LEGAL RESEARCH GUIDE SERIES
SPECIALIZED RESEARCH GUIDE # 6
UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH

A GUIDE TO UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
LAW SCHOOL
JACOB BURNS LAW LIBRARY
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I. Introduction

The United Nations (U.N.) is, according to Article 1 of the U.N. Charter, an organization of countries dedicated to “maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; cooperating internationally in solving international economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these common ends.”


The U.N. consists of six principal bodies: General Assembly; Security Council; Economic and Social Council; the Trusteeship Council; the International Court of Justice; and the Secretariat. In addition, there are 14 specialized agencies working under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in areas such as health, finance, agriculture, civil aviation, and telecommunications.

Information on the history and organization of the U.N. can be found in the following:


For additional information, please see the following research guide, United Nations Research, where you can also access this guide in PDF.
To determine if a source listed in this guide is available in *Bloomberg Law*, *Lexis Advance*, or *Westlaw Edge*, enter the name of the source in the search box at the top of the page and then select the source from the drop-down list. To obtain *Bloomberg Law*, *Lexis Advance*, or *Westlaw Edge* credentials, email electronicservices@law.gwu.libanswers.com and include your GWid number.

II. United Nations Resources

A. Types of Publications and Locations

According to Bluebook Rule 21.7, United Nations materials fall into six major categories:

**VERBATIM AND SUMMARY RECORDS** (Rule 21.7.1): The minutes or full-text transcripts of the sessional meetings of various bodies of the UN can be found here. Complete transcripts of meetings or “verbatim” records as they are called by the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Trusteeship Council are kept in the Official Records of those organs. The Economic and Social Council and the Trade and Development Board do not maintain verbatim records, but rather just minutes. All citations to verbatim and summary records should be to the Official Records whenever possible. References to the Official Records of these bodies are abbreviated GAOR, SCOR, etc (See Table T.3 in the Bluebook).

Official records also include "Annexes," which republish selected mimeographed documents. "Supplements" are also part of the Official Records. Some supplements also contain annual reports of various commissions and committees submitted to their parent body.

- **Microform**: LL1: U.N. microfiche collection (1946-2012)
- **Online**:

**RESOLUTIONS** (Rule 21.7.2): According to the Bluebook, “Authorized version of resolutions appear in the Official Records. It has become customary, however, to cite electronic versions or resolutions found in the Official Document System (ODS) of the United Nations using resolution symbols. For pincites to material within a resolution, use paragraph or article numbers.”

General Assembly resolutions and decisions are compiled into sessional cumulations that have traditionally been published as the final supplement to the *Official Records of the General Assembly*. However, from the 42nd session (1987-1988) onwards, Supplement No. 49 has been designated to contain the resolutions and decisions of a given regular session.

Security Council resolutions and decisions are compiled into annual cumulations which are issued in the S/INF/- series as part of the Official Records of the Security Council.

- **Microform**: LL1: U.N. microfiche collection (1946-2012)
- **Online**:
REPORTS (Rule 21.7.3): According to the Bluebook, when citing reports from U.N. committees the citation should include the name of the body and the subcommittee, if any; the title of the report; the pincite, if any; the document symbol; and the date. Many reports of major bodies of the General Assembly are printed as supplements to the Official Records.

Microform: LL1: U.N. microfiche collection

Online:


Also check the website of the UN issuing body.

SALES PUBLICATIONS (Rule 21.7.7): Sales publications are important annuals, statistical compendia, individual studies, etc., available for purchase from the U.N. An example of a sales publication is the Yearbook of the United Nations. Sales publications are assigned unique U.N. Sales Numbers (e.g., E.92.IV.1).

When citing a Sales publication, Bluebook Rule 21.7.7(d) also requires citation to the Sales Number.

Print: Search JACOB, the Jacob Burns Law Library’s catalog, to identify Library holdings of individual sales publications: [https://www.law.gwu.edu/library](https://www.law.gwu.edu/library)

MASTHEAD DOCUMENTS (Rule 21.7.4): Formerly known as "mimeographed documents", these are the first and only published format for many U.N. documents. They include draft documents, the initial publication of important items such as resolutions, as well as many ephemeral items of marginal interest to those outside the organization.

In the 20th edition of the *Bluebook*, under Rule 21.7.4, citation to masthead documents later published in the Official Record is favored “when possible.” When citing to masthead documents, they should be cited by the name of the institutional author, if any (Rule 21.7.4(a); the title of the document (Rule 21.7.4(b); pincite, if any; the document symbol (rule 21.7.4(c); and the date of publication.

Each masthead document has a U.N. document symbol (its unique identification number). There is nothing in the document symbol, however, to indicate to the user whether or not something is a mimeo document. Most collections of mimeo documents, whether in paper or microfiche, are arranged by the U.N. document symbols, for example, A/46/468. The Jacob Burns Law Library generally does not have mimeographed documents in their original print format.


