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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 10th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 17 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Motanyane (Vice-Chair) ..... (Lesotho)

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Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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*In the absence of Mr. García González (El Salvador), Mr. Motanyane (Lesotho), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information**  
(continued) (A/68/21 and A/68/315)

1. **Ms. Perceval** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, said that the growing interest of Spanish-speaking peoples in the work of the United Nations had prompted the foundation of the Group, based on the shared conviction that strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and such a group would benefit the Organization's ideals, purposes and principles. Because multilingualism was the principle that united and identified all Member States, all those who considered that languages played a central role in promoting understanding, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity, and believed in multilingualism as a guiding principle of the Organization's activities, were welcome to be observers of the Group of Friends of Spanish.

2. Through the combined use of new technologies and traditional communication media, the Department of Public Information and, in the Spanish-speaking world, the United Nations information centres, conveyed the reality of the Organization to a growing audience in the cause of peace, cooperation and solidarity between peoples. Additionally, the United Nations website was ever more important for the Member States, educational institutions and citizens throughout the world needing information about the work of the Organization. The recent introduction of webcasts of General Assembly and Security Council meetings in the six official languages was a vital contribution to the promotion of multilingualism, as was the global competition for students to write an essay on global citizenship in one of the official languages that was not their mother tongue.

3. It was, however, regrettable that parity among the six official languages was not always observed on the website, despite the Department's mandate from the General Assembly. That concern was even greater in view of the growing popularity of the Spanish-language portion of the website, which, according to the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the Department's news services (A/AC.198/2013/3), had ranked second only to English in volume of traffic in

2012. Such reports should always contain relevant statistics so as to facilitate forecasting in a spirit of transparency and freedom, and to develop specific initiatives for reaching the largest possible number of people.

4. Members of the Group of Friends of Spanish were encouraged by the fact that the draft resolution before the Committee, along with General Assembly resolution 67/292, emphasized the Secretariat's responsibility to mainstream multilingualism in all its communication and information activities, within existing resources and on an equitable basis. The traditional scarcity of resources for implementing linguistic parity appeared to have been overcome. In that connection, however, there was still a need for daily press releases in Spanish, as resolution 67/124 B had requested the Department to deliver daily press releases in all six official languages by means of creative solutions and in a cost-neutral manner. The Group of Friends of Spanish was ready to assist in searching for creative solutions and reworking old models. Above all, the shortage of resources should be dealt with in a manner fair to everyone.

5. The achievement of multilingualism would enhance the primary mission of the Department to provide accurate, impartial and comprehensive information on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations.

6. **Mr. León González** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), emphasized that the issue of information was of essential importance for the States members of CELAC and should be developed in strict compliance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Information activities should be used to promote peace, cooperation and solidarity between peoples, as well as sustainable development.

7. The report of the Secretary-General (A/68/315) reflected the scope of the Department's dissemination of discussions on the implementation of agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (the "Rio+20 Conference"), the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The Department should likewise publicize widely the discussions that had taken place at the high-level meetings held early in the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. In that regard, CELAC was concerned that the Secretary-General's

report did not refer to the high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament, as information on discussions on that subject could contribute to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. CELAC was encouraged by the fact that, as part of its efforts to promote multilingualism, the Department had begun to offer live coverage of General Assembly and Security Council meetings in the six official languages, and that the proceedings of the International Court of Justice would also become part of the United Nations webcast platform.

8. As part of the general debate held during the high-level segment of the current General Assembly session, a number of countries had referred to recent acts of global espionage. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba had stated that such acts were a violation of human rights, State sovereignty and international law.

9. In an ever-changing international environment, CELAC was in favour of spontaneous, rapid electronic communication allowing universal, non-discriminatory and inclusive access to information. It was nevertheless concerned at the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries, underscoring the need to continue the use of traditional methods such as radio and television to transmit the Organization's message. The United Nations information centres did vital work in that regard; they should be provided with enhanced support and should increase their cooperation with other United Nations bodies.

