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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 12th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Poels (Vice-Chair). (Belgium)
later: Mr. Drobnjak (Chair). (Croatia)

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In the absence of Mr. Drobnyak (Croatia), Mr. Poels (Belgium), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 53: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/71/21, A/71/227, A/71/383 and A/71/383/Add.1)

1. **Ms. Pires** (Timor-Leste), speaking on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, said that, in keeping with the core principle of multilingualism, the group strongly encouraged the Department of Public Information to continue producing work in Portuguese. Not only was it one of the world's most spoken languages and the most spoken in the southern hemisphere, with some 250 million speakers in nine countries over four continents, it also had one of the highest growth rates in terms of its usage online and in social media, and of interest among language learners. The importance of the language should be appropriately reflected in the United Nations communications strategy. The role played by the Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio, in particular during the selection process of the new Secretary-General, deserved to be highlighted. The Department should endeavour to create advantageous synergies between the Portuguese-speaking world and the Unit and its multimedia platforms. It would find ready partners in the member States of the Community.

2. The United Nations information centres and regional information centres were doing valuable work. Given the significant global reach of the Portuguese language, it was appropriate to reiterate the call for the long-awaited establishment of an information centre in Angola, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/243.

3. Just as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau had maintained the full Portuguese version of its website in order to reach the widest audience, the Department of Public Information had done commendable work in publishing translations, organizing exhibits and producing videos in Portuguese on important topics like sustainable development, climate change and the success of former slaves, and it should expand its activities in Portuguese in both digital and print formats. One could not overlook the importance of

reliance on the traditional means of information and communication, which continued to be the most used worldwide and in the Portuguese-speaking world.

4. **Mr. Al Khaniny** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that it supported the efforts of the Department of Public Information, in spite of its limited material and human resources, to spread the United Nations message across the globe using all existing forms of media. Spoken by over 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide, Arabic had a historic leading role in facilitating communication between peoples and nations and served as a rich repository of culture and science. Nevertheless, it did not enjoy linguistic parity with the other official United Nations languages: many documents were not yet distributed in Arabic, a dearth also apparent on the Department's website.

5. In order to convey the Organization's message of peace, security and sustainable development, human rights, human progress and rejection of extremism and hateful rhetoric, the Department must rely upon both traditional and modern media to disseminate accurate information about obstacles to those objectives. In particular, the plight of people living under occupation must be highlighted at a time when the Palestinian people, who had been suffering under Israeli oppression and aggression for over 50 years, continued to be subjected to flagrantly unlawful unilateral measures. The Department of Public Information and other relevant United Nations entities had done well to uncover the harsh realities of Israeli occupation practices and to counter Israel's misinformation campaign.

6. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information should be provided with the necessary financial and human resources to attain her goals, foremost of which were to spread the Organization's message and objectives worldwide and to achieve linguistic parity.

7. Speaking in his national capacity, he said his Government believed that the Committee on Information should establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding, predicated on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. Under its Vision 2030 plan, Saudi Arabia

was working to bring about a profound transformation of culture and media, alongside its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It sought to promote the values of excellence, discipline, justice and transparency in the media industry and make it more competitive globally. It also supported youth initiatives that used media as a tool to combat extremist thought, and launched regular media campaigns promoting dialogue and peace. Several media outlets were also conducting campaigns condemning domestic violence and promoting participation by women in all sectors of society. In an effort to increase media transparency, Saudi Arabia took care to circulate information through official media in traditional and non-traditional formats in several regional and global languages.

8. **Ms. Pucarinho** (Portugal) said that spreading relevant information was crucial to increasing knowledge and ownership of United Nations activities and inclusive participation in them. In order to meet its challenges, the Organization needed new and bigger audiences. The Department of Public Information had helped to amplify the visibility and impact of United Nations action through its work with many languages across various platforms.

