

# **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

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#### NOTE

Symbols of **United Nations** documents **are** composed of capital letters combined with figures, Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information

"(a) To continue to *examine United Nations* public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order ;

"(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications)

"(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly;"

and requested the Committee and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendation of its Ad Hoc Working Group, 1/ reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67 (resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980). The Committee on Information agreed, at its organisational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to forty-second sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee 2/ and its recommendations, and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 (General Assembly resolutions 36/169 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98, 40/164 A, 41/68 A and 42/162). At its forty-third session, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Committee on Information, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-fourth session (resolution 43/60 A).

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely China and Mexico; at its forty-first session the Assembly appointed Malta a member of the Committee, and at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee, bringing the total membership to 73.

**5. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:**

<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Singapore</b>
<b>Argentina</b>	<b>Greece</b>	<b>Somalia</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Spain</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>Guinea</b>	<b>Sri Lanka</b>
<b>Benin</b>	<b>Qyana</b>	<b>Sudan</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Syrian Arab Republic</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Togo</b>
<b>Burundi</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>
<b>Chile</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Tunisia</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Colombia</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Ukrainian Soviet Socialist</b>
<b>Congo</b>	<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Republic</b>
<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>Kenya</b>	<b>Union of Soviet Socialist</b>
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Republics</b>
<b>Cuba</b>	<b>Malta .</b>	<b>United Kingdom of Great</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Britain and Northern</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>Ireland</b>
<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>United Republic of</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>Tanaani a</b>
<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>Niger</b>	<b>United States of America</b>
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Veneauela</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>Viet Nam</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>Yemen</b>
<b>German Democratic</b>	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Yugoslavia</b>
<b>Republic</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Zaire</b>
<b>Germany, Federal</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>Zimbabwe</b>
<b>Republic of</b>	<b>Romania</b>	

## **II, ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS**

### **A. Opening of the session**

6. The organisational meeting of the eleventh session of the Committee took place at United Nations Headquarters on 6 March 1989.

### **B. Election of officers**

7. In accordance with the principle of geographic rotation, the Committee elected by acclamation the following officers for the period 1989-1990:

**Chairman:** Mr. Orobola Fasehun (Nigeria)

**Vice-Chairmen:** Mr. Qerhard Haensel (German Democratic Republic)  
Mr. Peter Janus (Netherlands)  
Mr. Mansoor Suhail (Pakistan)

**Rapporteur:** Mr. Ricardo Lagorio (Argentina)

### **C. Admission of new members**

8. The Committee welcomed the representatives of Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members,

### **D. Organization of the work of the Committee**

9. The Committee adopted, without objection, the following agenda and programme of work:

1. Opening of the session,
2. Statements by the Chairman and the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Election of officers.
5. Substantive questions:
  - (a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

**(b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperative of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order.**

Consideration of questions in this area would include oral and/or written reports on:

- (i) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 43/60 A and the recommendations contained therein (para. 1), with particular reference to the reports called for in recommendations 8 (g) and (h), 9 (b), 11, 16, 17 and 18;**
  - (ii) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, bearing in mind resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987 (resolution 43/60 A, para. 5);**
  - (iii) Review of public information activities in the Secretariat outside the Department of Public Information: feasibility study on the consolidation and co-ordination of all public information activities within the United Nations with specific reference to the financial implications as well as to the effectiveness of the Department of Public Information as the focal point for public information activities (resolution 42/162 A, para. 1, recommendation 12);**
  - (iv) Reassessment of the effectiveness of the UN Chronicle. Report of the Secretary-General submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 42/162 A, paragraph 1, recommendation 45.**
- (c) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communication (resolution 43/60 A, para. 1, recommendation 13).**

**6. Adoption of the report of the Committee on Information to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session (resolution 43/60 A, para. 6).**

**10. The eleventh session of the Committee on Information took place at United Nations Headquarters on 6 March 1989 (organizational meeting) and from 13 to 28 April 1989 (substantive meetings).**

**11. The Committee had before it the following reports:**

**(a) Assessment of the effectiveness of the UN Chronicle survey (A/AC.198/1989/3);**

**(b) Application of modern technologies within the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/1989/4);**

**(c) Public information activities of the United Nations pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine (A/AC.198/1989/5);**

(d) **Progreer report on the staff of the Department of Public Information in posts subject to geographical distribution (A/AC.198/1989/6);**

(e) **Public information activities of the United Nations pertaining to the policies and practices of apartheid (A/AC.198/1989/7);**

(f) **Report on the review of public *information* activities in the Secretariat external to the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/1989/8);**

(g) **Implementation of recommendation 37 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 3/ concerning public information activities (A/AC.198/1989/9).**

12. The Committee on Information decided to establish a Working Group and to conduct further informal consultations through the spokesmen for the regional groups (Group of 77, Socialist States of Eastern Europe, Western Group and Japan and China).

13. The following Member States took part in the session as **observers**: Angola, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Cape Verde, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Jamaica, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madaqascnr, Malaysia, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and Thailand. Representatives of the Holy See and Switzerland also participated as observers.

14, Representatives of the following **specialized** agencies were **present**: International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Educational, Sciontific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organisation (WHO).

15. In addition, **representatives** of the League of Arab States and of the following non-governmental organisations were **present**: Inter-American Press Association and World Federation of United Nations Associations.

#### **E. Other business**

16. The Chairman informed the Committee that Nepal had requested membership in the Committee. The Committee, supporting that request, decided to submit the candidacy of Nepal to the General Assembly for approval.

### III, SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

- (a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information

17. Statements during the general debate were made by or on behalf of the following States members of the Committee: *Algeria*, Argentina, *Bangladesh*, Belgium, (speaking also on behalf of Denmark, Finland, *France*, *Germany*, Federal Republic of, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, *Netherlands*, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America), Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, India, *Indonesia*, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, *Philippines*, Poland, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sudan, *Syrian Arab Republic*, Tunisia, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, *United Republic of Tanzania*, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire and Zimbabwe. Statements on specific topics were made by the observers for Angola, Cape Verde and Jamaica.

18. In addressing the issue of a new world information and communication order, many delegations declared their support for the promotion and establishment of a new world information and communication order and expressed dissatisfaction with the imbalance of information flows in both directions between the developed and developing countries, indicating that those imbalances needed to be overcome so as to allow the developing countries to become active participants in producing and disseminating communications and information. Some delegations deplored that information disseminated about developing countries was perceived from a perspective that was not always fair and accurate.

19. In that regard, it was emphasized that the call for a new world information and communication order should not be confused with efforts to impose press censorship or regimentation of information.

20. One delegation, speaking on behalf of several others, emphasized that they were committed to the fundamental principles of freedom of opinion and expression. Those principles implied the right to seek, to receive and to disseminate information and ideas regardless of frontiers: a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The delegation further declared that everyone should be able to benefit without obstacle or censorship from free information and from the search for knowledge in all its forms as well as to seek access to all points of view in political, cultural and religious matters in a spirit of tolerance. Freedom of opinion and of the press and free access to information were among the most important pillars of a just and democratic society.