Mimeo documents can be found republished in the *Official Records of the United Nations* or other U.N. publications.
Online:


- Official repository for documents published by UN
- Full text documents (PDF), 1992-. Security Council documents available back to 1946.
- All official languages of the United Nations
- Comprised of two databases, UN Documentation (1992-) and UN Resolutions, includes resolutions of the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council and Trusteeship Council, 1946-. Selected backfiles of older documents have also been added.


- The United Nations Digital Library (UNDL) provides open access to official UN documents, UN maps, as well as speech and voting records. The documents may be browsed by type of material or issuing agency. Users may also search by keyword across all content.

**YEARBOOKS AND PERIODICALS** (Rule 21.7.8): The U.N. publishes a number of yearbooks and periodicals, such as the Yearbook of the United Nations and the U.N. Chronicle. The Bluebook also provides rules for citation of U.N. Press Releases and Memoranda (Rule 21.7.5), Adjudicatory Bodies Established by the U.N. (Rule 21.7.6), Regional Organization Documents (Rule 21.7.9) and the U.N. Charter (Rule 21.7.10).

**Print:** JACOB: [https://www.law.gwu.edu/library](https://www.law.gwu.edu/library)

Search JACOB to identify the Burns Library’s holdings of yearbooks and periodicals issued by U.N. bodies.

**Online:**

HeinOnline: *United Nations Law Collection*

- Provides access to a selection of UN yearbooks such as the Yearbook of the International Law Commission and the United Nations Juridical Yearbook among others.

**Note:** LEXIS, WESTLAW EDGE and BLOOMBERG LAW, as of this writing, provide virtually no access to U.N. documentation save for the UN Chronicle.
U.N. publications not available in the Law Library may be located at one of the following libraries:

■The Gelman Library of the George Washington University
2130 H Street NW, Washington, DC
202-994-6048 (Ask Us Desk)


■Library of Congress, Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room
Room LM-133, Madison Building
1st St. and Independence Avenue, SE, Washington, D.C.
(202) 202-707-5690

The Library of Congress is a United Nations depository and maintains a large collection of documents issued by the U.N.

B. U.N. Affiliated Agencies

Most U.N. indexes and collections do not include publications of the autonomous agencies of the U.N. system. These autonomous agencies include such well-known bodies as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). These agencies have their own separate publication programs.

Some documents issued by these agencies are available on their websites. A list of the websites can be found at the Directory of United Nations System Organizations: http://www.unsystem.org/directory. Also check JACOB for individual titles that may be held in the Jacob Burns Law Library collection: https://www.law.gwu.edu/library.

III. United Nations Document Symbols

A. Basic Pattern of Symbols

Most U.N. documents are identified by an alphanumeric number called a "U.N. document symbol." An example of a document symbol is: E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/23/Rev.1. The letters in the U.N. document symbol system identify the issuing body and that body's place in the hierarchy of the U.N. organization. In the above symbol:

- **E** = Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); the parent body
- **CN.4** = Commission on Human Rights
- **Sub. 2** = Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
- **1993** = document year
- **23** = 23rd document
- **Rev.1** = Revision 1 of the document

Slashes (/) separate the various elements of the U.N. document symbol. This distinguishes the symbols from other numbering systems such as U.N. sales numbers (which use periods).
B. Selected Key Symbols

The first letter appearing in the U.N. document symbol denotes the major U.N. organ from which the document originated. The most common symbols and their corresponding U.N. organs are:

A/- General Assembly
E/- Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
S/- Security Council
ST/- Secretariat
T/- Trusteeship Council

Following the first slash in the U.N. document number are acronyms denoting other parent bodies:

/CCPR/- Human Rights Committee
/CERD/- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
/TD/- U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
/UNEP/- U.N. Environment Programme

Following the second slash, letter abbreviations refer to a specific type of organization:

/AC./- Ad-Hoc Committee
/C./- Standing or permanent committee
/CN./- Commission
/CONF./- Conference
/SC./- Sub-committee
/Sub./- Sub-commission
/WG./- Working Group

After the third slash, the type of document is indicated by the following letters:

/PV/- Verbatim records of meetings (procès verbaux)
/RES./- Resolution
/SR./- Summary record of meeting
/WP./- Working Paper

A modification of the text is indicated after the fourth slash:

/Add./- Addendum (Indicates an addition of text to the main document)
/Amend./- Amendment (Alteration, by decision of a competent authority, of a portion of an adopted formal text.)
/Corr./- Corrigendum (Indicates modification of any specific part of an existing document to correct errors, revise wording, or reorganize text.)
/Rev./- Revision (Indicates a new text which supersedes and replaces that of a previously issued document)
Following the fourth slash, letters denoting distribution status are listed:

/L._ Limited (documents for which wide circulation is not desired because of their temporary nature (draft resolutions, draft reports, preliminary action documents.)
/R._ Restricted (Applies to documents whose confidential contents require that they be withheld from public circulation. Note: these documents are usually unavailable)

C. Guides to Documents Symbols

UN Documentation Research Guide: UN Document Symbols  
http://research.un.org/content.php?pid=320836&sid=2626142


Assists with locating document symbols and sales numbers of U.N. documents, 1946-. Documents included are of a recurrent nature, such as annual or periodic reports, yearbooks, journals, reports of major conferences, etc.