9. Recently, United Nations Radio and the United Nations information centres — both strategic media vehicles — had publicized reliable information in a multitude of languages on the new manner of selecting the next Secretary-General, thereby fulfilling the commitment to transparency, inclusiveness and accountability. In addition, the Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio had consistently found new ways of collaborating with other entities working in Portuguese throughout the world; and key information centres had also done far-reaching work using the language.

10. The target audience of the Department of Public Information was the world public, and thus it must be commended for having translated into 45 languages, including Portuguese, the materials it had produced on the Sustainable Development Goals, some specifically directed at young people in universities; or for having jointly organized the recent multilingual exhibit at Headquarters on the rise to power of African slaves in India. Portugal looked forward to having many other United Nations flagship materials produced also in

Portuguese, given its importance as a truly global language, and stood ready to cooperate closely with the Department to further its use.

11. **Mr. Giacomelli da Silva** (Brazil) said that the Department of Public Information should continue to disseminate the ideals and activities of the United Nations in as many languages as possible, taking into account the linguistic diversity of countries. Also, a combination of traditional means of communication such as radio, television and the press and of new digital media such as websites and social media should be used to reach the public. Whereas access to the Internet remained limited in a number of countries, radio was available to 75 per cent of all households in developing countries, and should therefore be given special attention in the Department's strategic planning.

12. Although parity among the Organization's six official languages was crucial, it should be recalled that only 40 per cent of the global population spoke those languages. The Department should ensure greater use of such widely-spoken languages as Portuguese, Bengali, Hindi, Kiswahili and others. Accordingly, Brazil firmly supported the work of the Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio, which took a multimedia approach to disseminating information to over 16 countries. The United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro, the oldest such centre in Latin America and the most important source of information about the United Nations in Portuguese, would also continue to enjoy his Government's support. The United Nations web portal in Portuguese, maintained by the Rio Centre, was considered the Organization's most important information tool in that language with, on average, 400,000 views per month in 2016; and the Centre's own website had received over 2.5 million online visits, one third of all online visits to information centres worldwide. All 63 of the United Nations information centres were doing significant work in disseminating the values championed by the United Nations to local populations in their own languages.

13. Civil society involvement in the Organization had increased and the Department was encouraged to continue to develop activities in conjunction with the academic community and non-governmental organizations. Understanding how crucial their

participation was, Brazil itself had made a point of including representatives of civil society in its official delegations to thematic events. His Government also welcomed the Department's campaigns to celebrate days marking significant topics such as human rights, persons with disabilities, or AIDS, as well as its close involvement in the informational campaigns of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

14. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the Department of Public Information had made great strides in reaching a wider audience. Its publicizing of such international commemorations as World Environment Day, the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and the International Day against Nuclear Tests drew public attention to particular issues and illustrated the Department's pivotal role as the voice of the Organization. The United Nations information centres as well were a fount of information on United Nations activities and achievements and must therefore be well supplied with publications and other materials.

15. Achieving parity among the six official languages was necessary in order to enable the United Nations media to perform their role of promoting United Nations activities. While the easy flow of information in developing countries required the use of modern equipment, traditional media such as radio and the press must not be neglected, for they were a major source of information for their people.

16. In order for the United Nations to reach the widest possible audience, it was thus essential to narrow the digital divide by making information technology available to the developing countries and helping them to build the information and communications infrastructure and human resources they needed, in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and target 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution [34/182](#) on the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

17. Furthermore, the Department, backed by the General Assembly, would carry on with its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine until that issue was equitably resolved.

18. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that any approach taken by the Department of Public Information to publicize United Nations priorities and to highlight its past accomplishments and current and planned activities in an impartial, transparent and easily comprehensible manner would have an impact on the Department's capacity for outreach and advocacy.

19. Although the Department had done much to disseminate information and raise awareness about the Organization and the areas in which it was active, it should go beyond the use of the six official languages in order to reach the millions of people not fluent in them. The Department could bridge that gap by working through the United Nations information centres, such as the one in Kathmandu, to communicate in the various national and local languages, in order to reach both the people at large and those in higher education. Modernizing and equipping such institutions as university libraries would cater to the needs of students, faculty members and researchers who worked in languages not served by the United Nations.