21. Another delegation expressed the view that however important freedom of information was for the realization of other human rights, priority had to be given to its importance in its own right; and that it was the underlying factor to the fundamental notion that human beings were born free and were therefore entitled to personal freedom of choice and individual autonomy. The view was also expressed that individuals themselves determined what information they required and that the role of Governments was to create favourable conditions to enjoy this freedom.

This delegation noted further **that** freedom of information was an essential pre-condition for the enjoyment of many human rights, and that, without information concerning these rights and the possibility to freely write and read about them and discuss them, they could not be **realized**. The description of freedom of information **as the touchstone** of all freedoms must be understood in **this sense**.

22. Other speakers affirmed their own **commitments** to a new world information and communication order and their **support** for the **countries** seeking changes in the imbalances of information flows. It was suggested that a new approach to information was much needed to guarantee the dissemination of balanced and reliable information that served the interests of all nations. Other delegations **said** they **were** ready to work towards increasing the media capacity of developing countries and to co-operate with them in their effort<sup>8</sup> to **progress** in the economic and social spheres and in particular in the field of information.

23. The view was expressed that the new order should be based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all States, and that **in** diversifying the sources of information and **ensuring** free dissemination of and access to information, it **was** necessary for all States to **respect** the **sovereignty** of others, *the* choice<sup>8</sup> of the people in each State and their social values and cultural traditions. Those principles were conducive to narrowing existing differences.

24. One delegation **suggested** the **convening** of a special session of the General Assembly to deal with the issue of new world information and communication order. The outcome of the session should **be** the adoption of a special **charter** or **programme** of action in the **field** of **international** communications in **order** to contribute to the strengthening of the positive trends in the world political situation,

25. Many delegations expressed the view that UNESCO had a crucial role to play in rectifying the **existing** imbalances, were happy to note that UNESCO's efforts to build up **communications** infrastructures in the developing countries would continue to be pursued under its International Programme for the Development of Communication, and called for support for those efforts. **Some** representatives also expressed the view that the **industrialized** countries should **contribute** more to the Programme, calling for increased co-operation **between the Department of Public Information and UNESCO** to enhance the ongoing **efforts** at **improving** information flows from developing countries.

26. *The* hope was expressed that developed **countries** would recognise not only the need for substantial increases in **their** **contributions** to creating the necessary infrastructure of developing countries, but also the need for remedial efforts such as allowing **for** greater access to the sophisticated **technology** and other communication **systems**, so as to enable the vast majority of peoples from developing countries to make their voices heard and thereby contribute to the equitable interaction in the international information exchanges.

27. **Many** members of the Committee spoke of the **need** for training and assistance **programmes**, which they **felt** were necessary to **create** greater equity and equality in the flow of information.

28. One delegation suggested that the first step could be taken by the United Nations itself in ensuring access to the information systems within the Organisation. Access by developing countries to United Nations data bases would undoubtedly have an impact on their overall development.

29. Another delegation suggested that the Department of Public Information should act as a liaison centre for co-operation programmes offered by developed countries to bridge the technological gap between developed and developing countries.

30. The expanded co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries was lauded by several delegations. Many representatives underscored the importance of the Department's co-operation with the Pool and its broadcasting arm, the Broadcasting Organisation of the Non-Aligned Countries and urged the Department to extend it to other agencies such as the Eco-Pool. Regional and sub-regional communications infrastructures had to be bolstered with a commitment to pragmatic measures, based on collective self-reliance. It was suggested that the Department monitor the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement and those of its regional organizations as a way of achieving a wider and better system of information.

31. Delegations generally emphasized the need for consensus. Many delegations supported the Chairman's proposal for the division of the Committee's recommendations into two parts - one dealing with the new world information and communication order and the other with the work of the Department of Public Information. Delegation 8 addressing that issue felt that it would serve to break the deadlock in the Committee and steer it toward a more dynamic and progressive path, and that the Department should be informed by clear mandates, which would acquire greater force if they were unanimous.

(b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order

(c) Evaluation and follow-up on the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communication

32. Delegations generally welcomed the detailed oral report given by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information on the work of the Department of Public Information. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of recommendation 37 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations (A/AC.198/1989/9), concerning public information activities, some delegations expressed support of the restructuring efforts, which they hoped would enhance the capabilities of the Department to deal more effectively with its mandated priority programmes, as well as its other responsibilities. However, other delegations noted that, now that the restructuring exercise was almost complete, there should be careful examination to see whether the new structure was indeed more efficient and functionally more effective than the earlier one. Another delegation commented on a draft report being prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit and urged that the Department of Public Information analyse its recommendations and present a detailed report thereon to the General Assembly.

33. Several delegations were appreciative of the Under-Secretary-General's initiative to hold consultations with representatives of various regional groups

**before the actual start of the substantive session in order to identify the most appropriate ways and means to increase the effectiveness of the work of the Department of Public Information.**

**34. On the subject of the activities of the Department, many delegations were appreciative of its efforts at rising to the challenges presented by the important political developments that had occurred since the previous session of the Committee. In particular, the work of its Executive Media Services was commended by a number of delegations for the quality and timeliness of its information services both to the press and to the delegations of Member States. One representative singled out the work of the Visitors' Section as deserving recognition.**

**35. Some delegations welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of the effectiveness of the UN Chronicle (A/AC.198/1989/3) and the recommendations contained therein. One delegation suggested that the Department might wish to consider making the UN Chronicle a monthly publication in the interest of ensuring timeliness of its delivery. It also cautioned the Department of Public Information to be vigilant on the issues of personnel and editing of the publication,**

**36. A large number of delegations paid tribute to the Department and its efforts to discharge its mandates. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General concerning public information activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine (A/AC.198/1989/5), the role of the Department was stressed as essential in promoting the objectives of the United Nations in that area. The Department was urged to continue to focus attention on areas of special concern to Member States. They included the eradication of apartheid, the right of peoples to self-determination and decolonisation, Namibia, Palestine, the promotion of human rights, international peace and security, peace-keeping and peace-making, disarmament, economic and social development, foreign debt and the new world information and communication order. Many delegations stressed the importance of the Department maintaining the independence of its output and, where necessary, reporting divergent opinions so that it could give objective information on the problems before the Organisation. Another delegation expressed the view that the Department should focus on the activities of the Organisation and not provide information about everything under discussion in the world.**

**37. With regard to the activities of the Department pertaining to the policies and practices of apartheid, as reflected in document A/AC.198/1989/7, delegations addressing that issue were satisfied with coverage of those activities and requested that they be intensified. One delegation referred with satisfaction to the steps taken by the Department to reactivate the Radio Unit, in response to the concerns expressed in 1988. Another delegation noted with appreciation the reinstatement of Afrikaans programmes, the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to develop the mass media capabilities of the front-line and other independent States and the Department's most recent initiative of sending a survey mission to Africa in order to determine the effectiveness of its anti-apartheid radio programmes.**

**38. With regard to the Department's activities related to Namibia, the Department of Public Information was commended for its activities and information products concerning the United Nations Transition Assistance Group. It was suggested that posters and other printed materials should be published in all major languages of**

Namibia, such as Ovambo, Herero and Nama, in addition to English and Afrikaans. It was also recommended that the Department should intensify its activities related to Namibia, particularly the use of its radio broadcasting to carry out the message of free and fair elections in Namibia and to check the South African misinformation campaigns.

