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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Observations of Governments on the report of the Committee on
Freedom of Information of the Commission on Human Rights
(E/CN.4/762 and Corr.1)

The Secretary-General has the honour to inform the Commission on Human Rights that, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 683 C (XXVI), additional observations from Governments on the report of the Commission's Committee on Freedom of Information have been received as follows:

Japan:

"RE Draft Convention on Freedom of Information"

The Government of Japan has been under the impression that the views of various countries on the draft Convention as a whole and article 2 in particular are so sharply divided that under the present circumstances there remains little room for compromise among them. This impression has been further confirmed by the conflicting views of some twenty countries as contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/3868 and Add.1-7) and by the divergent views expressed during the Thirteenth Session of the General Assembly. Generally speaking, there seem to be two schools of thought on the problem of freedom of information. On one hand, some countries regard freedom of information as an absolute and supreme concept and, consequently, they reject any restrictions thereon by an international instrument like this draft Convention or any infringements thereof by the public authorities; on the other hand, some countries are in favour of an early adoption of a convention on freedom of information with a view to the outright prohibition of expressions inciting war and of false and distorted information. There are, furthermore, rival opinions with respect to the formula of article 2 of the draft Convention which is intended to stipulate explicitly the cases of permissible restriction on freedom of information.

The General Assembly at its Thirteenth Session decided to enter the detailed discussion of the draft Convention at the next Session. In view of the marked differences of opinion, however, it is hoped that the General Assembly would make as thorough a discussion as possible on the convention so that wide ratification and effective implementation can be effected by Member States.

RE Development of Information media in under-developed countries

The Government has much interest in the preparatory report (annex B) in that it has put forward constructive suggestions for the establishment of detailed and comprehensive programmes in this field which has not been studied in detail.

The report in its final form is to be fully considered by the Commission on Human Rights. The Government wishes to express its hope that, in the consideration of the Commission, emphasis should be placed on the necessity of a concerted action among various international organizations for the development of information media in under-developed countries."

Pakistan:

"The Government of Pakistan is in general agreement with the suggestions made in the report of the Committee on Freedom of Information (document E/CN.4/762 and Corr.1) and has no comments to offer.

Attention in this connexion is, however, invited to our letter No. GA/8-58 dated 8 August 1958, wherein the views of the Government of Pakistan in regard to articles 2 and 11 (b) of the draft Convention on Freedom of Information were conveyed." 1/

1/ See document A/3868/Add.1, circulated to the Thirteenth Session of the General Assembly.