

**REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-SECOND SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 21 (A/42/21)



UNITED NATIONS

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NOTE

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CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 10	1
II. ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION	11 - 17	4
A. Opening of the session.....	11	4
B. Election of officers.....	12	4
C. Admission of a new member	13	4
D. Organization of the work of the Committee	14 - 15	4
E. Other business	16 - 17	5
III. SUBSTANTIVE SESSION	18 - 61	6
A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work	18 - 28	6
B. Statement by the Chairman	29	9
C. Consideration of substantive questions.....	30 - 60	9
1. 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	30 - 44	9
2. Continuation of 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	45 - 57	12
3. Evaluation and follow-up on the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications	58 - 60	15
D. Recommendations	61	16

ANNEXES

I. Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of its substantive session	26
II. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information	30

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 communication;;

"(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 on Information 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 1/ and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182, decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67 and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its thirty-sixth session (resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980). The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational 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.

3. At its thirty-sixth session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee 2/ and its recommendations, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its thirty-seventh session (resolution 36/169 B of 16 December 1981).

4. At its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee 3/ and all its recommendations and urged their full implementation, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its thirty-eighth session (resolution 37/94 B of 10 December 1982).

5. At its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the

Committee 4/ and all the recommendations contained in paragraph 94 A, affirmed the requests and appeals reproduced therein and urged their full implementation, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182, and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session (resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983).

6. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee 5/ and all the recommendations annexed to the resolution, affirmed the requests and appeals therein and urged their full implementation, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its fortieth session (resolution 39/98 of 14 December 1984). The General Assembly also appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico, bringing the membership to 69.

7. At its fortieth session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee 6/ and its recommendations contained in paragraph 139 of the report, affirmed the requests and appeals therein and urged their full implementation, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182, and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-first session (resolution 40/164 A of 16 December 1985).

8. At its forty-first session, the General Assembly took note of the comprehensive report of the Committee on Information 7/ and urged the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraph 1 of the resolution, requested that the recommendations relating to the activities of the Department of Public Information be implemented within existing resources, and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-second session, (resolution 41/68 A). The Assembly also appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee (resolution 41/68 C), bringing the membership to 70.

9. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria	Ethiopia	Mexico
Argentina	Finland	Mongolia
Bangladesh	France	Morocco
Belgium	German Democratic	Netherlands
Benin	Republic	Niger
Brazil	Germany, Federal	Nigeria
Bulgaria	Republic of	Pakistan
Burundi	Ghana	Philippines
Chile	Greece	Peru
China	Guatemala	Poland
Colombia	Guinea	Portugal
Congo	Guyana	Romania
Costa Rica	India	Singapore
Côte d'Ivoire	Indonesia	Somalia
Cuba	Italy	Spain
Cyprus	Japan	Sri Lanka
Denmark	Jordan	Sudan
Ecuador	Kenya	Syrian Arab Republic
Egypt	Lebanon	Togo
El Salvador	Malta	Trinidad and Tobago

Tunisia
Turkey
Ukrainian Soviet
Socialist Republics
Union of Soviet
Socialist Republics

United Kingdom of Great
Britain and Northern
Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Venezuela

Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire

10. The Committee held its organizational session on 16 March 1987 and its substantive session, the ninth session of the Committee, from 15 June to 2 July 1987.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

A. Opening of the session

11. The Committee held its organizational session at United Nations Headquarters on 16 March 1987. It held one meeting.

B. Election of officers

12. In accordance with the principle of geographic rotation, the Committee elected by acclamation the following officers for the period 1987-1989:

Chairman: Mr. Pablo BARRIOS (Spain)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Aneesuddin AHMED (Pakistan)
Mr. Ricardo LAGORIO (Argentina)
Mr. Nabil OSMAN (Egypt)

Rapporteur: Mr. Gerhard HAENSEL (German Democratic Republic)

(A new bureau will be elected at the organizational session of the Committee in 1989.)

C. Admission of a new member

13. Malta was welcomed as a new member of the Committee by acclamation.

D. Organization of the work of the Committee

14. The Committee agreed to a proposed list of questions to be considered, which formed the basis of the agenda of the substantive session:

- (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 examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evaluation 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

Consideration of questions in this area would include reports on:

- (i) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/68 A and the recommendations contained therein;
- (ii) Co-operation of the Department of Public Information with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and regional news agencies of developing countries;

- (iii) The Department of Public Information training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries;
- (iv) Situation regarding the staff of the Department of Public Information in posts subject to geographical distribution;
- (v) Charges for use by Member States of video tapes, audio tapes and news photographs;
- (vi) The Department of Public Information as the focal point of all information activities of the United Nations;
- (vii) Curtailment of radio programmer of the Department of Public Information and improvement in the distribution of taped radio programmes;
- (viii) The effectiveness and timeliness of the UN Chronicle;
- (ix) Public information programme of the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 (see annotation 4 of the provisional agenda).
- (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

15. The Committee's attention was drawn to that part of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1984-1985 dealing with section 27 (Public information) (A/41/313/Add.1, table 27.1 and paras. 27.1-27.5). The comments of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-sixth session are contained in paragraph 65 of its report. 6/

E. Other business

16. The representative of Portugal, on behalf of the group of Western European and other States, recommended that the Committee on Information hold its substantive session for a period of two instead of three weeks, that is, 15 June to 25 June. The representative of Guatemala, on behalf of the Group of 77, endorsed the programme of work for the Committee established by the General Assembly, the period 15 June to 2 July, for the substantive session of the Committee. The representative of the German Democratic Republic proposed leaving the decision of the dates of the substantive session to the Committee's Bureau, which would discuss the matter and submit a common decision. The representative of Portugal agreed with the proposal of the representative of the German Democratic Republic.

17. The Chairman informed the Committee that the delegation of Burma and the Argentine newspaper association ADEPA had requested and been granted observer status at the meetings of the Committee.

III. SUBSTANTIVE SESSION

A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

18. The substantive session, the ninth held by the Committee on Information, took place at United Nations Headquarters from 15 June to 2 July 1987. The Committee held 17 meetings.

19. At its opening meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda (A/AC.198/115):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Statement by the Chairman.
4. Consideration of substantive questions.
5. Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

20. The Committee agreed, on the basis of the decision of the Committee at its organizational session and the agreement reached upon by the Committee's Bureau, that the consideration of items 4 and 5 of its agenda could proceed in accordance with the following schedule proposed by its officers:

Item 4

From 15 to 17 June

(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

From 18 to 24 June

(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

Consideration of sub-items in this area would include:

- (i) Report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/58 A and the recommendations contained therein;
- (ii) Report on co-operation of the Department of Public Information with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and regional news agencies of developing countries;

- (iii) Report on the training programme of the Department of Public Information for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries;
- (iv) Report on the situation regarding the staff of the Department of Public Information in posts subject to geographical distribution (A/AC.198/116);
- (v) Report on the charges for use by Member States of video tapes, audio tapes and news photographs (A/AC.198/119);
- (vi) Report on the Department of Public Information as the focal point for the formulation and implementation of information activities;
- (vii) Report on the curtailment of radio programmes of the Department of Public Information and improvement in the distribution of taped radio programmes (A/AC.198/117);
- (viii) Report on the timeliness and effectiveness of coverage publications produced by the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/118);
- (ix) Preliminary draft of the public information programme of the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 (A/AC.198/121);
- (x) Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its twenty-sixth session 8/ on the public information programme and on the triennial review of the implementation of its recommendations made at its twenty-third session on the work of the Department of Public Information.

25 and 26 June

(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

Report on the programme and activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (A/AC.198/120).

Item 5

From 29 June to 2 July

Adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-second session

21. The Committee decided to establish a consultative group. At the 12th meeting, the Chairman announced the establishment of an open-ended working group.

22. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Gabon, Nicaragua, Oman, Sweden and Uruguay. The Holy See, Switzerland, the European Economic Community, the League of Arab States, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Organization of the Islamic Conference also took part in the session as observers.

23. Representatives of the following bodies of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system attended the session:

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The Inter-American Press Association, non-governmental organization in category II, also participated in the session as an observer.

24. At the 7th meeting, on 19 June, the Officer-in-Charge of the Monitoring, Analysis and Evaluation Division made a statement. At the same meeting, the representative of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, a non-governmental organization in category I, also made a statement.

25. At the 9th meeting, on 22 June, the President of the United Nations Correspondents Association made a statement.

26. At the 17th meeting on 2 July, the Chairman of the Group of 77 introduced a set of draft recommendations submitted by that Group to the Committee (A/AC.198/L.38) and outlined the background of the document. In introducing this proposal, the Chairman of the Group of 77 referred to the Chairman's working paper (A/AC.198/L.37) and the amendments thereto presented orally by the Chairman and requested the Chairman to withdraw both proposals. The Chairman of the Committee agreed to the request of the Chairman of the Group of 77 and both proposals were withdrawn.

27. The representative of Portugal asked that the recommendations contained in the above document, as amended, be put to a vote. The draft recommendations were subsequently adopted by a roll-call vote of 50 to 1, with 13 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour: Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, German Democratic Republic, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

28. The representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, Egypt, Bulgaria and Japan made statements in explanation of vote after the vote. Statements were also made by the representatives of Argentina and China.

B. Statement by the Chairman

29. The Chairman of the Committee made a statement at the opening of the substantive session (see annex I).

C. Consideration of substantive questions

1. 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 (item 4 (a))

30. In her opening statement, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information stressed the importance of an informed public opinion for the future of the United Nations. There had to be a better understanding of the Organization's purposes and principles. Member States would perhaps be more inclined to support the United Nations if they felt the support of strong public opinion.

31. The Under-Secretary-General said that a spirit of co-operation and accommodation in the Committee was needed for the work of the Department of Public Information in the future. In this connection, actions taken with the full support of the Committee would provide the needed impetus for carrying out a realistic programme for the Department and promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department. The Under-Secretary-General also expressed the view that the Committee's work would provide the Department with guidance for carrying out its mandate.

32. Most delegations hailed the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 41/68 A as a positive step and expressed the hope that it could lay the groundwork for even broader agreement on the Committee's mandate. Generally, delegations stressed the importance of grasping the present spirit of co-operation and of reaching consensus in the Committee. While agreeing that consensus was the desirable objective, some representatives stated that it would not be meaningful if consensus were attained by avoiding controversial issues.

33. Many delegations were hopeful at the prospects of a closer co-operation and dialogue with the Department of Public Information. In this connection, delegates expressed the view that the informal presentations organized by the Department prior to the session had given Committee members an informative close-up look at how the Department implemented information mandates. Several delegations expressed the desire for this type of briefing and dialogue to be continued on a regular basis.

34. Many members of the Committee supported the promotion and establishment of a new world information and communication order. They pointed to the imbalances that existed in today's world in the field of information, dominated by a powerful information industry. Advances in communications technology had exacerbated the gap between developed and developing countries. Several delegations emphasized the effects of information and communications in an interdependent world on the economy, trade, culture and development of a nation. They deplored the fact that information disseminated about developing countries was perceived from a perspective that was not always fair or accurate. Some delegations, stressing

inequities in the world, linked the establishment of a new world information order to the new international economic order, as a step in reversing the dependent status of the developing countries. Some delegations said that a new world information and communication order should not be viewed as a restrictive process but rather as a process aimed at enhancing information infrastructures and the flow of information among all countries on an equal basis. In this connection, they referred to the definition of a new world information and communication order as an "evolving and continuous process", while some remarked that this definition should not entail a departure from any of the basic principles underlying the order. A number of delegations said that in formulating objectives it was important, according to some Committee members, to take into account the diverse economic, social and cultural situations among developing countries. In supporting a new world information and communication order, several delegations emphasized that information could play an important role in fostering a climate of understanding among peoples of the world.

35. Several delegations stressed that freedom of information and expression was paramount, as expressed in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These delegations recalled that at its first session the General Assembly had referred to freedom of information as the touchstone of all freedoms. Existing imbalances in the field of information should be corrected without diminishing basic rights and freedoms. Other delegations said that there was no contradiction between the establishment of a new world information and communication order and freedom of information. On the contrary, diversification of information sources would increase rather than restrict this freedom. A number of delegations remarked that information should be aimed at fostering peace, development and disarmament. Several members emphasized the link between freedom of information and responsible journalism. One delegation considered freedom of information provided in a prompt and accurate way to be a condition for other human rights and freedoms. The view was also expressed that the removal of obstacles to the free flow of information should include the right of journalists to seek information within and beyond national boundaries. A few delegations said that certain countries used freedom of information as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and made reference to specific radio broadcasts. One delegation maintained that these broadcasts provided information that would otherwise be unavailable. One delegation suggested exploring the possibility of the Secretary-General soliciting the views of Member States on questions concerning freedom of information and ownership of the media in order to help strengthen principles endorsed by the General Assembly. Two delegations criticized a decision by one Committee member's Government to restrict access of journalists to certain governmental press areas and to deprive them from the passes usually issued to foreign journalists. In their view that constituted a discriminatory act running counter to the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The delegation mentioned in this regard said that such measures were taken for security considerations and should not be considered as running counter to the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

36. In order to facilitate concrete results, which could achieve consensus, a number of delegations suggested avoiding controversial proposals and instead concentrating on the activities of the Department of Public Information. The original mandate of the Department is to promote a better understanding of the United Nations and its objectives among all peoples of the world. In their view, it was now especially important for the Committee to provide a few guidelines for

United Nations public information activities. One delegation said that the Department's central task was to convey the purposes of the Charter and the achievements of the Organization.

37. In the light of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 9/ a number of delegations, referring to this Group's report, emphasized the need for the Department to adhere to its mandate as contained in pertinent General Assembly resolutions. Many delegations agreed that the communication infrastructures of the developing countries needed to be improved and strengthened to reverse the growing imbalance in the content and dissemination of information. In this regard, there was strong overall support for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). It was an essential, practical framework for international co-operation that should be given more resources. The Department of Public Information was urged by several delegations to increase its co-operation with UNESCO and the Programme. Some delegations pointed to contributions they had given, both bilaterally and through the Programme, for the promotion of information infrastructure in developing nations.

38. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the training programme for young journalists and broadcasters organized by the Department of Public Information. This was a useful, practical programme that could contribute to strengthening information capabilities of developing countries.

39. Several delegations expressed support for the Declaration of the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries at Harare concerning a new world information and communication order (see A/41/697-S/18392, annex). In this regard, they referred to the recent meeting at Harare of information ministers of non-aligned countries at which that Declaration was reaffirmed and new measures adopted to improve the situation of non-aligned nations regarding information and communication issues (see A/42/43, annex).

40. The co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies was important, according to many delegations, and should be strengthened. Some delegations suggested that such co-operation should be extended to other agencies, such as the Eco-Pool, and the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries. In this connection some delegations from developing countries mentioned measures already under way or planned by their Governments to provide free radio time for the transmission of United Nations radio programmes produced by the Department of Public Information (Argentina, China, Egypt, India, and Nigeria).

41. Several delegations expressed support for a restructuring of the Department of Public Information, as recommended by the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 10/ provided that it would bring greater efficiency and effectiveness to United Nations public information activities. Several members favoured the acquisition by the Department of modern information equipment. Some delegations supported the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to consolidate information activities in the Department, 10/ while one delegation said that this question needed further study since it touched on the mandates of other intergovernmental bodies.