39. Various delegations spoke about the importance of the radio programme of the Department of Public Information in their regions of the world. In that context, representatives of Portuguese-speaking countries expressed concern about the future of such radio programmes in Portuguese, and expressed the hope that existing arrangements would be maintained,

40. Concern was expressed by one delegation about the reduction of taped radio programmes in unofficial languages, which had severely impaired the information on developing countries such as Indonesia. Another delegation called on the Department to take immediate steps to resume the Urdu taped programmes, which it noted had been unilaterally stopped some time ago.

41. Yet another delegation drew attention to the fact that the Department seemed to be giving less attention to the Russian language. That delegation also expressed some perplexity at the fact that, following post reductions, the entire work-load in that area had been left with one P-2 staff member, which in its view put Russian at a disadvantage vis-à-vis other official languages of the United Nations.

42. One delegation expressed the hope that the Department would organise regional information meetings in the Arab world, and called for the expansion of programmes relating to the Arab region.

43. One delegation expressed its concern that the Department of Public Information was requested to stop any action regarding the elimination of certain programmes. In its view, the Department should not be blocked in eliminating programmes that did not fit into the new structure as approved by the General Assembly. That delegation also thought certain taped radio programmes should be resumed only if there was a proven demand for them.

44. Many delegations strongly supported the view that United Nations information centres - a major part of the Department's activities - should be strengthened. One suggestion was that the United Nations information centres should encourage direct exchanges of communication with local media, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations. Another delegation suggested that information centres could carry out joint programmes of information dissemination and professional advancement for journalists in co-operation with Governments. Some delegations expressed satisfaction at the steps taken to reorganise and redefine the centres. Delegations hoped that, with the activities of the centres becoming more relevant to the work of the Department, resources, including technical resources such as modernisation of equipment within the local offices, would be increased. A few delegations expressed reservations about the relationship between the United Nations information centres and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They stressed the importance of the information centres functioning as independent entities and as an integral part of the Department of Public Information. One delegation expressed serious doubts that the UNDP resident representatives could combine their functions with that of running United Nations information centres. That delegation observed that although it recognized that

there were **still** financial problems, the contraction of the Department's role in Member States was not the solution to **the financial crisis**. Another referred to the intent to **share premises** and supported the view of **other speakers** that the autonomy of means and purposes should be **maintained** as the basis for the proper functioning of the information centres.

45. Some delegations expressed the view that the Department **should make the** necessary anticipatory preparations for the establishment of an information **centre** in Namibia **once** it acceded to independence.

46. Other delegations **expressed** the view **that** the Department should reactivate the centre in El Salvador.

47. One delegation, speaking of the issue of **redefining and regionalizing** information centres, observed that financial concerns **should not be the deciding factor** for the transfer of staff and closing of centres. It recommended that the following objectives among others, should be **borne in mind**: the importance of the population whose needs the centre was addressing) the geographical location of **the** country concerned, the availability of communications between the centre and its outposts; and the relationship **between** the centre and the authorities of the host country, non-governmental organisations and the media. Another delegation urged that information centres in developing countries, particularly **the least developed** countries, be upgraded to reflect the importance those countries attached to the United Nations and its contribution to the development of third world countries and peoples.

48. Several delegations **supported** the view that **it** was essential that the Department should co-operate with developing countries in the field of information, particularly through **its training programme for broadcasters and journalists**. One delegation expressed the view that the training programme should go beyond merely holding round-table discussions. Another suggested that the Department should consider identifying new forms of co-operation at regional and subregional levels **for the training of media professionals**. Yet another **recommended** elevating the level and quality of seminars, colloquiums, symposiums and workshops organised in connection with the training programme, taking due account of the needs of developing countries. One delegation informed the **Committee** in this regard that **each year** its diplomatic academy **offered** a seminar for journalists where, among other things, participants discussed the main issues on the **current international agenda** and the activities of the United Nations, and expressed its **willingness** to discuss with the Department of Public Information the possibility of enhancing the participation of journalists from other countries in the region. Another delegation, however, proposed that the Department should leave the **issue** of training to professional schools of journalism. The Department was not equipped for it and should instead inform the trained about the **United Nations**. Yet another delegation was pleased to note that the Department had begun to explore the possibility of obtaining external support for broadening its training programme. That delegation expressed the hope that extrabudgetary support for that purpose would be forthcoming, which in turn would assist in strengthening the media.

49. Several delegations voiced their concern that the **Department of Public Information** did not have adequate financial resources to carry out its mandate, and urged that they be secured. In particular, referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the application of modern technologies within the Department (A/AC.198/1989/4), the view was expressed that the process of introducing new

technologies to enhance its work should receive full support. One delegation suggested that a small group be established by the Committee to make the needs of the Department known to the chairmen of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and the Fifth Committee. The view was also expressed that the chairmen of other committees should participate in the work of the Committee on Information.

50. Referring to the progress report on the staff of the Department of Public Information in posts subject to geographical distribution (A/AC.198/1989/6), many members of the Committee exhorted the Department to take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts, particularly at the higher levels. Others emphasized that not only equitable geographical but gender representation should be adhered to, particularly as it pertained to promotion and appointments at the senior levels. Another delegation expressed concern at the decrease in representation from the group of Eastern European countries, particularly the Soviet Union. That delegation hoped that equitable geographical distribution of posts would be taken into account when vacancies were filled in the future. Some delegations referred to the inadequate representation of staff from the Caribbean. One delegation voiced concern over the inadequate representation of staff from Asia and Pacific. Another delegation expressed the view that the need for equitable geographical distribution should apply only to the Secretariat as a whole and not to individual departments. Imposing such restrictions on individual departments was contradictory to the principle set out in General Assembly resolution 41/213.

51. Some delegations expressed the view that the Department should arrange practical seminars during the sessions of the Committee on Information,

52. Commenting on the report relating to the review of public information activities in the Secretariat external to the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/1989/8), several delegations voiced support for the idea of consolidating all information activities within the Department and generally endorsed the Secretary-General's intention to undertake a further review of that subject in 1992. One delegation urged closer co-operation between the Department of Public Information and other departments and specialized agencies, including joint budget planning for information purposes.

53. Commenting on the work of the Committee itself, some delegations expressed the view that the Committee should devote less time to political discussion and deal more with guidelines for the Department of Public Information, whose task was to disseminate information to the world. Others felt that the Committee should exercise restraint in presenting demands to the Department with regard to specific topics, since those demands could hamper the efficiency of its work. One delegation proposed a Chairman-sponsored study on information that could be used as a stepping-stone to the future work of the Committee. Other delegations reiterated a proposal made at the previous session that a group of experts be set up, including representatives of the regional groups and China, to meet between sessions of the Committee.

54. One delegation called for the Department of Public Information *to* pay more attention to ~~issues~~ of *peace* and disarmament and suggested that it organise more specific seminars and symposiums on the role of the mass media in ~~strengthening~~ the current positive trends in international affairs.