10. CELAC reaffirmed its full respect for freedom of expression and the press, which were essential values and principles of a democratic society. Information media should be used in accordance with the relevant international norms. CELAC therefore expressed its concern at contraventions of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) regulations. Radio frequencies must be used in the public interest and in accordance with the principles of international law.

11. As multilingualism was inherent to the existence of the United Nations, the statement in the Secretary-General's report that press releases could not be produced in official languages other than English and French without additional cost was a matter of great concern. For that reason, the draft resolution under consideration reiterated the request for the delivery of press releases in the six official languages by means of creative solutions, at no extra cost, and in accordance

with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Moreover, equal respect and parity for all the official languages must be achieved, and the financial and human resources of the Department should be more evenly distributed among them, in particular in relation to the United Nations website and social media.

12. CELAC welcomed the creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, and would continue to focus on the application of multilingualism in all the Organization's information-dissemination activities. The work of the United Nations could only be effective if it was adequately publicized. Although information and communication technology (ICT) platforms were developing more and more quickly, millions of people were still excluded from that process. Conveying the United Nations message using a combination of modernity and tradition remained a major challenge. CELAC would continue to work towards that goal on the basis of full observance of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

13. **Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) said that history had shown that freedom of expression and open, transparent communication were essential to strengthening democratic coexistence, promoting development and innovation, and combating corruption. Such flows of information achieved their full potential when the rule of law was observed and when a combination of traditional and new information and communication technologies was utilized. Those technologies provided the means for effective participation by citizens and their use should be extended to all sectors of the population, in particular young people. In that connection, the Government of Costa Rica had hosted the BYND2015 Global Youth Summit in conjunction with ITU. The Summit had called on the international community to provide equitable and universal access to ICTs, as well as to create information and technical knowledge in all the fundamental areas of life.

14. To bridge the digital divide, it was necessary to facilitate access to communication tools, enhance legal certainty and participation by citizens, and ensure respect for freedom of expression, in particular through the creation of institutions and the development of best practices. In that connection, Costa Rica was proud to have been selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to host World Press Freedom Day 2013.

15. One of the main functions of the United Nations was to enhance effective communication and thereby strengthen the three pillars defined in the Organization's Charter. The Committee on Information and the Department had improved their cooperation in that regard. Furthermore, the Department had met increasing challenges with decreasing resources through coordination with other United Nations bodies and civil society in general. Its challenges included the promotion of international understanding and tolerance, and the promotion of multilingualism. It had taken welcome initiatives to achieve a better balance in the use of the six official languages, although much remained to be done. Of particular note for Costa Rica was the recent creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, of which it was a member.

16. **Mr. Wehbi** (Lebanon) said that the mass of information available in the modern world entailed greater responsibilities. Equal access to information should be guaranteed, the voices of those suffering empowered and, most importantly, the values of respect for privacy, confidentiality and dignity preserved. The work of the Department was particularly important, both at Headquarters and through its information centres in the field. It had launched campaigns relating to the Millennium Development Goals, peacekeeping operations and conflict prevention, and such efforts must involve all the different stakeholders.

17. Lebanon acknowledged the United Nations Academic Impact initiative and its global network of universities. Education was a crucial foundation of human development, in particular for young people, and in that regard the United Nations information centre in Beirut and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had assisted in commemorating International Youth Day. Similarly, a team had been formed comprising the Beirut information centre, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture and a Lebanese university, to mark the first International Day of Forests.

18. In conflict-affected countries, collaboration between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Public Information was essential for conveying a clear message on the role of peacekeeping. It was important to utilize both traditional and modern communication networks so as

to reach all communities. In Lebanon, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Public Information Office had been active in enhancing dialogue and understanding through its activities. Likewise, awareness-raising was critical in addressing historical injustice, and Lebanon fully supported the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine. Continued collaboration between the Committee on Information and the Department would become more and more relevant as the peoples and communities of the world became increasingly interconnected.

19. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) emphasized his delegation's full cooperation with the Department of Public Information, which played a pivotal role in disseminating information in the international arena on such issues as conflicts and wars. In its work, the Department expressed the values, purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

20. As the voice of the Organization, the Department took into account the opinions of different groups, based on the principle of multilateralism, since it was expected to reflect a variety of cultures and civilizations in a manner serving the common interests of humanity and fostering human values. The freedoms set out in international instruments should not be interpreted unilaterally. The Department of Public Information played a role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, moving the post-2015 development agenda forward, and addressing the issues of climate change, sustainable development and disarmament, as well as disease prevention. The collective endeavour to find solutions to those problems was reflected in the two reports before the Committee. While his delegation appreciated the reports, tangible efforts should be made to narrow the digital divide between developed and developing countries so that the latter were not deprived of the benefits of sophisticated modern technology.

21. There was also a need to intensify efforts to achieve parity among the six official United Nations languages, particularly in the light of the difficulties experienced by those in developing countries attempting to master foreign languages. Official documents, including press releases, should be available in all official languages.

22. He further commended the activities of the Department in relation to the question of Palestine, the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, and the establishment of a Palestinian State, and welcomed the introduction of direct video coverage of statements given in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

23. Finally, the Sudan called for the strengthening of international efforts in the information and media fields. In that regard, international media institutions should ensure that they respected the principles of credibility, objectivity and accuracy at all times in their reporting.

24. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) said that the work of the United Nations information centres was especially important. With its new Director, the Tokyo information centre acted as the disseminator of critical information about the United Nations throughout Japan.

25. Furthermore, the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development had been held in June 2013, at which the Yokohama Declaration 2013 and the Yokohama Action Plan 2013-2017 had been adopted. The Conference had provided valuable input to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. Two other events of note for Japan had been the Peace Bell ceremony, in observance of the International Day of Peace, and the filming of a Japanese film, *The Human Trust*, in the General Assembly Hall.

26. Japan welcomed the enhanced use of social media platforms by the Organization during the past year. As the United Nations faced a multitude of new challenges with increasingly limited resources, Japan believed that it was necessary for the Organization to improve efficiency and transparency through the rationalization of current resources. In that regard, he reaffirmed Japan's strong support for the Department.

27. **Mr. Ghirani** (Libya) said that his delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to keep abreast of major technical developments in the information and communications fields in providing coverage of United Nations activities, and its cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs in disseminating awareness of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and seeking to achieve international peace and security.

28. Information, in its different forms, had become one of the most important factors in international relations, especially in light of recent huge developments in ICT. The Department, along with the Committee on Information, therefore had the important responsibility of raising awareness of the major issues and challenges facing the international community, by generating interest in informational materials; peace was, after all, created in the mind before it became a reality. It was necessary to strengthen the culture of dialogue between civilizations and religions, and eradicate violence and fanaticism. Awareness of other common challenges should also be raised, including climate change, sustainable development issues, peacekeeping and the suffering of refugees.

29. In a similar vein, international cooperation was required in order to limit the digital divide between developed and developing countries through the organization of training courses. At the same time, the use of more traditional media should continue to be encouraged in developing countries. The role of United Nations information centres should be emphasized, as they were the main bodies disseminating the results of the Organization's activities.

30. Given the importance of multilingualism, press releases should be issued in all the official languages and the number of publications in Arabic should be increased. Cooperation with other United Nations departments was important, as for example in the training programme for Palestinian journalists; indeed, the Department should focus more on the suffering of the Palestinian people, burdened as they were by the occupation. He encouraged coordination between the Department of Public Information, the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya in organizing an exhibition at United Nations Headquarters on the transition from a dictatorial to a democratic regime, including issues such as elections, human rights and the participation of women.

31. Freedom of information in all its forms was one of the most important achievements of the Libyan revolution in February 2011, as demonstrated by the emergence of numerous women's channels and social networking sites, without any official monitoring. In the building of a democratic State, freedom of information was one of the most important phenomena.