42. A number of delegations emphasized the importance of United Nations publications. One delegation cited Development Forum as an example to be followed, as it portrayed the efforts of the peoples of the world in the area of development. Some delegations said that the timeliness of United Nations publications and other information material and the availability of language versions should be improved. Some delegations noted that improvements had been made in radio and television programmes produced by the Department. In this connection, it was the view of some delegations that the Department should continue such programmes, particularly on the subjects of the policies and practices of apartheid, the illegal occupation of Namibia and the question of Palestine. Other Committee members regretted the curtailment of some radio programmes. One delegation stressed the importance of objective and accurate reflection of delegates' statements in press releases and requested that addenda or corrigenda be published in the language of the press release when the delegate so requested.

43. In view of the complex challenge facing the Organization, many delegations considered the activities of the United Nations information centres as invaluable tools for the dissemination of information about the United Nations. The centres should be given more resources and modern equipment for operational activities. Several delegations emphasized that while continuing to co-operate with other United Nations agencies in the field, the centres must maintain their functional autonomy to perform effectively. In this regard a number of delegations expressed reservation about the suggestion to consolidate information centres with other United Nations field offices, fearing that it would have negative effects on the information capabilities of the centres. One delegation questioned whether administrators in the economic and social fields would be equally qualified to carry out the information priorities set by the Committee on Information.

44. The majority of delegations expressed satisfaction with the work of the Department of Public Information, observing that it had to work under severe budgetary restrictions. A number of delegations said there was a need to redress the geographical imbalance that existed in the personnel of the Department, especially at the higher levels. Other delegations stated that geographical imbalances should be redressed in the Secretariat as a whole, and not on a department-by-department basis.

2. Continuation of 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 (item 4 (b))

(a) Report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/68 A and the recommendations contained therein

45. The Under-Secretary-General indicated that reports on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations had been circulated. The Department was making every effort to meet the requests made by the Committee. Further information would be provided in reports on subsequent items.

(b) Report on co-operation of the Department of Public Information with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and regional news agencies of developing countries

46. The Under-Secretary-General noted that the Department had continued to co-operate with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and to monitor its important meetings. The Department has invited journalists and the heads of the radio and television services from the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies to participate in the editors' round table and other meetings held at Headquarters. The Department also sends news dispatches to the various agencies of the Pool on subjects of interest to them. In this connection, the Department has also co-operated with the Eco-Pool by dispatching news covering the activities of the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund and, during the forty-first session of the General Assembly, on the work of the Second Committee. The Under-Secretary-General also pointed out that the United Nations Information Centre at Belgrade had formed a working relationship with the co-ordinating agency of the Pool. A recent initiative undertaken by the Department was to establish co-operation with the radio Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries.

47. The Under-Secretary-General noted that the Department had been requested to organize a workshop in 1987 for the familiarization of news agencies of developing countries with modern technology of relevance to news agencies and for the standardization of teaching methods and syllabuses and to produce training manuals in various languages for the training centres of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies. The Department had consulted with UNESCO on the matter and had been informed that there was a provision in its current programme of activities for training in the application to communication of new technologies and for support for the organization of workshops on the establishment and improvement of computerized systems in the news agencies of the developing countries. However, owing to financial constraints it might not be possible to implement fully this programme in 1987. A number of possible forms of collaboration were being explored with the Pool in the area to be covered by the proposed workshops.

48. A number of delegations indicated strong support for co-operation between the Department and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies as well as with regional news agencies of developing countries. Such co-operation was viewed as an effective method for combatting the imbalanced flow of information. One delegation called such co-operation a high priority.

(c) Report on the training programme of the Department of Public Information for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries

49. The Under-Secretary-General stated that the Department of Public Information had always attached considerable importance to this programme. Since 1981, the Department had organized six training programmes for 101 journalists from 73 developing countries. The seventh training programme was being organized to take place during the forty-second session of the General Assembly.

50. A number of delegations expressed continued support for the Department's training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. One delegation suggested that for the recruitment process for the programme a closer consultation with the permanent missions should be sought. One delegation

suggested that a group of friends of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information might be established.

- (d) Progress report on the situation regarding the staff of the Department of Public Information in posts subject to geographical distribution (A/AC.198/116)

51. One delegation recalled that recommendations had been adopted calling upon the Secretary-General to take steps to increase representation in the Department of developing nations and other groups of underrepresented nations. In this connection, the same delegation asked why in the report the representation of one group of countries was buttressed at the expense of another group of developing countries. Two delegations regretted that a whole regional group in the Department was underrepresented and that that situation should be corrected. Several delegations believed that the question of geographic distribution of posts could only be studied on a Secretariat-wide basis and that the Committee should not examine the question specific to one department.

- (e) Report on the charges for use by Member States of video tapes, audio tapes and news photographs (A/AC.198/119)

52. The report was received by the Committee without substantive comment.

- (f) Report on the Department of Public Information as the focal point for the formulation and implementation activities

53. Many of delegations supported the conclusion that the Department of Public Information should be the focal point for all information activities. Two delegations felt that a study to analyse the costs and the necessary funding involved in such a process would be useful.

- (g) Report on the curtailment of radio programmes of the Department of Public Information and improvement in the distribution of taped radio programmes (A/AC.198/117)

54. One delegation expressed concern at the suspension of certain radio broadcasts in Spanish and Arabic, particularly about women, and at the way in which taped broadcasts were being disseminated. Some other delegations regretted that the financial crisis had necessitated the curtailment, suspension or reduction of radio programmes, in particular those used by developing countries. One delegation assured the Department of its readiness to assist efforts under way to overcome any difficulties in the timely distribution of those programmes. One delegation offered to follow the example of other countries by providing air-time, free of charge, for the transmission of United Nations broadcasts.

- (h) Report on the timeliness and effectiveness of coverage publications produced by the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/118)

55. A number of delegations called for a reduction in the backlog of the production of the United Nations Yearbook. Some delegations called for improvements in the compilation, printing and distribution of the UN Chronicle and its continued publication as a means of informing public opinion about United Nations activities. One delegation criticized production delays in the Arabic version of the publication. Some delegations expressed support for the valuable

contribution made by Development Forum and one delegation cited it as a model for other social and economic publications because it deal with substance as well as with news. One delegation appealed to the specialized agencies for a stable and sound basis for this publication.

- (i) Preliminary draft of the public information programme of the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 (A/AC.198/121)

56. The Under-Secretary-General made a statement providing preliminary views of the Department of Public Information on the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 (see annex II).

- (j) Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its twenty-sixth session concerning public information

57. The representative of the Office for Programme Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation, reporting on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the in-depth evaluation of the work of the Department and the review by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) at its twenty-sixth session of the programme performance report for the biennium 1984-1985, drew attention to the specific recommendations on those two subjects adopted by CPC 11/ and endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-first session. The Committee took note of the observations and comments of CPC.

3. Evaluation and follow-up on the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communication (item 4 (c))

Report on the programme and activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (A/AC.198/120)

58. Several delegations expressed the desire to see a cost-benefit analysis made by the Department of Public Information on a sample of United Nations information centres to give the Committee a picture of the effectiveness of the United Nations information centres.

59. A number of delegations recognized the function of the information centres as an extension of the Department of Public Information in the field. Centres should work closely with the media, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and others to produce and disseminate information, supported by the activities of the Department at Headquarters. Several delegations pointed in this regard to defined target audiences, particularly the youth, in the countries in which centres are located. In connection with the report prepared on the programme and activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, one delegation said that given the level of available technology and available resources, it was necessary to concentrate on a few fundamental questions and to create information programmes and activities that would allow the communication of those questions. It was better to do a few things well than one million a mediocre way. Some delegations said that the Department, in co-operation with other bodies, would disseminate information regarding the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (General Assembly resolution S-13/2 of 1 June 1986, annex).