55. At the closing of the debate, the Under-Secretary-General *for* Public Information provided additional information on the work of ~~the Department~~ and responded to specific questions *posed by* delegations. She expressed her appreciation *to the many delegations that commented* favourably on the work and functioning of the Department *over* the past year, noting that such recognition *served as* encouragement to the staff, who *had* performed *outstandingly* despite enormous difficulties and obstacles.

56. With regard to the United Nations information centres, she ~~stressed~~ the Department's intention *to* safeguard ~~and~~, indeed, to strengthen their role and their mandates, improving their working methods and efficiency by measures such as the introduction of modern technology. The preliminary agreement reached on the future co-operation between the Department of Public Information and UNDP was to be tested for one year ~~before~~ any changes were implemented in the relationship in the field. On ~~the~~ expressed need to plan for an information centre in independent Namibia, she said the Department would be fully prepared to submit concrete details on the matter, which would require *approval* by the General Assembly following consultations with the Government of the new nation.

57. Referring to the Department of Public Information programme *for* the training of broadcaster~~s~~ and journalists from developing countries, she pointed out that candidate~~s~~ for the programme *were* expected to have acquired some training *or* professional experience in their fields. The Department did not pretend to act as a professional school *or* to duplicate UNESCO work in that field. As to the question whether the Department could co-ordinate co-operation programmes between developed and developing countries *or* among developing countries in areas related to information, she said it would be important to minimise duplication of activities by *various entities* of the United Nations system. It would therefore appear more appropriate *for* such programmes to be carried *out* with ~~the~~ UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication, ~~as~~ well as relevant programmes of the International Telecommunications Union.

56. Concerning co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the Pool of News Agencies of Non-Aligned Countries, she observed that the Department *had* been co-operating with the Pool *for the last* seven years, by sending daily news dispatches through TANJUG, in Belgrade, to the more than 90 news agencies members of the Pool. Plans were under way to make the dispatches available directly to several regional news agencies. The Department was studying ~~the~~ possibility of co-operating with the Broadcasting Organisation of the Non-Aligned Countries in its proposed programme exchange service.

59. In view of particular constraints imposed during the financial crisis and more recently as a consequence of the mandated post reductions, she ~~said~~ the Department had had to resort to various alternatives for the production of ~~radio~~ programmes in non-official languages. The alternatives included local production *of* information

centre staff, or the recruitment of free-lance producers, locally or at Headquarters, or special arrangements entered into with broadcasting organisations. She stressed that there had been no curtailment of services in Portuguese and that no such curtailment was contemplated for the future.

60. She observed that the problems encountered in producing departmental publications would not be fully solved until the Department undertook - and it was its intention to do so at the earliest possible moment - a comprehensive study of all its publications with the aim of avoiding duplication, defining and targeting audiences and taking account of technology that was both innovative and practical. Concerning press coverage for meetings, she reaffirmed that the Department intended to continue its best endeavours to fulfil that service as an important information activity. Its objective in that regard, subject to the availability of resources, was full coverage of all meetings in both working languages,

61. With regard to the question of holding practical seminars, she said the Department of Public Information had every intention of continuing to convene editors' round tables and other encounters to increase the public awareness of the aims and activities of the United Nations.

62. On the question of geographical representation of staff, she indicated that, while the desirable ranges established by the General Assembly were intended to apply to the Secretariat as a whole, she shared the view that it was essential for the Department to have as close to an optimal distribution of its staff as possible. Any existing imbalances were borne in mind for improvement in the future, both through career development of existing staff and recruitment when a suitable opportunity arose.

#### IV. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

63, As indicated in paragraph 12, the Committee on Information established a Working Group and conducted further informal consultations through the spokesmen of regional groups and China. For these consultations all the regional groups and China agreed to work on the basis of two papers submitted by the chairman, which he had in turn extracted from annex VII to the Committee's report to the General Assembly at its forty-third session, 4/ by including in the first paper those issues related to the new world information and communication order and in the second paper issues related to the mandate of the Department of Public Information.

64. During the informal consultations conducted by the spokesmen of the regional groups and China, progress was achieved on a number of issues, while a number of other issues remained unresolved. The papers prepared by the Chairman and amended as a result of the negotiations by the spokesmen of the regional groups and China were made available to all delegations. Some delegations expressed the desire to refer the papers to their capitals for instructions. Some wanted to annex the papers to the report, while others did not. The Committee recommended that those papers should be included in the negotiations during the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

#### Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, This Session Supplement No. 21 (A/35/21), annex.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/40/21); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21); and ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21),

3/ Ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

4/ Ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/43/21).

## ANNEX I

### Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information

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As **this is** the **first** time that I preside over a substantive **session of this** Committee, may I **reiterate** my **assurance** that all members of the Bureau, your humble Chairman included, will **co-operate with each** member of the Committee, with Under-Secretary-general **Sévigny** and with the staff of the Department of Public Information in making **this session a success**.

In my **maiden speech** to the Committee in March, I have already paid tribute to my indefatigable **predecessor**, Mr. Barrios of **Spain**. I also **expressed** gratitude to all members of the Committee for my election. The other members of the Bureau elected with me have profound knowledge of the issues **before this Committee**. Collectively, we **shall** endeavour to **serve** you to the best of our abilities.

A decade ago, the **General Assembly** took a historic **decision** on the mandate of the Committee on Information. Acting unanimously, the world community **empowered** the Committee to review **United Nations** public information policies and activities, and to evaluate and follow up **efforts** made and the **progress achieved by the United Nations** in the field of information and communication.

The **third element** in the triple mandate of the Committee on Information **relates** to the **new** world information and communication order. The new order would promote the democratisation of global information **processes**, strengthen the communication infrastructure of developing countries, and **foster** free **circulation** and wider and better balanced dissemination of **information**. It would also promote and strengthen the diverse cultures in our world.

Ten **years** after the adoption of that historic document, our Committee **is** still embroiled in, and one might **unhappily say** **deadlocked over**, the definition of a concept that was well accepted and ably defined in 1979.

A decade after this agreement on a new world information and communication order, the developing countries still lag behind in the acquisition, utilisation and production of modern communication technology. The debt problems of many developing countries have prevented them even from adequately **maintaining the** communication infrastructure they already **have**.

Without doubt, developing countries need assistance to establish or enhance **networks** and **systems** of the kind that developed countries take for granted. Such assistance should be given **as a practical demonstration of support for a new world** information and communication order,

In the task of attaining this **new** order, the Department of Public Information, UNESCO and all Member States have crucial and important roles. The new order still requires multilateral efforts, supplemented by co-operative bilateral **efforts**, to reverse the ever-widening information and communication gap between developed and developing countries.

Our world today is witnessing profound and heartening changes in relations between States. The old and tested instruments of negotiation, conciliation and

compromise have again been reviewed, and with them the centrality of our Organization, the United Nations, in the management and resolution of conflicts.

The Department of Public Information has the primary duty to inform peoples about all aspects of the work of the Organization. A few days ago, on 11 and 12 April, we were treated to a presentation mounted by DPI, showing us the gamut of its activities. I commend DPI for its efforts. The Department should continue its work to publicize United Nations activities in the campaign against apartheid, the struggle for Namibian independence, the struggle of the Palestinian people for a State of their own, human rights, environmental issues, the status of women, disarmament, and the economic and social crisis facing the developing countries.