20. His Government wished to benefit from the activities, experience and assistance of the Department in producing its own media content in Nepali, particularly with regard to United Nations peacekeeping operations and Nepal's contribution to them, and its cooperation with the Organization. Such information programmes not only helped to inform communities, but also broadened the constituencies in favour of the United Nations.

21. Energetic efforts should be made reduce the digital divide. The devices and technology required for social media platforms were not generally available in many parts of developing countries, and upgrading technology and keeping pace with its rapid change were costly, whereas traditional media continued to be major sources of information. The Department must therefore give due importance to both traditional and modern means of communication. It should explore providing toll-free telephone access to United Nations materials throughout the world. With the requisite publicity, the resulting global outreach could make a dramatic impact on the ground. Lastly, the Department should have state-of-the-art capabilities, within its mandate, to both prevent and deal with any abuse of information by cybercriminals.

22. Nepal stood ready to cooperate in the areas mentioned, and encouraged the Committee on Information and the Fourth Committee to provide the necessary guidance to the Department.

23. **Ms. Mwingira** (Tanzania) said that efforts to expand United Nations use of social media should, though laudable, be balanced by continuing use of traditional media. Many developing countries would still rely on radio, television and print media for the foreseeable future, as they were major means of communication particularly in rural areas, and were more affordable. To the satisfaction of his Government, the Kiswahili Unit at United Nations Radio had expanded a great deal, reaching millions in eastern and central Africa. Despite resource constraints, the Department of Public Information continued to support the Unit, as a result of which three new radio partnerships with stations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Tanzania had been formed. The Unit had also seen a considerable increase in the number of its social media followers.

24. His Government understood the crucial role United Nations information centres played in portraying the Organization positively and in informing the public about its activities. The Centre in Tanzania, which had established good working relationships with the Government and the national media, also served as a public library and proposed frequent offerings to the public. Unfortunately, the Centre's limited budget hindered the outreach capacity of its staff, particularly to those in rural areas. The Organization should review the resources allocated to information centres in order to optimize their capacity. The Centre in Tanzania was further challenged by its location within the same building as the United Nations Development Programme, where the myriad security and bureaucratic considerations made it inaccessible to all but a few. It could be of benefit to a greater number of people if it were located elsewhere, and the Department was encouraged to look into the matter.

25. *Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia) took the Chair.*

26. **Ms. Yáñez Loza** (Ecuador) said that, because many of the Organization's most important publications were available in only one language, it was essential to ensure parity in the use of the six official languages of the United Nations by the

Department of Public Information in its activities, so that it could disseminate information equitably, thereby contributing to the democratization of the United Nations.

27. In recent years, Latin America had made exceptional progress in bridging the digital divide. The percentage of Latin Americans using the Internet, for example, had increased substantially in a short period. However, the region had yet to achieve the levels seen in developed countries where information and communications technologies were concerned. It was thus indispensable that traditional media continue to be used and that stronger material be developed for them.

28. The Department had done excellent work despite scarce resources and Ecuador welcomed its coverage of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development held in Quito.

29. **Mr. Halfaoui** (Morocco) said that he welcomed the various communications campaigns spearheaded by the Department of Public Information on matters pertaining to the African continent, the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, human rights, peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts, among others. His Government drew attention in particular to the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, which ought to put still more emphasis on the right of the Palestinian people to a viable independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

30. The Department should continue to highlight United Nations values such as tolerance, solidarity, peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights. It should also promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue in order to fight all forms of extremism and xenophobia. His Government would continue its engagement with the Department with a view to promoting those common ideals.

31. Although Morocco as a multilingual society attached special significance to the equitable use of the six official United Nations languages in the dissemination of information, the Department should make materials available in other appropriate languages without restricting itself to the official languages. The Department should be congratulated for what it had done to achieve language parity at the United Nations and also to reach the widest possible audience through its use of local languages. One way

to overcome the lack of financial and logistical resources that hindered such efforts was to use new information technologies, as the Department had done. However, the existing digital divide meant that traditional tools of communication remained important in many developing countries and the Department should adapt its programmes to that reality.