32. **Mr. Montilla** (Dominican Republic) said that information was fundamental for spreading awareness of the Organization's work in such important areas as international peace and security, sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Department had done important work in those areas; moreover, the two important draft resolutions under consideration by the Committee highlighted the use of new information technologies and the need to reduce the digital divide between developed and developing countries. Also, the Organization's daily press releases and its website should be made available in the six official languages, without additional cost, in conformity with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

33. In that connection, the recent creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations was a milestone for Spanish-speaking countries, since it would promote greater use of the language in accordance with the principle of multilingualism and would lead to better dissemination of information at the global level, especially to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Multilingualism also strengthened respect for freedom of expression and thought, as exemplified by the Department's continuing efforts to enable persons with disabilities to gain access to the Organization's website in the six official languages. The work of the Department should be further enhanced so as to disseminate information to an ever-increasing audience in the Spanish-speaking world on the activities of the United Nations.

34. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that the United Nations faced the continuing challenge of disseminating its message in the largest possible number of languages, including in areas where access to new technologies was difficult. Despite their ease of use, those new communication platforms were not available to a significant part of the population. It was therefore essential to continue strengthening the use of traditional means of communication in areas where television and radio for example were prevalent.

35. Since ICT played an important role in development and poverty eradication, cooperation mechanisms should be promoted in relation to such technologies so as to reduce the disparities between developed and developing countries. The United Nations information centre in Bogotá was very active in that regard and had provided services and information to more than 6 million people in 2013

alone. Of note was the centre's work with academia and government in the areas of preventive diplomacy, sustainable development objectives and the post-2015 development agenda. It was important to highlight and strengthen the work of all such centres in order to achieve sustainable results.

36. Multilingualism was of particular importance as a guiding principle of the Organization's work, and efforts to achieve parity among the six official languages must continue, as for example in the issuance of press releases, which often appeared in one language only. Although the Department had undertaken a related pilot project, the Secretary-General's report had concluded that press releases could not be produced, even in translation, without additional cost. The Department should make further efforts to devise creative solutions, as requested by the General Assembly, since the achievement of effective results required innovative strategies for working with the academic and volunteer sectors while using existing capacities based on the equitable distribution of resources.

37. He was pleased to note that Spanish was the second most frequently used language on United Nations websites and social media. Nevertheless, Spanish-language materials were still limited in terms of scope and quality when compared to English. Furthermore, it was essential to reintroduce the practice of citing statistics in information-related reports. The creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations was a big step forward and, as a member, Colombia was fully committed to the development of the Group's activities. It was convinced that the Group's aim of promoting understanding between peoples, linguistic diversity and multilingualism would enhance collaboration with the Department and would pave the way for greater cooperation for the benefit of the ideals, purposes and principles of the United Nations.

38. **Mr. Suan** (Myanmar) said that Myanmar attached great importance to the observations of the Committee on Information concerning the credibility of information, press freedom and the use of innovative technology with regard to the work of the Department. It valued the Department's public information work in the areas of international peace and security, human rights, the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

39. The United Nations information centres played a pivotal role in the dissemination of information. Given that the central aim of the Department's news operations was to deliver accurate, objective and balanced news, the Department and the information centres should not be involved in the redistribution of sensitive news reports from sources other than the United Nations, which could have a negative impact on the country concerned.

40. While the United Nations played a fundamental role in ensuring accessibility of information, the digital divide between developed and developing countries still remained. Myanmar therefore welcomed the Department's commitment to ensure that people in developed and in developing countries were informed of its activities by means of both traditional and new communication technologies. It further welcomed the initiative to promote public participation in the "My world" global survey and "The world we want 2015" platform through its various websites in partnership with UNDP and the Millennium Campaign.

41. In Myanmar, the Government had been undertaking a series of far-reaching political, social and economic reforms over the past two and a half years. It was convinced that freedom of the press and information and the emergence of responsible media were essential in building a democratic society and economic development. Media censorship had been abolished in August 2012, and an Interim Press Council had been formed the following month to draft a code of conduct for journalists and to prepare a draft media law with a view to protecting media personnel and settling press disputes. Also, the telecommunications sector had been opened to public investment. All the reform measures introduced had been taken in collaboration with United Nations agencies, local and international media institutions and civil society. Myanmar fully supported the Department's role as the public face and voice of the United Nations.