These are entrenched and established priority issues for the United Nations. But DPI needs more resources to enable messages on these issues to reach the peoples of the world. Part of our task as members of the Committee, then, is to ensure that there is no diminution in the resources committed to these issues. Indeed, we should endeavour to increase the resources devoted to DPI, so that it can adequately fulfil its mandate.

The issues of DPI resources, its tools of communication and many other aspects of the Department's work will feature in our discussion. We must give the Department clear guidelines and support it with the requisite resources.

We are a decade away from the twenty-first century and the start of a new millennium. Thus, our attention should more than ever focus on the short- and long-term future of the United Nations and its publicity arm, the Department of Public Information,

As our world becomes more effectively linked through technology, we have to think of preparing a new generation to eschew the ills of racism, war, the arms race, environmental despoliation, drug addiction and exploitation of persons. We should infuse in our youth the shared global values of peace, equality of all races and both sexes, environmental protection and global disarmament.

The Department of Public Information has a critical role to play in the task of moulding future leaders of our world. It should start developing programmes targeted to our youth, to sensitize them to issues and to inculcate in them a global awareness of shared problems and multilateral solutions. Through such programmes, the United Nations may gain recognition not only as a forum for discussing peace but also as an Organisation that concerns itself with the future of the world.

In the introduction to this statement, I alluded to the consensus of 1979. We nearly reached such consensus again last year, at the forty-third session of the General Assembly. The impact of those long and arduous negotiations on the minds of delegates is too fresh to require a reminder. Yet, new efforts have to be made to recreate the lost consensus. This will require understanding, flexibility and compromise on the part of all nations and groups. By consensual agreement on the recommendations of the Committee, DPI will be strengthened to carry out the mandates entrusted to it.

## ANNEX II

### Statement by the Under Secretary-General for Public Information

It is my privilege to welcome ~~the~~ members of the Committee on Information to this session - the ~~eleventh~~ of the Committee and the third which I have the honour to address. At the outset, I wish to assure all of you of my commitment and that of the staff of the Department of Public Information to ~~assist~~ and support you in your important tasks.

In my intervention ~~today~~ I wish to report on the activities of the Department of Public Information over the last year, including the progress achieved in the reforms begun two years ago, as well as to respond to specific requests addressed to the Secretariat in the resolution of the forty-third session of the General Assembly on the question of information - resolution 43/60 A.

The period since the last substantive *session* of this Committee has been an eventful and positive one for the United Nations. Developments in the political arena have given our Organisation a positive image - a great contrast to the negativism, despair and gloom of prior years. From the public information perspective, I am proud to say that the activities and performance of the Department of Public Information, thanks to the efforts of its staff, have done *credit* to the Organisation.

Last year, ~~under~~ the guidance of the Secretary-General, the areas of peace-making and peace-keeping were highlighted. The Department was fully prepared - despite great obstacles to which I shall refer later - to cope with a series of positive developments in a number of regional conflicts and to manage effectively a number of media events. ~~Members~~ of the Committee will no doubt have seen the various press kits related to events such as the signing of the agreements relating to Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq cease-fire, the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to ~~United Nations~~ peace-keeping forces, the launching of Operation Salaam, to name a few. These generated extensive positive media coverage for the United Nations. Indeed, it would not have been possible to achieve this without the events themselves having occurred; but I have no doubt that our ability to provide the media with pertinent and timely background material in Print, with radio and video feeds, films and photographs and, of course, adequate technical and other services, both at Headquarters and in Geneva, contributed significantly to the positive coverage of the various events. Our co-ordinated, multi-media approach to issues enabled us to plan a number of other activities around the theme of peace-making/peace-keeping.

By positive coverage I mean the accurate reporting of the activities of the United Nations to the world's peoples, to make them aware of the Organisation's successes, of its potential for further success in other areas and, consequently, of its importance to the future of mankind.

The approach taken for the reform of our public information activities and methods of work proved successful in these cases. Examples in other areas included the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the visit to Headquarters of Mr. Gorbachev, the General Assembly debate in Geneva on the question of Palestine, World AIDS Day and, for the first time ever, an open day at United Nations Headquarters, all of which were major media events.

**Now we need to take advantage of the momentum created by the events of the past several months in order to build on and consolidate the positive image created on the political side. It is to that end that our efforts will be directed.**

**I would like to report on the reform process of the Department of Public Information, which is aimed precisely at improving our ability to respond more effectively to the needs of the Organisation in the field of public information. The Committee has before it, in document A/AC.198/1989/9, a rather detailed report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213, in particular with regard to recommendation 37 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations (otherwise known as the Group of 18). This report contains details of actions taken by the Secretary-General in response to recommendation 37, in so far as the organizational structure of the Department is concerned. Allow me to complement that information with some comments as to how those structures are actually functioning.**

**The newly established Executive Media Service has a three-fold operation. The first aspect of its activities is to serve as spokesmen for the Secretary-General. This entails daily briefings for correspondents and press attachés of permanent missions, accompanying the Secretary-General on his official travel abroad and organizing his interviews, for which the demand over the past year has been enormous.**

**EMS is also involved in support activities for senior officials in the Secretary-General's cabinet dealing with various political dossiers, in particular Namibia, Iran-Iraq, Afghanistan, Cyprus and the Middle East, as well as for elected officials of intergovernmental bodies. An example of the kinds of services provided is EMS's involvement in the information activities related to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia. In addition to participating in the Department's development of a press kit and the organisation of press briefings on the subject, one of its staff members has been posted to Windhoek to assist in setting up UNTAG's information service.**

**EMS provides other support services to the Secretary-General and senior officials such as by preparing specific analyses of media coverage on specific issues. The Service has also provided the spokesman for the President of the forty-third session of the General Assembly and works very closely with the presidents of the Security Council.**

**A third aspect of EMS's activities consists of the organisation of editors' round tables at Headquarters and the launching of outreach programmes for editors in the various geographical regions. An example of the former, to which I referred earlier, was the very successful Francophone Editors' Roundtable held at Headquarters from 11 to 13 October 1988, at which some 20 high-level correspondents from French-speaking countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and Canada were briefed for three days by United Nations officials on all topical issues. It is intended that another round table be held in 1990 for Asian editors.**

**As part of its outreach programme, EMS staff members meet with leading editors and journalists in connection with their official travel. EMS also acts as a focal point in co-ordinating press relations on occasions such as visits by heads of State.**

The Communications and Project Management Division is responsible for the development and **implementation**, as appropriate, of multi-media **information** plans and **for** the promotion of a better **understanding** and awareness of the **priority** issues and special events of the United Nations, as determined by the **General** Assembly. In the peace and security area, the **major** DPI initiative was increasing attention to the work of the **Secretary-General** in **peace-making** and, in the light of the award of the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize to United Nations peace-keeping forces, greater **emphaisis** on this vital United Nations activity.

Last **September** in Tokyo, in co-operation with Yomiuri Shimbun, a distinguished group of policy-makers, journalists and academics **examined** United Nations peace-keeping and **peace-making**. Concurrent with this, DPI produced two 26-minute films **on** these subjects.