32. The United Nations information centres were at the forefront and should enjoy the Department's consistent support. Because of its partnerships with members of academia and its collaboration with national and international press organizations in Morocco, the Centre in Rabat had been able to bring its pioneering activities to the general public.

33. The coverage and dissemination of United Nations activities was more crucial than ever. The Marrakech Climate Change Conference to be convened in November, for example, demanded media attention in keeping with the importance of the event. Furthermore, there was a need for trustworthy, neutral and objective information in a globalized world, and his delegation wished to join others in expressing its concern over the use of information by some to undermine the sovereignty of States and interfere in their internal affairs. The Department should not allow itself to be swayed by anyone presuming to dictate what subjects it should cover or what actions it should take. The Committee on Information existed for that very reason. His Government, for instance, would not presume to request the Department to publicize the daily flouting of the basic rights of the Kabyle people. Nor would it ask the Department to focus on the situation of any specific country or political, economic or social situation, no matter the danger posed to regional or international stability and security. Preferring a constructive approach, his Government would ask the Department only to continue to focus on the themes and tasks that fell within its mandate and the guidelines of the Committee on Information.

34. **Ms. Salem** (Observer for the State of Palestine), commending the Department of Public Information for disseminating information on human rights, tolerance, equality, peace, justice and freedom, and recalling its commemoration of the Nelson Mandela International Day, said that a statue of Mandela stood tall in the Palestinian city of Ramallah as the universal symbol of the struggle for freedom, reminding everyone of the

defeat of apartheid in South Africa and the need to confront its resurgence in Occupied Palestine.

35. The Department had successfully promoted the Sustainable Development Goals in all official United Nations languages using a variety of multimedia platforms. The international community must now ensure that no one was left behind, least of all the Palestinian people and those who lived in the besieged Gaza Strip. Another important topic recently highlighted by the Department was the situation of refugees and migrants; it should, however, do more to promote the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which, *inter alia*, upheld their right of return.

36. Another of its important programmes was the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, under which its annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East had been held in August 2016, for the first time in sub-Saharan Africa. The Israeli representative had criticized the activities under the Special Programme: but he need only consider the Charter principle of self-determination and the many United Nations resolutions Israel was breaching to understand why the programme had been created in the first place. Palestine considered it crucial in fostering support for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

37. The Department had also provided valuable assistance in media development through its annual training programme for young Palestinian journalists, and had publicized Palestinian issues well in a permanent exhibit at Headquarters and in the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Her delegation was confident that the Department would appropriately commemorate also the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Palestinian partition and exodus and the 50th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and of the Gaza Strip, so as to highlight the urgency of ending the injustice and dispossession the Palestinian people had endured for so long. It also looked forward to the implementation of General Assembly-mandated activities such as the organization of fact-finding missions by journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

38. Access to information and freedom of the press in Palestine remained an issue of major concern. Israel

was systematically and deliberately targeting Palestinian and foreign journalists and destroying media institutions to prevent them from conveying the grim reality in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resorting to arrests, detentions and an indiscriminate use of force against them, especially when they tried to report on peaceful protests, inhumane prison conditions, or Israeli aggressions. A recent incident in which Israeli forces had intentionally shot and wounded an Associated Press photographer covering an Israeli military raid in a West Bank village had been condemned by the Foreign Press Association.

39. The State of Palestine, expressing appreciation to all journalists and activists who braved the risks to convey, by image and by word, the stark facts of the illegal Israeli occupation, utterly rejected any violation of freedom of speech and the press, and her Government recognized its own responsibilities in upholding them, being fully aware of the long road to harmonizing its own laws, policies and actions with international law, including the human rights treaties to which it had acceded.