60. A few delegations suggested that the Department of Public Information, in co-operation with UNESCO, could arrange for the convening of another round table dealing with information infrastructures. One delegation offered to host such a round table on a new world information and communication order in 1988.

D. Recommendations

61. The Committee on Information submits the following recommendations to the General Assembly:

1. All countries, the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned should co-operate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, and based, inter alia, on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, guaranteeing diversity of sources of information and free access to information and, in particular, the urgent need to change the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communication, as the principle of sovereign equality among nations extends also to this field, and intended also to strengthen peace and international understanding, enabling all persons to participate effectively in political, economic, social and cultural life and promoting human rights, understanding and friendship among all nations. The ongoing efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which retains the central role in this field, to eliminate gradually the existing imbalances in the field of information and communication and to encourage a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information in accordance with the relevant resolutions of that organization, adopted by consensus, should be reaffirmed.

2. Fully aware of the important role that the media world-wide can freely play, particularly under the present situation, it is recommended that:

(a) The mass media should be encouraged to give wider coverage to the efforts of the international community towards global development and, in particular, the efforts of the developing countries to achieve economic, social and cultural progress;

(b) The United Nations system as a whole should co-operate in a concerted manner, through its information services, in promoting a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities and potential of the United Nations system, in all its endeavours, in accordance with the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, with particular emphasis on the creation of a climate of confidence, the strengthening of multilateralism and the promotion of the development activities in the United Nations system;

(c) All countries should be urged to extend assistance to journalists for the free and effective performance of their professional tasks.

3. Aware of the existing imbalances in the international distribution of news, particularly that affecting the developing countries, it is recommended that urgent attention should be given to the elimination of existing inequalities in and all other obstacles, both internal and external, to the free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, ideas

and knowledge by, inter alia, diversifying the sources of information and respecting the interests, aspirations and socio-cultural values of all peoples, as a step towards the attainment of a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information.

4. The United Nations system as a whole, as well as the developed countries, should be urged to co-operate in a concerted manner with the developing countries towards strengthening the information and communication infrastructures in the latter countries, in accordance with the priorities attached to such areas by the developing countries, with a view to enabling them to develop their own information and communications policies freely and independently and in the light of their history, social values and cultural traditions, taking into account the principle of freedom of the press and information. In this regard, full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which constitutes an important step in the development of these infrastructures, should always be emphasized.

5. It is recommended that the need be stressed to promote the access of the developing countries to communication technology, including communication satellites, modern electronic information systems, informatics and other advanced information and communication facilities with a view to improving their own information and communication systems in accordance with the specific conditions prevailing in each country.

6. It is recommended that the Department of Public Information, in co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, explore further ways and means of strengthening co-operation and co-ordination with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, with the EcU-Pool of the news agencies of non-aligned countries as well as with the regional news agencies of developing countries, as this constitutes a concrete step towards the elimination of existing imbalances. It is also recommended that the Department of Public Information establish adequate co-operation with the developing countries in the audio-visual field, especially with the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries.

7. Reaffirming the primary role that the General Assembly is to play in elaborating, co-ordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information and emphasizing the central role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the field of information and communication, it is recommended that the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned should be urged to give that organization adequate support and assistance in the field of information and communication. The Department of Public Information, in particular, should co-operate more regularly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, especially at the working level, with a view to maximizing the contributions of the Department to the efforts of that organization in further promoting the attainment of a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information.

8. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 12/ which provides that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression and that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and

regardless of frontiers, and article 29, which stipulates that these rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, should be recalled.

9. The Department of Public Information should be requested to disseminate information about the United Nations activities in the field of human rights. The Department of Public Information should be requested to make broad use of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which will be observed in 1988, for the dissemination of information on human rights.

10. The United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, should aim at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already taken within the United Nations system, including, in particular:

(a) Development of human resources as indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries, and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(b) Creation of conditions that will gradually enable the developing countries to produce, by using their own resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, specifically for radio and television broadcasting;

(c) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries.

11. The Secretary-General should be requested to ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the priority areas such as those stated in section III, paragraph 1, of General Assembly resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980 and other pertinent resolutions of the Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information, so as to ensure an objective and more coherent coverage of, as well as a better knowledge about, the United Nations and its work. It is recommended further that no new public information units independent of the Department be created in the Secretariat of the United Nations.

12. The Secretary-General should be requested to provide the Committee on Information at its substantive session of 1988 with a 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.

13. The Department of Public Information should be requested to continue its co-operation with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as with intergovernmental organizations and regional organizations, and should

monitor, as appropriate, important meetings of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as of intergovernmental and regional organizations, with a view to the promotion of a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information.

14. In the light of the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa, the Secretary-General should be requested to ensure that the Department of Public Information continues to do its utmost in bringing to the attention of the international community the real dimensions of the plight of the African people and the tremendous efforts of the African countries towards recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community, with a view to increasing its contribution to alleviating this human tragedy. In this regard, the Secretary-General should be requested to ensure that the Department of Public Information continues to do its utmost to disseminate widely and to publicize the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. 13/ In this respect, the efforts of the Department of Public Information should be commended.

15. The Department of Public Information should be urged to give the widest possible dissemination of information pertaining to acute world economic problems in general and, in particular, the severe economic difficulties of the least developed countries and the need for strengthening the international economic co-operation aimed at resolving external debt problems of developing countries.

16. The relevant paragraphs of General Assembly resolution 59 (I) of 14 December 1946, in which the Assembly stated, inter alia, that freedom of information is a fundamental human right, must be reiterated.

17. The relevant provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed at Helsinki on 1 August 1975, and those of the Concluding Document of the meeting of representatives of the participating States of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held at Madrid from 11 November 1980 to 9 September 1983, should be recalled.

18. The relevant provisions of the Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace 14/ should also be recalled.

19. The final documents of the Conferences of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Jakarta from 26 to 30 January 1984 15/ and Harare from 8 to 12 June 1987 16/ should be recalled.

20. The Conference of Ministers of Information of States members of the Organization of African Unity, held at Addis Ababa in March 1985, which expressed its conviction of the importance of a new world information and communication order, should be noted.

21. The relevant resolutions on the question relating to information of the Fourth Islamic Summit Conference, held at Casablanca in January 1984, 17/ and the Fifth Islamic Summit Conference, held in Kuwait in January 1987, 18/ should be recalled.

22. The relevant section of the Political Declaration adopted by the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Harare from 1 to 6 September 1986, 19/ should be recalled.

23. The Department of Public Information should continue to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting for all material produced by the Department and should promote, to the greatest possible extent, an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world, inter alia, the cultural, humanitarian, economic and social programmes of its specialized agencies, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur.

24. The Department of Public Information should, in the context of the review of its role, performance and method of work, consider the feasibility of applying modern technologies for the collection, production, storage, dissemination and distribution of information materials, including the use of satellite facilities, having in mind the possibility of owning one in the future. The Secretary-General should be requested to submit such a feasibility study, including its financial implications, to the Committee by the next organizational session, at the latest.

25. In this regard, attention is drawn to the success attained by the ARABSAT, BRASISAT, INSAT-1B, MORELOS and PALAPA satellite systems and to the CONDOR project, designed to promote national and regional integration, and the improvement of communication infrastructures.

26. In the light of the present financial difficulties of the Department of Public Information, it is recommended that the Department consider expanding the programme of telephone news bulletins that are paid for by its users. The Committee on Information notes with appreciation the positive response of those countries that are assisting the United Nations in resuming the short-wave broadcasts through their respective national networks free of charge. In the light of this successful co-operation, the Department of Public Information is requested to continue its contacts with interested countries and broadcasting organizations, in both the developed and developing countries, especially those with recognized capabilities, to solicit this type of co-operation and to report to the Committee at its substantive session in 1988 on the outcome of those contacts. The Department of Public Information should be requested to ensure that these radio programmes are objective and professional.