A comprehensive press kit and a poster were produced and distributed world wide, with special **emphasis** on New York, Stockholm and Oslo, in conjunction with the Peace Prize ceremony.

One of our **priority** areas of activity is the question of the policies and practices of **apartheid**. The Committee has before it, in document A/AC.198/1989/7, a report on the various activities of the Department, both at Headquarters and in the field in this regard. In 1988, the Department **continued** its close co-operation with the Centre against **Apartheid**. A highlight of these efforts was the Artists against **Apartheid** symposium in Athens in September. DPI co-produced a 26-minute video to open the **symposium**, provided full press release coverage of the meetings, and published a **booklet summarising the conclusions**. Events such as this supplemented the continuing coverage and feature stories by United Nations radio and television **dealing with actions to eliminate apartheid**.

Another **priority area** for us is that pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine. In this context the **Committee** will note a written report of the Secretary-General, which is contained in document A/AC.198/1989/5, which **summarizes the various** activities of the Department in this area for the past year. Particularly effective were the journalists' encounters held in various regions of the world, as described in paragraphs 16-19 of the report.

The African recovery and development effort was an important **part of the** Department's 1988 programme. The Africa Recovery newsletter, produced in English and French, continues to be widely **recognized** as the foremost periodical **in** this field. A comprehensive press kit was prepared and widely distributed on the occasion of the **mid-term review** of this major United Nations project.

Numerous special programmes and events took place in 1988, in addition to those related to the Nobel Prize. I will mention just one. DPI **worked closely** with UNICEF on the event at United Nations Headquarters **where**, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, Mickey Mouse was designated an Emissary of Goodwill to the world's children. As a follow-up, Disney Educational Productions is producing a video on the United Nations and UNICEF, which will be seen by tens of millions of children around the world.

During 1988 and the first few months of 1989, the Department has continued its **efforts to mobilize** international public opinion on the subjects of **decolonization** and the **self-determination** of peoples. The most important development in this

**sphere has been the start of the independence process of Namibia under United Nations auspices. As the world witnesses the birth of a new nation in southern Africa under the supervision of the Organisation, DPI is working to provide accurate, in-depth public information on the country as well as on the process leading to independence. This is a three-pronged effort. First, there is UNTAG's own information programme within Namibia, which the Department helped to develop, and which it supports at Headquarters by producing specific outputs required by UNTAG and by detailing staff to complement UNTAG's own resources. Second, DPI is responsible, at Headquarters, for coverage activities aimed at world-wide information on developments related to UNTAG and, thirdly, DPI continues to implement its own programme of activities related to Namibia, which it is mandated to carry out under the guidance of the United Nations Council for Namibia. In this regard, consultations with the Council are maintained on a constant basis with a view to adjusting and sharpening the programme in the light of developments.**

Numerous issues related to economic and social development were included in DPI's 1988 agenda. Among these were close co-operation with the Centre on Transnational Corporations to publicize, through a press kit and a series of press briefings in various world capitals, the fourth survey report of the Centre, "Transnational Corporations in World Development".

The Department of Public Information serves as the lead agency for the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, or NGLS, an inter-agency activity aimed at building support for development projects among the peoples of developed countries. NGLS has offices in New York and Geneva, and concentrates on creating networks among non-governmental organizations in support of third world development.

Just last month, the Department of Public Information, in co-operation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, organized a journalists' encounter immediately prior to the opening of ESCAP's forty-fifth session. The encounter provided a unique means to enhance press interest in the development activities and needs of the region. A dozen leading editors, publishers and correspondents were on hand and had the opportunity to meet and discuss, with ministers and several United Nations senior officials, issues such as population growth, the environment, human settlements and other economic and social questions facing Asia and the Pacific.

To mark the fortieth anniversary, in 1988, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, DPI launched a co-ordinated multi-media campaign for which a variety of promotional products were created, including a public service announcement television spot, two television news features and a basic information kit. DPI also enlisted the support of celebrities to speak for human rights; it helped non-governmental organizations set up events; its information centre directors assisted Governments in planning human rights celebrations, hosted film festivals, chaired panels, participated in university seminars and sponsored exhibits in addition to their normal contacts with press organizations. In this context, a number of important events were held around the world, including Paris - the site of the adoption of the Declaration - where the Secretary-General himself took part in activities co-ordinated by our information centre.

Since its inception in 1907, the annual DPI training programme in public speaking has coached more than 80 senior officials and middle managers throughout the United Nations in public speaking presentation skills. The programme is designed to assist speakers in presenting major United Nations issues more

effectively. One of **its** main objectives is to establish a roster of trained United Nations speakers who can be called upon to **address** the public at Headquarters and in **the** field to promote a **sustained** and well-founded public support for the Organisation.

The programme **consists** of **one-day** intensive training sessions and includes **video-taped** exercises, **formats** for speech-writing, and methods to handle question and **answer** situations. Fifteen senior officials and 12 other staff members took part in four pilot sessions in 1987. Fifty-five staff members participated in the **course** in 1988. **This year, it is** expected that nearly 60 people will be trained. Participants **include** United Nations Secretariat staff as well as representatives of **other United Nations** bodies and specialised agencies, such as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNIFEM, *UNDP* and **UNRWA**.

The Information **Product**8 Division (IPD), responsible for radio, video, photos, press releases **and** publications as well as for providing technical and related services to the electronic and print media at Headquarters and in Geneva, has in **co-operation** with the other Divisions of the Department, effectively responded to the media events of 1988 to **which** I have referred. This, **of course, was in addition to** the production of **outputs** on every *aspect of the work of the United Nations, from peace-making and peace-keeping and the debt crisis to the environmental effects of nuclear war.* For instance, IPD has completed a **co-production documentary** film on the African Recovery, in English, French and Spanish, and is now completing a film on the **disabled**.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that there has been an increased demand on the part of **delegations** and media for the coverage of virtually all meetings in the two working languages. With adequate supplementary **resources**, the Department will **be** able to provide meeting *coverage* service as an important information activity.

Our co-operation in news exchanges with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned **Countries** will continue, and **efforts** are being made to strengthen these ties. After **extensive** consultations with a number of news **agencies** in non-aligned **countries**, I am pleased to report **that** plans are being worked out to transmit United Nations dispatches, in **English** and **French**, to five focal point news agencies in Asia, Africa and Latin *America*. Those **agencies** would act as centres for the **redissemination** of United Nations information through a **network** of correspondent news agencies **and** media in their regions. We should be in a position to provide to the Committee **more** details on this project at **next year's** session.

The **Division** is constantly seeking possibilities for co-production and new outlets for **disseminating its** products. For instance, following an experiment conducted by a private Italian radio relay service last year, at **no** cost to the United Nations, it has been determined that there is a **sizeable** potential audience for United Nations radio **programmes** in Western Europe. Since European radio stations do not normally use these programmes, the Information Products Division is about to make use of the relay service in order to reach those listeners directly by short **and** medium wave.

In paragraph 1 (17) of resolution 43/60, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to **ensure** full **programme** delivery by the Caribbean Unit, including implementation of the provisions of resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983, **which** called for radio programming in French Creole and Dutch

**Papiamento.** I am happy to report to the Committee that, on the basis of responses to two pilot radio programmes produced last summer, our Caribbean Unit has commenced regular production in these languages since February this year. The Dutch **Papiamento magazine** is distributed to 23 broadcasting organisations and the French Creole to 18 organizations.