40. **Ms. Kritikou** (Observer for the International Organisation of la Francophonie) said that it was important to mobilize the Secretariat and Member States in support of multilingualism, which would be key to the effective implementation of the sustainable development commitments made in 2015, and had in fact been recognized as a core value of the United Nations. Full respect for parity among the six official languages was in effect a guarantee of successful multilateralism. The effectiveness of international action depended on multilingualism, as in the case of the deployment of peacekeeping operations or the implementation on the ground of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

41. In New York, her organization, in conjunction with like-minded associations such as the Group of Francophone Ambassadors and the Groupe des Amis de l'Espagnol, was militating in favour of multilingualism as crucial to diplomacy, for no international organization could be effective in a single language, and only respect for cultural and linguistic diversity made it possible to understand the world and the underlying aspirations of societies.

42. In addition to its advocacy work, her organization had built a collegial relationship with the Department

of Public Information. In the course of assessing the implementation of the *Vademecum on the use of French in international organisations*, a text adopted a decade earlier by its 80 member States on the subject of the linguistic rights and duties of diplomats, her organization had had lengthy exchanges with its colleagues in the Department concerning ways in which they could work together to promote multilingualism..

43. Her organization welcomed the commitment and achievements of the Department's UN Web Services Section with regard to multilingualism, encouraging all its units to adhere to the minimum website standards for multilingualism; and also praised the work of its Press Service, Publications Section and Radio Section. Multilingual work must be enhanced on every level and should promote a variety of cultural frames of reference and an assortment of communication styles by preserving traditional means of communication alongside new technologies.

44. Following those fruitful exchanges, she herself had, in July 2016, organized an informational meeting on the Department's French-language tools and services, and looked forward to doing so again in a few months. Her organization reaffirmed its full readiness to deepen its partnership with the Department in order to identify concrete solutions and enable multilingualism to become a daily reality.

45. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolutions before it under agenda item 53. While draft resolution A had no programme budget implications, that was not the case with draft resolution B.

Draft resolution A: Information in the service of humanity (A/71/21 (chap. IV))

46. *Draft resolution A was adopted.*

Draft resolution B: United Nations public information policies and activities (A/71/21 (chap. IV))

47. **Ms. Giles** (Secretary of the Fourth Committee), presenting an oral statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution B in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, said that the provision in paragraph 23 that the Department of Public Information must be given the necessary capacity to undertake all its activities in

all six official languages under future programme budgets meant that — under programme 24, Public Information, of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2018-2019, still to be endorsed by the General Assembly, and under the programme of work for section 28, Public Information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 — the Department, if it thus introduced multilingualism across the board in order to reach many more end-users, would be greatly expanding its activities. She detailed the increased work that would be involved in the preparation and dissemination of a spectrum of public information products in various media.

48. It was anticipated that the activities in question would require additional resources for the biennium 2018-2019 in the amount of \$7,094,800, which included \$5,226,000 under section 28, Public information, \$1,381,600 under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, and \$487,200 under section 36, Staff assessment. Those requirements would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

49. Under section 28, Public information, additional resources were needed totalling \$3,202,000 relating to 27 posts (9 P-3, 4 P-2 and 14 General Service) for content drafting, graphic design adaptation for social media, for the reviewing, editing, proofreading and publishing functions of press releases, for language staff for the news centre and for the coordination, editing and inputting of metadata to the on-demand products for each additional language; and \$2,024,000 relating to non-post requirements pertaining to general contractual services, general operating expenses, equipment and supplies and material. Contractual services would be required for external translation of press releases from English to Arabic, Russian and Chinese, and for translation and layout of United Nations publications and other outreach products available in a downloadable digital format. The requirement for external translation was based on the assumption that press releases — with some exceptions — and summaries of open meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies would be translated into four official languages, and that publications and other outreach products available in print and electronic formats would be commercially translated into six official languages. It was expected that additional resources would also be

required for data processing services, rental and communications, information and technology equipment and supplies and material for new posts. Under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, the additional requirements related to office furniture and office space and, under section 36, Staff assessment, to staff assessment for new posts.