27. The Committee on Information takes note with appreciation of regional efforts, especially among the developing countries, as well as co-operation between developed and developing countries to further develop their media infrastructure, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information with a view to encouraging a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information.

28. The Department of Public Information should continue its annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. The Committee on Information notes that the workshop for the familiarization of news agencies of developing countries with modern technologies, as recommended

by the Committee 20/ and approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/68 A of 3 December 1986, has not been organized owing to financial constraints. The Department of Public Information is once again requested, in co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, to ensure the continuation and expansion of this kind of activity. In this connection, the Department should continue to examine the possibility of allocating a week of the programme for a visit of journalists and broadcasters from developing countries to one of the developing countries that expresses readiness to receive them for the purpose of acquainting them with the ways in which information on the United Nations is received and utilized.

29. In order to enhance awareness and understanding of the lofty objectives of the United Nations, the Department of Public Information should provide assistance, in an objective and equitable way, to educational institutions of Member States for teaching about the structure of the United Nations, as well as the principles and purposes enunciated in its Charter. In order to implement this recommendation, the Department should continue to organize seminars for educators and education policy makers.

30. Within the World Disarmament Campaign, the Department of Public Information should encourage coverage aimed at the promotion of a climate of understanding, confidence and co-operation, peace and development, and the enhancement of human rights.

31. The Department of Public Information should be requested to continue to cover adequately and accurately all United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, and to report to the Committee on Information at its substantive session of 1988.

32. The Department of Public Information should continue its activities and dissemination of information on the policies and practices of apartheid, giving due attention to the unilateral measures and official censorship imposed on the local and international media with regard to all aspects of this issue.

33. The Secretary-General should be requested to intensify his efforts in order to alert world public opinion to the illegal occupation of Namibia and to continue to disseminate adequately and accurately, with the full assistance of the United Nations Council for Namibia, the Department of Public Information and the United Nations system as a whole, information relating to the struggle of the oppressed people of Namibia for self-determination, national independence and freedom as well as to the need for full and speedy implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibia.

34. The Department of Public Information should further cover adequately and with impartiality the activities of all United Nations peace-keeping operations, in view of the paramount importance of such operations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

35. The Secretary-General should be requested to ensure the continuation and improvement of United Nations radio and television programmes and, inter alia, to strengthen the Middle East/Arabic Unit as the producer of Arabic television

and radio programmes. The Department of Public Information should implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983 on the Caribbean Unit. In view of the importance of United Nations radio programmes in the Asian and European regions, the functions of the Asian and European Units should not only be maintained, they should also be expanded.

36. The unique function of the United Nations information centres as one of the most important means of disseminating information about the United Nations among the peoples of the world is recognized. In this regard, United Nations information centres should continue to assist press and information media in their respective countries in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly and should intensify direct and systematic communication exchange with local information and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations in a mutually beneficial way. Every effort should be made to establish close co-ordination with other field offices of the United Nations system, particularly those of the United Nations Development Programme, in order to avoid duplication of work. Co-ordination with other United Nations offices should take into account the functional autonomy of the United Nations information centres. The Department should ensure open and unhindered access by all people to all United Nations information centres and to all materials distributed through the centres.

37. The Department of Public Information should disseminate information concerning the decisions of the United Nations dealing with acts of terrorism in all its forms, taking into account particularly General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985, as well as the relevant statements of the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

38. The Secretary-General should continue to strengthen and accelerate his efforts to develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the activities of the Department of Public Information, particularly in the priority areas determined by the General Assembly, taking into account the need to improve data collection procedures, analysis of feedback data and end-use of the Department's materials, and maximizing the efficiency of the operations in all their aspects.

39. Future reports of the Department of Public Information to the Committee on Information and to the General Assembly, in particular on new programmes or on the expansion of existing programmes, should contain:

(a) More adequate information on the output of the Department in respect of each topic included in its work programme, which forms the basis of its programme budget;

(b) The costs of the activities undertaken in respect of each topic;

(c) More adequate information on target audiences, end-use of the Department's products and analysis of feedback data received by the Department;

(d) A statement detailing the priority level that the Secretary-General has attached to current or future activities of the Department in documents dealing with such activities;

(e) The Department's evaluation of the effectiveness of its different programmes and activities, with particular reference to the need constantly to review internal programme elements and activities.

40. The steps taken by the Department of Public Information in redressing the imbalance in its staff should be noted. The Department should continue its efforts to that end. The Secretary-General should take appropriate steps to increase the representation of underrepresented developing countries and of other underrepresented groups of countries, especially at the senior levels, in conformity with relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, and to submit a report to the Committee on Information at its substantive session in 1988.

41. Member States should be called upon once again to make voluntary contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Economic and Social Information.

42. Note is taken of the report 21/ on the curtailment of radio programmes and the improvement in the distribution of taped radio programmes produced by the Department of Public Information, and the Department is requested to take steps to improve their distribution, to examine its current effectiveness and to report to the Committee at its substantive session in 1988. In this connection, the Department of Public Information should explore adequate measures to resume radio programmes that have been curtailed, bearing in mind the need to ensure effective utilization, timeliness and maximum audience impact.

43. Note is taken of the report on the programme and activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, 22/ and the Secretary-General is urged to continue his efforts to secure a sound and stable financial basis for Development Forum, the only inter-agency publication of the United Nations system that concentrates on development issues. The Secretary-General should continue to ensure that Development Forum retains its editorial policy of intellectual independence, thus enabling this publication to continue to serve as a world-wide forum in which diverse opinions on issues relating to economic and social development can be freely expressed.

44. In order to ensure a better image of the United Nations and to promote a more accurate understanding of its activities, the Department of Public Information should guarantee daily coverage of all United Nations meetings through issuance of the daily press releases and the weekly news digest in all working languages. The Department of Public Information should continue to co-operate closely with and provide assistance to the members of the United Nations Correspondents Association, taking into account their needs and requirements, especially in the area of press releases, which provide them with the necessary raw material for adequate reporting. The Department of Public Information should be requested anew to use the official languages of the General Assembly adequately in its documents and audio-visual documentation in order to better inform the public about the activities of the United Nations. The Department of Public Information should again be requested to make balanced use of the two working languages of the Secretariat in conformity with General Assembly resolution 2 (I) of 1 February 1946 in its written and audio-visual documents and to provide the two press sections with the means of producing and distributing press releases and, accordingly, to

arrange appropriate staffing. The Department of Public Information should co-operate with delegations when they request that their views be reflected with accuracy and objectivity, by issuing addenda or corrigenda in the language of the press releases.

45. The Department of Public Information should improve the timely distribution of its materials to subscribers and United Nations information centres, particularly the UN Chronicle, a major source of information on the United Nations to its recipients, and should reassess the effectiveness of this publication and report to the Committee on Information at its substantive session in 1988.

46. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to continue and intensify his efforts to explore all possibilities of securing adequate resources for the continuation of the World Newspaper Supplement project. The Supplement should be properly labelled to identify its sources.

47. It is recognized that free distribution of materials is necessary in the public information activities of the United Nations but, as demands increase and whenever it is desirable and possible, the Department of Public Information should actively encourage the sale of its materials.

48. It is requested that the recommendations relating to the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat be implemented within existing resources.

Notes

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

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21).

3/ Ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1).

4/ Ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2).

5/ Ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21).

6/ Ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/40/21).

7/ Ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21).

8/ Ibid., Supplement No. 38 (A/41/38 and Corr.1 and 2).

9/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

10/ Ibid., para. 44, recommendation 37.