42. **Mr. Proaño** (Ecuador) said that the Constitution of Ecuador provided that the State should facilitate universal access to information and communication technologies, especially for persons or groups with no or limited access. That principle was important in view of the enormous difference between developed and developing countries in terms of available ICT resources. The Department should make its products available to the widest possible audience to meet its

obligation to the international community, and also to combat prejudiced interpretations of the Organization's work.

43. Information should be made available in all six official languages, in order to contribute to broad, transparent and timely dissemination, rather than being restricted to only the two working languages. In that regard, as a member of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, Ecuador emphasized the principle of multilingualism and noted that Spanish was the second most commonly used language for accessing the United Nations website. However, Spanish-language content should be expanded, and clear statistics should be included in reports on the Organization's information activities.

44. Information analysis in international organizations should be based on trust and respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of States. The recent revelation of an indiscriminate system of mass espionage involving the communications of people throughout the world was not only an infringement of human rights, but a violation of countries' sovereignty, and led to instability in relations between States. The security of one country could not take precedence over the security of others, the human rights of their citizens or the principles of international law. Ecuador was therefore ready to participate in an open dialogue on that subject, and supported efforts to establish an appropriate international legal framework on the inviolability of all electronic communications.

45. **Ms. Rivera** (El Salvador) said that in view of the Department's important role in the dissemination of information on United Nations activities, in particular those carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, it was essential to enhance dissemination mechanisms, including both traditional means and new social and technological networks, so that the public was well informed.

46. Of note was the memorandum of understanding signed between the United Nations and El Salvador in 2003, which had enabled the country to participate in peacekeeping missions around the world. El Salvador recognized the Department's work on the dialogue among civilizations, and formed part of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative launched by the Secretary-General in 2005 and designed to enhance knowledge and relations between

countries by means of cooperation among cultures and religions. The basic themes of the Alliance of Civilizations should continue to be promoted, especially given its importance for the post-2015 development agenda. Greater involvement by the Department was required, in order to provide a more creative and dynamic approach to the promotion of dialogue and negotiation and resolve conflicts, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

47. While information technology was vital for the work of the United Nations, much of the population in developing countries still did not have access to such resources owing to the existing digital divide. El Salvador would continue and strengthen its support for initiatives relating to multilingualism. In that regard, enhancing the cooperation between the United Nations and the Group of Friends of Spanish would benefit the ideals, purposes and principles of the United Nations and the well-being of peoples.

48. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon) said that he shared the vision of the United Nations regarding information, as embodied in the work of the Department and the network of information centres, in the face of social and political challenges, problems of sustainable development, and communication by the Department with civil society through both traditional and new media. The work done by the Department demonstrated the Organization's basic commitment to the promotion of peace and human rights, freedom of the press and information, and an independent media.

49. Cameroon fully supported freedom of information, as demonstrated by the existence of 15 television channels and 300 radio broadcasters in the country. Journalists were free to practise their profession and, since 2002, the Government had provided financial support to all communication sector firms.

50. Access to information was also a very important concept for Cameroon, which had facilitated access to ICT by providing tax breaks for newcomers to the sector and, beginning in 2007, had adopted a national strategy for the development of such technologies. It had initiated a project to provide multi-purpose community telecentres designed to enhance Internet access for the population and narrow the digital divide. The country adhered to the principle that Internet access for all was essential, with a short-term goal of

providing Internet coverage for 40 per cent of the population by 2014. Similarly, the mobile telephone sector was booming as a result of the liberalization of the telecommunications sector.

51. While those developments had broadened access to information, as for example in regard to the Government, a digital divide persisted between urban and rural areas. In its efforts to overcome that problem, Cameroon had opened a rural telemedicine centre that represented a significant step forward in the modernization of the health system. Similarly, Cameroon hosted a United Nations information centre in Yaoundé, which was a reliable source of up-to-date information for government leaders and representatives of civil society. The centre should be allocated greater funding so as to continue its work.

52. A good information society was one that brought people together, not one that was addicted to electronic games. Such a society would enhance awareness of the major challenges ahead, find solutions to those problems and serve the cause of peace and progress.

53. **Mr. Messone** (Gabon) said that his delegation praised the efforts of the Department to make the United Nations more visible in the world at large in the areas of sustainable development, peacekeeping and human rights, particularly in relation to awareness-raising through social media during the recent high-level meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development.