50. **The Chair** said that a recorded vote had been requested on paragraph 23 of the draft resolution.

51. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, and on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the 115 members of the Committee on Information had reached consensus on the text of draft resolution B at its thirty-eighth session, after lengthy and intense negotiations and a universal show of flexibility and compromise. The Group of 77 and China attached particular importance to paragraph 23 — which, incidentally, was identical to the analogous paragraph in the resolutions on information adopted in the three previous sessions — and had made concessions on other paragraphs. It was the long-standing position of the Group that budgetary questions and any budgetary implications of draft resolutions must be considered in the Fifth Committee as part of the adoption of the Organization's biennial budget. For those reasons, he invited delegations to vote in favour of paragraph 23.

52. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Palau,

Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

53. *Paragraph 23 of draft resolution B was adopted by 102 votes to none, with 49 abstentions.*

54. **Mr. Komada** (Slovakia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that its member States had, after negotiating in good faith, joined the consensus on the adoption of the draft resolutions in the report of the Committee on Information earlier that year. Given the Committee's agreement that the Secretariat would continue to work towards mainstreaming multilingualism into all its communication and information activities within existing resources on an equitable basis — as very clearly stated in paragraph 22 of draft resolution B — the Secretary's oral statement about programme budget implications had come as a surprise. During informal consultations on the resolution, no reference had been made to the need for additional resources, neither for the biennium under way nor for the next one. The Programme Budget and Planning Division had apparently in the interim determined that paragraph 23 necessitated

additional resource requirements of over \$7 million for the 2018-2019 biennium, as outlined in the oral statement. His delegation, however, disagreed with the Division's rationale for the estimates presented in the oral statement, and did not accept its interpretation of paragraph 23; it had therefore abstained from the voting on paragraph 23.

55. The member States of the European Union emphasized that the adoption of the resolution as a whole would not in itself entail any financial implications and could not be seen as constituting a commitment to the financial requirements anticipated in the oral statement. Moreover, the presentation of the estimates did not prejudice their consideration under the proposed programme budget for the 2018-2019 biennium by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee, and the estimates should not be perceived as having been endorsed by Member States.

56. In line with European Union practice, its member States unreservedly supported multilingualism in the United Nations and in all multilateral bodies, and attached great importance to United Nations public information policies and activities. Accordingly, their abstention on paragraph 23 did not alter their commitment to reach consensus on the matter.

57. **Mr. Kishimori** (Japan) said that his delegation had abstained in the voting on paragraph 23 because it too had been surprised to hear the oral statement of programme budget implications. The estimates from the Programme Planning and Budget Division were seriously wrong: it had evidently chosen to ignore the agreed language in draft resolution B — negotiated in good faith by all members of the Committee on Information and adopted by consensus — which clearly instructed that multilingualism should be implemented in a cost-neutral manner. His delegation was also uncomfortable with the timing of the statement of programme budget implications, delivered so far in advance of the budget for the 2018-2019 biennium. He therefore asked the Secretariat to reprioritize the budget proposal and make available the revised results to Member States by the first resumed session of the Fifth Committee.

58. **Ms. Green** (Canada) said that her delegation had abstained from voting on paragraph 23 because it did not believe that the request for additional resource

requirements of over \$7 million for the biennium 2018-2019 to implement its provisions was justified. It disagreed with the rationale given in the oral statement of such unexpected programme budget implications, and was especially concerned since Member States had previously instructed the Department of Public Information to reprioritize its activities so as to conduct them without requiring additional funds. Moreover, paragraph 22 of the draft clearly called on the Secretariat to continue its work within existing resources. Canada nevertheless was a bilingual country that placed high value on multilingualism and was proud to champion that cause at the United Nations.