In paragraph 1 (18) of the same resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General "to maintain the functions of the Middle East/Arabic Unit as the producer of Arabic television and radio programmes, to strengthen and expand this unit to enable it to function in an effective manner." For obvious professional and administrative reasons, radio programmes are produced by the various units of the Radio Sections and video/television programmer by the Video Section. However, and this also applies to programming in Arabic, there is ongoing collaboration between these sections, taking into account both linguistic and regional needs, especially in adaptation, narration and production support services. The Middle East regional unit of the Radio Section is functioning effectively and, in terms of human resources and the programme needs of the region it serves, it compares favourably with other regional units of the Information Products Division.

I might add in this regard that, following discussions with a group of Arab broadcasters during a recent visit to New York, we are currently reviewing the mode of distribution as well as the content of our video products to the Middle East.

Our most regular television magazine, **World and UN in Action**, continue to gain popularity around the world. **World Chronicle**, for instance, is broadcast in 65 public service stations in this country plus in the Philippines and Trinidad and Tobago and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands. Furthermore, it is also transmitted by 45 radio stations throughout the world.

The Dissemination Division is responsible for ensuring the rationalisation and effectiveness of the distribution functions. In order to ensure effective dissemination of United Nations messages to the widest possible audiences throughout the world, various means of communication are utilised, including physical and electronic distribution, providing access to redisseminators through the maintenance of NGO and institutional relations, press accreditation, co-ordination of lectures, briefings, film screenings and other public services.

The Division supplies 105 film libraries in UNICs and UNDP field offices around the world with feature films, videos and TV magazines. The Division also provides services to 40 distributors world wide as well as to United Nations agencies and programmer, United Nations-accredited NGOs, permanent missions, broadcast and cable television organizations, and potential purchasers of our programmes.

The number of **UN in Action** programmes distributed increased from 1,134 in 1987 to 4,018 in 1988. **World Chronicle** programmes distributed free of charge increased from 210 in 1987 to 906 in 1988. There was also a marked increase in the number of **World Chronicle** programmes sold: 39 in 1987 compared to 234 in 1988. Films sent to information centre or UNDP film libraries totalled 1,342 in 1987 as compared to 1,571 in 1988.

The Department hopes to market the international edition of **World Chronicle**, which is expected to make its debut in the fall of 1989. Also under consideration

is the placement of films and videos with commercial airlines to **be included** in their in-flight programmes.

This **summer** DPI **expects to release** a new and more complete film and video catalogue in **English and French**. The last English catalogue was **produced in 1986** while the last French catalogue was **produced in 1985**.

The Department **has also worked hard to increase the number of joint ventures** between the United Nations and external publishers, which are indispensable in facilitating **the dissemination of United Nations materials**. Working through established publishers allows us the opportunity to use their **distribution networks to get the maximum number of publications in different languages** to our audiences. Currently there are 53 titles, 41 more than last year, being **processed for external publication**! 21 in the production stage, 9 in the contractual stage and 23 for which **contracts are being negotiated**.

Topics include disarmament, **transnational corporations and African development**. In 1988, royalties from **sales of publications** came to some \$80,000, with over \$20,000 in **savings to the United Nations in the form of free copies**. Revenue increased by more than 30 per cent over the **1987 level**. The income earned through these activities is **credited to the General Fund of the Organisation** and is not available for **use** by the Department.

The Department's Non-Governmental-Organisations Section **has been vigorous in increasing its capacity to convey information to more than 1,000 NGOs** associated with DPI around the **world**. As compared to 1987, this figure represents a **24 per cent increase in the number of NGOs served by DPI**.

In our assistance to **accredited journalists and correspondents**, the Department **granted more than 6,000 accreditations in 1988**. For the visit of General Secretary Gorbachev, this Section, as well as our technical services, **provided assistance to more than 1,100 members of the media**.

The recent United Nations successes in diplomacy seemed to have had an effect on the **type of public inquiries received at Headquarters** as well as the number of people visiting the United Nations. Peace-making and peace-keeping were the first and third most popular topics of general inquiries to the United Nations in 1988 and two out of the top three subjects of briefings within and outside Headquarters. Based on the first three months of the year, we anticipate an increase of **a third in the number of visitors to the United Nations over 1988** as well as a 40 per cent increase in the number of **conducted tours**. I am delighted to inform you that, after 20 years of deficit, our **guided tours at Headquarters** became a financially self-sustaining operation in 1988.

One notable aspect of **DPI's work** is the extent to which its activities take place away from Headquarters. In fact, more than half of its total staff is deployed in the field. For the forthcoming biennium, 353 of the Department's total of 685 regular budget posts will be outside of Headquarters. This is because, as early as 1946, in resolution 13 of its first session, the General Assembly recommended the establishment of branch offices "in order to ensure that peoples in all parts of **the world** receive as full information as possible about the United Nations". The same resolution stated that "**The Department and its branch offices** should also be equipped to analyse trends of opinion throughout the world about the

activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured".

United Nations information centres have continued to perform well throughout the year. Through evolving relations with local press and broadcasting organisations, some UNICs have obtained time-slots for audio-visual programmes produced at Headquarters. Others have provided substantive inputs for local programming. UNIC directors are often interviewed on radio and television, and have initiated a number of special broadcasts on United Nations observances and topics. In addition, exhibits have been organised in public buildings, schools, and on UNIC premises using photographs, posters, wallcharts, various United Nations documents and publications provided by centres. UNICs also provided information services to many United Nations agencies and programmes by organising seminars, setting up exhibits, calling press conferences, and giving press and NGO briefings.

In order to improve co-ordination of our field office and Headquarters activities on both programme and administrative issues, we have continued to organise regional meetings with directors of information centres. Thus, in addition to the one for directors in the Africa and Asia regions held in 1987, a meeting for European centre directors was held in Moscow in 1988 and another one, for directors in the Americas, was held in Mexico City in February of this year.

Co-operation between DPI and UNDP in the field last year was strengthened by way of the initial text for DPI/UNDP Understanding for Rationalising United Nations Field Representation, which began the process of making the relationship more mutually beneficial and reduced potential areas of duplication. The text was distributed to all UNDP resident representatives and co-ordinators as well as to all UNIC directors for review and comment. It is expected that the understanding between DPI and UNDP will have a one-year trial period in the field. It is to be subsequently reviewed and finalised at Headquarters in the light of experience and the comments and suggestions received from field representatives of both organisations.

Through the Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit, which will now be attached to my office, we have commenced a research programme to assess the levels of awareness and understanding of the United Nations among people in different countries. Through this means, we will be able to evaluate whether the Department is succeeding in one of its original mandates, which is to ensure among the general public an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations. We are also ascertaining people's main sources of information on the United Nations to ensure that our information products reach our audiences through the most efficient means. Media profiles are being completed for the Member States which have United Nations information centres to improve the dissemination of our material to the media.

This Unit is also responsible for co-ordinating self-evaluation exercises, one of which, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the UN Chronicle, is before the Committee for its consideration, in document A/AC.198/1989/3.