11/ Ibid., Supplement No. 38 (A/41/38 and Corr.1 and 2), para. 94.

Notes (continued)

12/ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

13/ General Assembly resolution S-13/2, annex.

14/ General Assembly resolution 33/73.

15/ A/39/139-S/16430, annex.

16/ A/42/431, annex.

17/ A/39/131-S/16414 and Corr.1, annex II, resolution 15/4-P(IS).

18/ A/42/178-S/18753, annex IV, resolution 1/5-C/IS).

19/ A/41/697-S/18392, annex, sect. I, paras. 294-312.

20/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21), para. 69.

21/ A/AC.198/117.

22/ A/AC.198/120.

ANNEX I

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of its substantive session

In opening this substantive session of the Committee on Information I would like first of all to renew my full disposition as Chairman to work with the highest degree of commitment and impartiality and to co-operate closely with my excellent friends and colleagues from the Bureau as well as with the new Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, Mrs. Paquet-Sévigny, whom we have all started to admire professionally and to esteem personally.

In my address to the Committee during the organizational session in March this year, I pointed out that I wished the Committee could follow a new path. I now renew the invitation directed then to all members of the Committee to make a great collective effort in order, not only to re-establish consensus, but to give a new direction to our work, in a pragmatic, productive and action-oriented line. We are faced with the urgent task of obtaining the result of a set of useful and realistic recommendations that help to improve the efficiency of the Department of Public Information and the image of our Organization.

A number of hopeful circumstances can help us in our task, General Assembly resolution 41/68, recommended by the Special Political Committee for adoption by the Assembly in December last year, contained substantial progress, bringing us nearer the objective of a re-establishment of consensus, which we are all eager to obtain. Following a policy of transparency and direct co-operation with all delegations, the Department of Public Information has organized a number of comprehensive briefings, which we have all applauded and which have been extremely useful in order to prepare our work in depth. A negotiating team composed of representatives of the Group of 77, the Eastern European Group, the Western Group and China has been regularly meeting under my chairmanship and with the invaluable assistance of the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Halim, and it has obtained the agreement you all know, concerning the duration of the substantive session of the Committee as well as on a group of recommendations concerning the Department of Public Information. This effort must be continued and I intend, if the Committee agrees with it, to keep on using this negotiating pattern from the very first days of our session in order to try to finish our work successfully and therefore to offer a set of recommendations that are supported by all of us.

The Department of Public Information plays a fundamental role in the process of reform under way in the United Nations and we should all contribute to its most efficient reorganization.

The theme of a crisis of multilateralism and of a loss of credibility of the United Nations, especially in the developed countries, has been frequently heard. The United Nations has, however, a rich array of achievements in many fields that should be emphasized by the Department in order to improve the image of our Organization in those places where this task is more necessary.

The careful selection of target audiences for the material of the Department should be coupled by a selection of information products, reduced in number in order to improve the quality and impact of those selected. Directly linked to this objective is the task of making the Department of Public Information the focal

point of all the information activities of the Organization, with a view to the consolidation of all the information units within the Department.

In our recommendations and in order to improve the Department we should emphasize its necessary modernization. The Department should rely on modern technologies for the recollection, production, storage and distribution of information materials.

Professionalism, objectivity, editorial independence and reflection of all points of view are all central qualities that should preside over the work of the Department, on which we all agree and which we could underline once again.

The subject of priorities of the Department has been extensively discussed during the informal negotiations. In this respect, I would like to stress the primal importance that the Committee should give to the activities of the Department concerning economic and social development. The activities of the United Nations in the economic and social field constitute the major part of the efforts of the Organization and could very well be the basic nucleus of the Department, contributing decisively to the response to the capital challenge of the North-South disparity in our days.

As concerns the programmes on specific political questions under way, I would like to point out, as I have already done on other occasions, the need for objectivity, moderation and balance, which should inspire the coverage of these questions. In my intervention in March, I stated that the Committee should approach the most conflicting subjects from a perspective which aimed at a final compatibility of positions and at an agreement which shouldn't exclude any country.

Finally, we should stimulate a very open policy of the Department with regard to the co-operation with the media, encouraging in the most imaginative way, co-production projects and all other co-operation formulas. Argentina, China, Egypt and Nigeria have established a very positive and generous co-operation with the Department as concerns its short-wave radio programmes and we should strive to obtain the widest geographical extension of this co-operation in order to include major radio organizations of the developed countries too.

As concerns the controversial subject of a new world information order seen as an evolving and continuous process, I also pointed out in my first intervention as Chairman of the Committee that, in line with UNESCO, we should follow a new approach to the problem, of a pragmatic character, based on concrete measures of help to the information infrastructures and to the development of human resources of the developing countries.

Our starting point in this area, as in the recommendations directly related to the Department, should be the urgent task of development. In order to redress the imbalances and inequalities that exist between North and South in information and communications only one real path exists: a great effort of the international community to help the developing countries to have the necessary human and technological resources in the information field.

Even if in this field the major effort corresponds to UNESCO, our Committee could also make a contribution, within its possibilities, by producing a group of positive and practical recommendations on which we could all agree.

In the first place, we have the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the importance of which, as concerns the strengthening of information infrastructures in the developing countries, is paramount. I would like to invite all members of this Committee to reflect on the possibilities of a greater support to this Programme, studying also the scope of its co-ordination with the rest of the Organization.

Besides the IPDC, we count a great number of international co-operation programmes in the field of information and communications on the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. In the informal discussions we have been holding, a suggestion was made that the Department might issue a catalogue containing precise information on all the existing programmes at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, which could be a useful instrument for all Member States.

The programme of training of journalists from the developing countries, annually organized by the Department, as well as the workshop on familiarization with modern technology for the press agencies from developing countries, should also be carefully examined and we could perhaps study the possibility that the Department, within its limits, could expand these programmes, in co-operation with prestigious specialized institutions. The necessary human resources capabilities and a substantive professional level of personnel constitute basic elements to ensure the development of information and communications systems of the developing world.

In order to obtain the best coverage of the realities of the third world in the media of the developed countries and in order to void risks of trivialization, sensationalism or insufficient journalistic coverage, the Committee in co-operation with the Department should study in depth the problems of World Newspaper Supplement and similar initiatives. Programmes and exchanges, which could bring the media of the developed world in closer contact with the realities of the developing countries, could be envisaged.

The co-operation of the Department of Public Information with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies should merit all our attention. In a recent statement on communications and the United Nations during the annual meeting of the International Press Institute at Buenos Aires, the Director-General of TANJUC, Mr. Saranovic pointed out:

"Today, there are no restrictions on the work of the Pool, nor is it exposed to outside pressures. But it does face an objectively limiting factor, namely the lack of qualified personnel, equipment, telecommunication channels. Therefore, more important than all discussions and resolutions is now assistance to the faster development of the least developed media, in order that democratic relations in the flow of information could genuinely be established and replace the rhetoric on equality, a more just and better balanced flow of information on 'an evolving and continuous process'."

In another part of his statement, Mr. Saranovic summed up the dramatic situation that we face in our work in this area in the following way:

"It would be an illusion to believe that the new information order can be established only by resolutions passed by the United Nations, UNESCO or other major international organizations, or those adopted at international forums ...

The media in the developing countries lack personnel, equipment etc. ... The resolving of these questions would bring the information order within sight, without bickering, round tables, resolutions and declarations of which there are more than enough already."

The quotations I have just transcribed outline perfectly the feeling of frustration that I think exists among many members of this Committee in front of the lack of results of an ideological debate that has deeply divided us in the past and faced with the absence of practical action in order to meet the challenge of such urgent and real needs, described by Mr. Saranovic.