59. **Mr. Sardar** (United States of America) said that his Government supported the Department's critical work and, for that reason, was a member of the Committee on Information. While much was asked of the Department, the United States believed that it was able to accomplish its mission without increasing its budget. His delegation had sought throughout the drafting process to ensure that the draft resolution was sufficiently imbued with sustainability. The Department had shown its ability to partner with a diverse array of stakeholders to do just that. The United States supported multilingualism and had previously joined the consensus on resolutions regarding its importance at the United Nations, but it had also heard the voices of those Member States frustrated at the slow pace of the implementation of multilingualism. He believed that the consensus text reflected those sentiments.

60. The Committee on Information had consistently factored resource constraints into all its discussions of the Department's activities. References to operating "within existing resources," to a "cost-neutral manner" and to the need to establish partnerships with Member States, the private sector and civil society appeared throughout the draft text. In the section on multilingualism, paragraph 22 stated specifically that the Secretariat's work to mainstream multilingualism was to be done within existing resources. His delegation was therefore surprised and disappointed to learn from the Secretary's oral statement that paragraph 23 had created a need for more than \$7 million in additional resources for the biennium 2018-2019. The pursuit of additional resources was unacceptable because it did not reflect the understanding and the text agreed to by members of the

Committee on Information and had occurred without genuine consultation among Member States. The United States could not countenance either the Secretariat's interpretation of paragraph 23 or the steps it had taken, which went against the letter and spirit of the text.

61. For that reason, his delegation had abstained from voting on paragraph 23, although it supported the draft resolution as a whole.

62. **Mr. Yardley** (Australia) said that his delegation strongly supported the adoption of draft resolution B by consensus but had abstained in the voting on paragraph 23 because it did not agree that its implementation would entail additional resources. The estimates provided by the Programme Planning and Budget Division stemmed from a surprising interpretation of the paragraph, which instead had been negotiated in good faith on the understanding that the agreed language would have no financial implications. Australia looked forward to discussing the Department's financial requirements in the context of the budget outline for the 2018-19 biennium in the Fifth Committee during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

63. **Mr. Lim** Hoon-min (Republic of Korea) said that while his delegation would join the consensus on draft resolution B as a whole, it had deeply regretted the Secretariat's interpretation of paragraph 23 of the draft resolution and had therefore abstained from voting on the paragraph. Despite its support for multilingualism, his delegation was dismayed that the Secretariat had disregarded paragraph 22 of the same resolution, which requested that communication and information activities should be carried out within existing resources. Any decision that would impose an additional financial burden on Member States should be fully reviewed and discussed, which had not been the case. His delegation requested the Secretariat to submit a proposal for consideration by the Fifth Committee that reflected the letter and spirit of the resolution as a whole.

64. *Draft resolution B as a whole was adopted.*

Agenda item 48: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.2/Rev.1: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

65. **Ms. Green** (Canada) introduced the revised text of the draft resolution, as agreed by the Working Group of the Whole of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, for consideration by the Committee.

66. *Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.2/Rev.1 was adopted.*

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

67. **Mr. Gat** (Israel), responding to remarks by the Palestinian representative, said that the representative's concern for democratic values in Israel was remarkable, given that the most recent elections under the Palestinian Authority had been held a decade earlier. The representative's statement was another instance of the cynical, manipulative use of the Committee to misinform and incite, which neither contributed to the shared struggle against prejudice nor served to unify. He reiterated his Government's call on the Palestinian leadership to respond positively to its overtures for peace and conduct direct bilateral negotiations without preconditions, the only way to achieve the solution of two States for two peoples. Israelis and Palestinians should speak with one another, not about one another.

68. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria), responding to remarks made by the representative of Morocco, said that his delegation would continue to ask the Committee on Information to perform its mandated role of disseminating information on items on the Organization's agenda in a non-politicized, non-selective manner, which of course included the decolonization of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and their right of self-determination.

69. A baseless accusation had been made against his country regarding the region of Kabylia, which was not on the Committee's agenda. That very region, an integral part of Algeria, had witnessed the launch of the Algerian independence struggle. His country was composed not of minorities but of Algerian citizens who had equal rights and responsibilities before the law. Moreover, Kabylia enjoyed rights under the Algerian Constitution, as attested to in his Government's reports to United Nations treaty bodies.