54. Gabon welcomed the Department's active use of new technologies to create a dialogue with young people and to generate an ever-wider audience for its activities. For that reason, it also encouraged the United Nations Academic Impact initiative. Similarly, it considered the issue of multilingualism to be a priority and the implementation of that concept as a binding obligation. As the Chair of the Group of Francophone Ambassadors at the United Nations, he also expressed satisfaction at the recent creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish.

55. Despite the efforts made to ensure equal treatment of all the official languages, it was essential that the available resources should be distributed fairly so that the voice of the United Nations could be heard more clearly throughout the world. As the bridge between the Organization and the general public, the Department should have the logistical and human capacity to promote multilingualism, a concept

embodied in the holding of the competition “Many languages, one world”. In the field of peacekeeping, taking multilingualism into account in the selection and recruitment of commanders would also help to establish the climate of trust required for peacekeeping missions to succeed. In that connection, Gabon was particularly keen to receive full factual information on the conflict situations in Africa. Generally speaking, new approaches should be devised to ensure equality among languages at all levels. The accessibility and credibility of the United Nations system depended on it, and Gabon was willing to work with all stakeholders to achieve that goal.

56. **Mr. Kim Ju Song** (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) said that public information activity was the most powerful means of promoting peace and security, social unity and sustainable development. Recognizing the work done by the Department, especially in developing countries, he said that current challenges were related to control of communication technology by a small number of countries and the ever-growing gap between developed and developing countries.

57. Certain countries were monopolizing modern mass media to impose their values on developing countries and to cause social disorder. An example was the creation of Radio Free Asia by the United States of America, aimed at causing the internal disintegration of regimes in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulated the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. If public information activities were to contribute to peace and security, social unity and sustainable development, priority should be given to the establishment of a new world information and communication order based on impartiality and objectivity. Measures should be taken to address the imbalance of world information in terms of its quantity, one-sidedness and selective content. Furthermore, importance should be attached to building public information and communication capacity in developing countries. In order to address the imbalance, developed countries and United Nations organizations must assist developing countries in their efforts to strengthen public information infrastructure, intensify international cooperation and transfer modern technology and investment.

58. The Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was making consistent efforts to develop national public information activity through

the introduction of the latest communication systems and technologies. It would join the international undertaking to establish a new information order and achieve world peace and security, social harmony and sustainable development.

59. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the State of Palestine) reaffirmed his appreciation for the efforts of the Department in implementing many important programmes, including the special information programme on the question of Palestine. That programme was instrumental in raising awareness in the international community of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the efforts for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to both the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

60. He further commended the Department, especially its Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section, for organizing the annual international media seminars on peace in the Middle East (of which the latest had been held in Istanbul, Turkey), for updating the permanent exhibit on the question of Palestine at United Nations Headquarters, and for its activities in commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

61. The Department of Public Information also continued to provide assistance to Palestinian broadcasters and journalists through its annual training programme. In line with General Assembly resolutions, the Department should expand the collection of audiovisual materials on the question of Palestine and the organization and promotion of fact-finding news missions to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. Those activities required sufficient funding if they were to be fully implemented.

62. Unfortunately, Israeli forces continued systematically to target Palestinian journalists and media outlets. Freedom of expression continued to be suppressed through an ongoing campaign of arrests and use of excessive force. His delegation therefore reiterated its call to the Committee and relevant international organizations to step up their efforts to protect Palestinian and foreign journalists and to demand a halt to Israel’s violations of international law.

63. The telecommunications and information technology sector was very important because of its vital role in the development process. Despite Israeli

restrictions imposed on the sector, which deprived the Palestinian people of the right to direct access to services, the Palestinian leadership was making tireless efforts to build networks accessible to all and to help people to overcome geographical and physical impediments to normal life.

64. The State of Palestine was committed to the peace process that would end the Israeli occupation and enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights to self-determination and return. The State of Palestine should be admitted as a full Member of the United Nations, and take its historical and rightful place among the community of nations.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*