I would finally like to touch upon freedom of information and upon the constructive and practical work in which I invited the Committee to engage in March in order to prevent and reduce the number of violations against freedom of information. We also face here clear imbalances and inequalities in the flow of information between countries and within countries, between groups and, above all, between Governments and individuals, who, on so many occasions, are deprived of information, voice and means of expression, by ideological, sexual, political, religious or racial motives. It would also be an illusion to think that this sad situation could be changed by the resolutions or declarations that we would here adopt.

As Chairman of this Committee, and in these opening moments, I feel that the most positive contribution I might suggest to you in this field is to insist on the universal character of freedom of information. On many occasions in our past discussions, freedom of information has appeared as a value associated with the Western world, when, in fact, it is a universal asset that cannot be described as Eurocentric. Freedom of information is an historical achievement to which all men are associated and which still necessitates, as in the past, countless and heroic sacrifices and long and painful efforts for its final establishment in all societies and in all consciences.

If we all aspire to redress all the present imbalances and inequalities, we have to be conscious of the fact that not only the developed countries should actively contribute to the correction of these imbalances, but also of the fact that the basic price of all our efforts resides on information and press freedom and on intellectual freedom as a whole.

ANNEX II

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information

Among the objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are social and economic development, the enjoyment by men and women of their basic human rights, free access to information and the right of peoples to self-determination. Each year, these essential conditions for the maintenance of peace in the world and security for the world's people form the basis of the mandate and the programmes of activities of the Department of Public Information.

The Department's mandate thus entails:

- (a) Reaffirming and explaining in updated terms the principles, the orientations and the activities of the United Nations;
- (b) Treating these subjects in terms and in formats that are understandable and easily accessible to the peoples of Member States, the various units of the Secretariat, the agencies of the United Nations system and delegations;
- (c) Producing information material or having it produced externally and disseminating it in keeping with the standards prevailing around the world;
- (d) Establishing communications links around the world with as many interest groups as possible, both existing and in formation.

The 1980s have been a difficult, indeed crucial, decade for the United Nations. From a structural and financial point of view, its activities as a whole, and even its very existence, have been called into question. The dearth of political achievements and the proliferation of parallel activities without any central planning, and an unprecedented duplication of duties have revealed the aging nature of the Organization and have gradually caused an increasing number of Governments to question the value of multilateralism as a tool for peace and stability.

As the Secretary-General observed last year to an audience of correspondents in New York, "the credibility problem of the United Nations arises mainly from the inability of Member States to make the Organization work". That is a view he has also presented officially to the delegations in the General Assembly, warning them that the crisis in multilateral co-operation has brought the world "perilously close to a new international anarchy".

The current crisis of the United Nations has had a devastating impact on the public; this has been deplored in all quarters, even by its staunchest supporters. These effects have included:

- (a) A deterioration of the Organization's image. As a mere reflection of the Organization, the Department has functioned without any focus, dissipating its energies in carrying out a great number of parallel activities and producing a

great number of outputs, without any preliminary or post facto evaluation and without adequate funding. As a result, the Department of Public Information is facing a threefold crisis: managerial, financial and policy;

(b) A diminishing quality of its outputs, the underutilization of staff and the use of obsolete tools;

(c) Considerable delay in the adoption of computerized technology and in the use of the latest technologies in printing and electronic production. The Department has also lagged behind in the areas of translation, art direction and the use of computer graphics, all of which are essential in the communications field. As a result, the Department is almost totally out of touch with everyday realities in the countries that it is supposed to serve and with the latest techniques for communicating with the world.

The objective of the United Nations in the area of communications cannot and should not change year after year. The basic mandate of the United Nations should not be influenced by daily ups and downs, and this is also true for the basic objectives of most of the agencies.

The basic communications objective of the United Nations, i.e. the message that the Organization wants to convey to the peoples of the world about its activities in the medium term, can and must be adjusted in response to short-term situations, the successes, failures, political developments and priority projects of the system as a whole.

It is quite natural, for instance, that at the beginning of a new decade we should think about the future generations that by the year 2000 will know nothing about the two World Wars, or about the media environment which by the year 2000 will have turned our planet into a small village linked by cables and satellites.

In this telescopic view of a world born after 1945, where the media will only strengthen and emphasize not only what unites the world's peoples, but also what makes them different, we cannot be content in the area of communication with simply reproducing the records of the General Assembly or releasing information in the hope that billions of people will seek it out every day and be eager to go straight to the source, that is, the technical reports of committees and sub-committees of international bodies, whichever they may be.

The interest and value of the communication programmes of the Department of Public Information will depend on its ability to sum up and reflect the work, the activities and the raison d'être of the United Nations, taking into account and respecting the concerns and the interests of the peoples that we try to reach, who are the sole judges of the effectiveness of the United Nations.

The final objective of the communication and information programmes of the United Nations is to restore the United Nations to its unique position in the world as the main agent for the development of countries and defender of human rights, which is the only way to maintain peace and the only guarantee for the future of mankind.

Those who stand to benefit from this process are the citizens of the world. They must come to recognize this fact; in other words they must perceive the activities of the United Nations as an advantage for them, as something that benefits them personally.

Only then will the United Nations emerge as a winner.

A conceptual framework is needed in which to deal with the gradual and relative decline of resources in the 1980s; with the increasing number of pressures on and requests to the Department of Public Information from the General Assembly and the entire system; and with the modern media environment - competitive by nature - which calls for concentration. The programme of activities should be placed increasingly within a general conceptual framework, easily identifiable, accessible and remembered by all.

This broad and flexible conceptual framework will have not only (a) to carry and support credibly the identity of the United Nations; (b) to reflect and to strengthen the Organization's unique role as the exclusive instrument for peace, security, development and freedom; but also (c) to incorporate any specific activity requested on a biennial basis.

In order to ensure the cohesion, the relevance and the visibility of the programmes of action, it will be necessary to make sure that every one of them reflects and is inspired by this general framework. The latter should become the principle and the objective, the premise and the conclusion to any communication activity.

Further, it will be necessary that programmes and events, whatever form they take, reflect a style that is unique to the United Nations, a style that subtly reveals the permanent task of conciliation and peacemaking undertaken by the United Nations.

In such a framework, two objectives stand out, namely, development and freedom - the development of territories and of social and economic conditions, and the freedom of peoples and individuals. Any issue-oriented activity can be dealt with from the standpoint of making optimum use of resources.

In that perspective, it will be possible to plan individual programmes, regrouping of programmes, and the juxtaposition of activities in order to reinforce the main point, to promote support, sympathy and the participation of the peoples of the world.

In order to convey the message of a well-managed world Organization as complex as this one - where conflicts appear to arise frequently - to different audiences which do not enjoy the same access to, or show the same interest in or the same level of knowledge about, United Nations activities - in some cases ignoring its very existence - it will be necessary to explore two main approaches:

- A. "Information";
- B. "Promotion".

Each one will pursue the same two objectives:

- (a) Maintaining existing support;
- (b) Developing new support.

A. Information

Even before the "feasibility" studies are completed and all the possibilities before us have been explored, it is safe to say that it would be pretentious and counter-productive for the United Nations and the Department of Public Information to position themselves in 1990 as a "medium" offering an international public service in radio, live television broadcasting and daily news reporting. Even if the United Nations had every new technology at its disposal today, it would cost several hundreds of millions of dollars over the next five years to be able to provide a specialized multi-media service operating "live" and in two languages.

We will have to see in the autumn, after the completion of our reviews, how the Department of Public Information can hope to position itself internationally as a "small news agency" in which the written press, radio and direct access to raw information could, in particular, play a new role. As regards the broadcasting of images, television already sets an example in this respect.

In this perspective, the professional processing of information, hard work and technology are closely related. The search for co-financing arrangements should be pursued. Translations and local adaptations would only enhance efficiency and credibility.