In a recent amendment to the Constitution, for instance, his Government had declared Amazigh an official language, and it was taught in institutions and widely used in periodicals, television and radio channels. The people of Kabylia served as government officials at various levels throughout the country. It was therefore evident that the accusations levelled by the representative of Morocco were not grounded in reality.

70. While referring delusionally to minorities in Algeria, the representative of Morocco dismissed his country's own heroic resistance figure, Abdelkrim al-Khattabi, as a separatist. Given the situation in the Rif region of Morocco, that country was in no position to accuse Algeria of restricting the rights of its citizens. However, out of its respect for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, Algeria limited itself to addressing the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in its statements before the Committee. Until the right to self-determination was upheld, Western Sahara would remain a Territory under illegitimate occupation by the administering Power, which was not entitled to ownership of it.

71. **Mr. Halfaoui** (Morocco), said that, unfortunately, it was becoming a habit in the Committee to exploit the right of reply by bringing up the question of Moroccan Sahara, even when the agenda item under consideration was the question of information. What he had forgotten to mention was that it was Morocco, and not Algeria or another country or the so-called representatives of the Sahrawi people, that had inscribed the Saharan question on the Committee's agenda.

72. Although it attested to its respect for the human rights of the Kabyle population, Algeria had refused visits from the special procedures of the Human Rights Council since their inception. Thanks to the work of international and non-governmental organizations that were sufficiently credible, there was reliable information that the basic cultural and linguistic rights of minorities were not respected in Algeria. Before the Kabyle people could claim their right to self-determination, they had to be able to express themselves. His delegation wondered how that population could have access to its right to self-determination when it did not have the right to free speech.

73. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria) said that the right of reply was stipulated in the rules of procedure and he was not exploiting it. If Morocco had requested the inclusion of the question of Western Sahara as an agenda item, then it had to explain why that issue remained on the Committee's agenda. The situation must come to its logical conclusion for the Sahrawis, who must exercise their right to self-determination, if not independence. The people would have the right and opportunity to decide whether they wanted to remain with Morocco or preferred autonomous association or independence, which were the three options provided for by resolution 1514 (XV).

74. Although the Moroccan representative spoke of the Kabyle people, there were no other people apart from the Algerian people in Algeria, and they had exercised their right to self-determination in 1962. In a sovereign State with a 99-per cent school enrolment rate in the Kabyle region as elsewhere, the Kabyle people were Algerian citizens like all others. He asked where the Moroccan representative had obtained those unfounded allegations about their rights. His Government had no interest in truncated information.

75. Furthermore, Algeria had never refused visits from the special procedures. On the other hand, certain Special Rapporteurs were not allowed to visit Morocco and, particularly, Western Sahara; and there had been reports by human rights treaty bodies working with special procedures on the situation there that persons calling for independence in Moroccan Sahara were systematically tortured and imprisoned and that cultural rights were being infringed. There was insufficient information on human rights, natural resources, and other aspects of the situation in the Territory.

76. **Mr. Halfaoui** (Morocco) said it was surprising that the Algerian representative could erase 9,000 years of Kabyle history in one fell swoop. The Kabyle were the last native African population who remained under domination. Assimilation had once more become the norm.

77. For over a decade, Morocco had accepted numerous visits from United Nations special procedures. Although the Algerian representative stated that his country had never opposed such visits, none had ever been made there, despite dozens of requests sent to its Permanent Mission in Geneva.

78. Morocco was fortunate to be a multicultural country with various ethnic groups, which were guaranteed their inalienable cultural and linguistic rights under the Constitution, following the example of its Algerian neighbour. Morocco itself broadcast television programming in three different dialects of Amazigh. His country needed and benefited from that ethnic diversity, and was interested in minority freedoms everywhere. Reports that all persons calling for independence in Moroccan Sahara would be tortured were contradicted by the fact that Morocco authorized pro-independence organizations in such places as Laayoune and Dakhla, and they functioned without impediment.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.