In this regard, permit me to draw the attention of the Committee to the recommendations contained in part VII of the report, concerning the magazine's subscription base, the timeliness of production and distribution, its design, the need for ongoing research into audience patterns, and the situation with regard to the five language editions other than English. With your permission, I would wish

**to discuss in more detail the question of the effectiveness of the Chronicle and our other publications when this report is taken up.**

**On my arrival at the United Nations in 1987, one of my first actions was to initiate a review to see how we should upgrade technology in the Department, at Headquarters and in the field, for the production and especially the dissemination of information. The Committee on Information has given impetus to this project, recommending at its last two sessions that we continue to explore the feasibility of applying modern technologies in this area.**

**A few months ago, we completed an initial survey of what we are doing and plan to do in this area, with emphasis on computer applications. At the same time, we drew up a four-year plan designed to give every DPI unit access to computers for a wide range of applications, including word processing, electronic publishing, telecommunication, and management information systems. This plan was drawn up by a DPI Technological Innovations Task Force and approved by a Steering Committee composed of all of the Department's Directors. Representatives of the Electronic Services Division take part in this work to ensure co-ordination with the Secretariat's overall technological plans and policies. This machinery, which I established in mid-1988 in response to the Committee's latest recommendation on this matter, is, I understand, the first such structure in any Secretariat department. It is pursuing its work this year by drawing up plans for individual projects. A report in this regard, submitted in pursuance of the request addressed in paragraph 1 (9) (b) of resolution 43/60 A, is before the Committee in document A/AC.198/1989/4, which incorporates a chart showing a planned implementation schedule.**

**Our main thrust in this field has been the expansion of our electronic mail system. At present, 25 United Nations information centres and services, including two centres headed by UNDP resident co-ordinators, are connected to the DPI electronic mail system. The number of information centres having this facility is expected to increase to 37 during 1989 and to all of the centres where this is technically feasible by 1991. By the end of 1989, the electronic mail system will be operational in centres in all the major regions of the world. At the same time, we have begun to install facsimile transmission facilities at various information centres. Seven centres have fax machines at the moment, a figure which should grow to 17 by the end of this year and to 39 during the period 1990-1991. These measures will immeasurably improve communication between Headquarters and the centres, as well as between the centres and local redisseminators such as media and non-governmental organizations. It will also allow for the computerisation of the UNIC reporting system to Headquarters, allowing us to monitor more carefully the activities and overall effectiveness of the information centres.**

**We have been fortunate in obtaining excellent co-operation from the Training Service of the Office of Human Resources Management in organising training sessions for our staff in computer applications and word processing.**

**Resources have been requested in the programme budget for the next biennium to cover the cost of developing a global computer-based contact and mailing-list system which would enable the Department to target more effectively its printed and other products and services. This system will contain data on contacts maintained by Headquarters units and information centres and services, and would provide a better basis for estimating the production runs required for each title and**

language, In addition, it is also planned to develop a companion system for inventory control of the Department's products.

I must express my concern that the resources available to perform our formidable tasks successfully and effectively are severely limited. In the coming year, therefore, efforts will need to be pursued to obtain extrabudgetary resources to complement those provided in the regular budget, thus enabling us to enhance the effectiveness of our efforts.

For example, one of the most effective ways in which developing countries can be assisted to strengthen their media is to provide opportunities for their young journalists and broadcasters to familiarize themselves with the latest techniques and technology in their fields. The Department of Public Information has begun to explore the possibility of obtaining external support for broadening its modest training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing nations. One possible approach would be to bring the DPI trainees to a regional news agency or other training centre in a developing country for further training at the close of DPI's fall session. Other possible projects, which would also require extrabudgetary support, involve the training of journalists and broadcasters of the front-line African nations as well as a feasibility study for the establishment of a new agency in Namibia after it gains independence.

Of course, in the context of these projects, DPI has been, and will continue to be, guided by the Charter and other mandates given by the General Assembly as well as this Committee.

In my statement thus far I have sounded an optimistic note regarding the work of the Department of Public Information. It is only fair that I do this, first and foremost in recognition of the dedication, loyalty and efforts of the staff of my Department. Despite the considerable obstacles presented by the very process of reform, the selection process, the inadequate accommodation arrangements to which they are still subjected, the unavailability prior to this year of the full appropriation - as a consequence of the financial crisis - and many others, the staff have responded in a magnificent manner to the challenges posed and I wish to pay tribute to them.

At the same time I have to state, with regard to the Department as a whole, that it is still not functioning at its optimal level. I have hinted at some of the reasons for this: we are just beginning to emerge from a long period of sometimes arbitrary financial constraints; the reform process, while almost completed, still has its last stages to go through the introduction of technological innovations, computerisation, and software development and staff training - an indispensable element for the effective functioning of the reformed Department - is also only partially in effect, with much still to be done; the Department still does not have full control of all the means to produce and deliver its outputs and, consequently, cannot in all cases guarantee their timely arrival at their destination.

All of these are issues that need to be addressed within the Secretariat and our efforts will be concentrated in finding adequate solutions to them.

The challenges of international information in the context of multilateralism are endless. The mandates given us are frequently either disproportionate to our resources or too specific, imposing communications strategies and techniques which

often may not be the most appropriate for the objective we are trying to reach or the audience we are trying to target. However, this chronic shortcoming of public information at the United Nations should not prevent us from striving to refine our tools - which are the words, pictures and sounds that convey information - and to design a more efficient approach to reporting and disseminating the news.

The United Nations and our Department of Public Information must make the best use of this unique forum of multilateralism to demonstrate world wide - by their example - that it is possible to achieve four objectives:

- (a) A balanced treatment of international issues as perceived and experienced by the people of the world;
- (b) Broad circulation of the daily stories of all peoples of the world;
- (c) Adherence to technical transmission standards that facilitate information flows within and between countries;
- (d) The imposition of reasonable charges allowing easy and therefore effective access to information systems.

For there can be no real peace without a readjustment in the distribution of technical, financial and human resources in the world. And there can be no real development without a standardization of communication infrastructures, without free expression and exchange of various viewpoints, of human experiences, not only between more developed countries and developing countries, but also among developing countries themselves.

The ability to describe and understand daily experiences from different perspectives goes hand in hand with the blossoming and maturation of national cultures. This ability is enhanced when cultural and media productions from one country become available, through a progressive and mutual understanding, to neighbouring countries and, ultimately, reach international consciousness. These are issues to be confronted world wide.

Already our Department strives to reflect - in the way it carries out its mandates and through its access to international networks of distribution - the plurality of viewpoints and geographic contexts. In our opinion, there is a profound need for nations to ponder the role that a revitalized and modernized media can play in the development process and in the dialogue between societies, as well as in promoting the increasing internationalization of common challenges. In short, we will have to make sure that the debate on the maturation of the media world wide will reach the decision-makers and that the richness of the daily experiences of our human family, whatever their origins, will be conveyed to all.

I look forward to listening to the views and observations of distinguished representatives on the subjects on your agenda. Please accept my very best wishes for a fruitful and productive session of the Committee, which will bring about renewed commitment to the vital task of ensuring more effective information activities on behalf of the Organization.



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