The key to this first strategic approach is professionalism and speed. The very survival of the Organization depends on this. These first two conditions depend exclusively on the political and administrative will of those in charge. As to access to technology, it can be bought, financed and co-financed.

B. Promotion

The second strategic approach relies on the parallel creation in a professional, orderly manner, without hesitation or second thoughts, of a department composed of international experts in the conduct of public relations projects, community relations, relations with the media, relations with Governments, multi-media writing, art direction and management of co-productions and external productions.

The links between the two strategic approaches must remain on the professional level. Briefings, access to central documentation, agendas, exchange of action sheets and other contacts are everyday occurrences. But the two functions are separate and independent. They complement each other, but are distinct. Mistaking one for the other leads to confusion in the mind of the public and to systematic bias in the treatment of information.

The range of media and means is very wide both for the information outputs and the promotional outputs. Once again it will be necessary to deepen our penetration and to strengthen our impact, not to multiply the means. In that area, the constraints are mainly financial and professional.

No medium (whether publication, radio, television, non-governmental organizations, United Nations information centres, United Nations association, posters, stamps, seminars, round tables, exhibitions or data banks) can be an end in itself.

Each project must therefore be evaluated, developed and launched in the light of a budget, a topic, an audience, a distribution network, a timetable and a specific objective.

Any project that fails to take these pre-conditions into account is a total waste of human resources. The main losers are the United Nations and the peoples of the world.

On the matter of United Nations information centres, if the present situation should continue, it is obvious that the Department of Public Information will have to rethink its policy on regional presence. In accordance with the General Assembly's recommendations in 1986 and the undertaking given by the Secretary-General in 1987, a rationalization and a strengthening of the information centres will have to be completed before 1990. While the choice of activities and the administrative authority rest with the Department, these centres will have to become more dynamic, and be provided with the necessary professional and financial resources.

The United Nations information centres perform a difficult and undervalued task. Their role is to gather, organize, interpret and disseminate information. Their efforts must be focused, not diluted and spread thin in countless disconnected activities. They must also be able to rely on improved regional and central co-ordination, so that they are able to have a real impact.

The constraints which the centres face are varied: management, leadership, professional competence and finance. There is still a great deal that needs to be done. By the end of 1987, I will have met with three quarters of the Directors of these centres. There is a need to forge ahead with the computerization of the centres; half of that process should be completed by the spring of 1988.

To put off this process would be a false economy.

In regard to the non-governmental organizations and the United Nations associations, a full review of their status, degree of involvement, areas of interest, and capacity to carry out common projects would help optimize their links with the Department of Public Information. It is up to the Department to convince these organizations and associations of the value of its programmes and to increase the support for its priority programmes. Co-financing is not to be ruled out. The main difficulty in this area is the lack of target programmes and leadership on the part of the United Nations Secretariat and the Department. A new course must be set for the Department's activities.

The lack of co-ordination in the timing of activities with other Secretariat units and other agencies of the system that deal with the associations and the non-governmental organizations is another obstacle to making better use of available resources.

In this area, too, computerization is a "must".

The United Nations Secretariat accounts for a large part of the Organization's annual budget. Given the Department's telephone communications, its written correspondence, its guided tour operations, the services it provides to delegations, committees and correspondents, the facilities it provides for foreign journalists from the written and electronic press, the speakers bureau, its training programmes, its library services, its programme of periodical and annual publications, and the exhibitions and public events it sponsors, there is much room for confusion. An in-depth review of all these activities needs to be carried out. In this area, everything is important, but nothing is essential.

In the mean time, a new order of priorities needs to be established, taking into account the potential for self-financing and the potential impact. An organization can very well provide countless services that nobody will ever hear of. Would it not be better to provide just 10 services that the whole world will know about through pictures and articles?

Here also it is a question of defining responsibilities and viewpoints, and gauging resources. Without our even realizing it, resources intended for programmes are being spent on free services.

In the area of interdepartmental and inter-agency services, the necessary studies have not been undertaken. However, they will have to be carried out quickly, for there is much that needs to be done to work out arrangements for outside or internal financing, so as to take greater advantage of the activities of departments and various agencies. But until we find a way to ensure a more balanced distribution or concentration of resources in the field of information, promotion and public relations within the Secretariat itself, and in the relevant committees and bodies, it will be difficult to project a coherent image of the Organization as a whole. In 1987, in the Secretariat alone, 40 per cent of the appropriations for communication activities is being managed and spent outside the Department of Public Information.

It goes without saying that these outside efforts are not any better regarded than the Department's own activities. Everything in the United Nations seeks the lowest level.

While this decline goes on, the pressures exerted on the Department increase. Like all departments, the agencies are affected by the financial and professional crisis of the United Nations.

The demands and requests that come in from all quarters, without any relation to an annual programme, take up a great deal of the time of the staff. Only a few large agencies that are well structured and efficient are experimenting today by

exchanging financial resources, programmes and staff with the Department in a professional context.

There is a need to seek out concerted action and new approaches to financing.

As for support services, the situation is the same. The Department of Public Information must have around-the-clock access to translation, art direction, computer and reproduction services; its daily effectiveness depends on it.

The Department of Public Information should have priority access to such services and the means to enforce deadlines, or, alternatively, it should have internal and external services of its own.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the United Nations must endeavour to polish its image by marshalling the resources of its political sector, communications sector, and the Office of the Secretary-General. We will have to think further to see what can be done to refine its strategy.

A programme of by-lines should be started, for the written and electronic media, not only for the use of the Secretariat but also for other components. If one is not proud of using one's name, then what can one be proud of? Additional resources will be necessary unless private financing can be obtained.

Internal communication: This sector, which does not fall within the mandate of the Department and which is at present non-existent, needs to be developed, either within DPI or elsewhere. But here again, it is impossible to professionalize public programmes if every staff member of the United Nations does not share the general purposes of the Organization, or if staff members are simply not informed of them.

United Nations staff members are the primary ambassadors of the Organization, the main sources of information about its daily activities.

The pre-condition for the beginning of a five-year programme is the institution of modern methods of management and supervision. The Department of Public Information should be in the vanguard of the movement to reorganize the Secretariat.

Later this year, the Department should be in a position to propose several options for managerial systems.

These should include:

- (a) Strategic planning;
- (b) Evaluation and administrative reports of the Department of Public Information and the committees;
- (c) Staff and budget management;
- (d) Planning and management of automation systems.

It appears, after two weeks of this session, that all the members of the Committee on Information recognize the urgency of establishing a coherent, relevant, co-ordinated and efficient type of communication programme. The United Nations expects it. So do the peoples of the world.

It is up to all of us who are here, you as delegates, the Department of Public Information, as the operational unit, to assure that the image of the United Nations as an institution, of its services and of its system, will be solidly implanted in the public mind.

The role that you play, as an established group, is all the more important because the United Nations, under its mandate, has no other power than the power to convince and to persuade, to seek and to nurture the support of the world's peoples, to move them to action.

This task that has been entrusted to the United Nations hinges fundamentally on information, communication and projecting a positive image. This is precisely the mandate that the Department of Public Information has to fulfil.

How is it then that the budget of the Department of Public Information for 1986-1987 is the lowest ever in relative terms? And yet the list of its activities keeps on growing. Those activities have fallen flat to be sure. But if the United Nations really has a mandate to persuade, if the Department of Public Information really has a mandate to inform and to communicate, if a committee like yours really has a mandate to set the course to be followed in the field of communication, then we will have to find the time this year to discuss how to restore the balance between programming, financing, technology and professionalism.

Committees such as yours will also have to familiarize themselves, several times a year, with the work accomplished by the Department and with the structure of its programmes.

The sole raison d'être of my Department and office is to serve the citizens of the world, the Secretariat, United Nations bodies and your Committee.

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