[Location: Ready Reference KZ 4985 .D33 1946-96]

This publication provides a list of U.N. symbols. Subject/title indexes are useful starting points for identifying specific bodies whose work concerns particular topics. Document symbols created after 1996 can be identified by using the UN-I-QUE database mentioned above.

[Location: SL2 JZ 4936 1981]

This guide is helpful for its overview of UN publications. It includes an excellent explanation of how to decipher the document numbering system used by the U.N.

IV. Indexes for United Nations Documents


The United Nations Digital Library (UNDL) provides open access to official UN documents, UN maps, as well as speech and voting records. The documents may be browsed by type of material or issuing agency. Users may also search by keyword across all content.
V. Selected Yearbooks and Compilations

Yearbooks and subject compilations of U.N. documents are valuable sources for identifying documents as well as locating selected reprints of key documents. They also provide detailed discussions of key issues.


The Yearbook, arranged by broad subject areas such as human rights, disarmament, refugees, etc., is an excellent source for reviewing U.N. activities. A detailed subject index is included. The Yearbook, while "based on official sources, is not an official record." It contains numerous references to primary documents. Often the texts of resolutions and decisions made during a particular year are included. If the text is not reprinted, sometimes there will be a summary of the document. A separate "Index of Resolutions and Decisions" lists where a text, summary or discussion of a document may be found.


The International Law Commission's work is of key importance to developing areas of international law. Their Yearbook is issued in two volumes:

**Volume 1:** Provides summary records of the Commission's meetings during the session.

**Volume 2:** Includes special reports and other documents issued during a session.

The publication delay is about 4 to 5 years. Reports on draft international agreements (e.g. Draft Code of Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind, draft articles on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses) are regularly published in the *Yearbook*. The Law Library has a complete set of the Yearbook in paper. It is also available at the ILC's website at: [http://legal.un.org/ilc/publications/yearbooks/](http://legal.un.org/ilc/publications/yearbooks/).

The *United Nations Law Collection* on HeinOnline also includes the Yearbook for the years 1949-2012.


The UNCITRAL Yearbook contains reports of the Commission on its annual sessions and various reports/working papers on specific topics. One section gives the current status of conventions drafted by the Commission. They are also available at the UNCITRAL website at: [http://www.uncitral.org/uncitral/en/publications/yearbook.html](http://www.uncitral.org/uncitral/en/publications/yearbook.html) as well as in the *United Nations Law Collection* on HeinOnline for the years 1968-2013.
The United Nations Juridical Yearbook contains legislative texts and treaty provisions promulgated each year relating to the legal status of the United Nations and related intergovernmental organizations. It includes a general review of the Organization’s legal activities; highlights of decisions of international and national tribunals relating to the legal status of the various organizations of the U.N. and a bibliography of relevant publications issued during a particular year. It is also available in the United Nations Law Collection on HeinOnline for the years 1962-2013.

VI. General Assembly Resolutions

A. Numbering

Beginning in 1975, with its 31st annual session, the General Assembly began numbering its resolutions in the format \textit{A/RES/31/1}. Resolutions are numbered sequentially each session.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{A}=General Assembly
  \item \textbf{RES}=resolution
  \item \textbf{31}=31st session
  \item \textbf{1}=first resolution of that session
\end{itemize}

Prior to 1975, the General Assembly numbered its resolutions in the pattern \textit{A/RES/2904 (XXVII)}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{2904}=specific resolution number (with numbers continuing incrementally from session to session instead of starting over each year)
  \item \textbf{(XXVII)}=the session number in which the resolution was passed
\end{itemize}

B. Publication

1. Mimeographed (Masthead) Version

A General Assembly resolution is first issued individually as a mimeographed document and contains a U.N. document symbol (e.g. A/RES/48/320). The Law Library does not subscribe to U.N. mimeographed documents. To obtain a resolution at this stage:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Online:}
  \item U.N. Documents website at \url{http://www.un.org/documents}
  \item \textbullet\ 1st session (1946-) in PDF format.
\end{itemize}

• 1st session, 1946-

• Final official record version of all resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. The sessional compilation can be found by searching by UN document symbol using the symbol A/[session number]/49 for the 42nd session (1987-1988) onwards.

• Before the official record version is available, individual resolutions and decision compilations from 1993 can be found at the UN Documentation website listed above.

International Legal Materials (I.L.M.) (journal published by the American Society of International Law (ASIL))

• Selected General Assembly resolutions

• General Assembly resolutions are less likely to be published in ILM than Security Council Resolutions, which are binding on member states.

• HeinOnline: Law Journal Library

• LEXIS ADVANCE (1962-)

• WESTLAW EDGE (1980-)

2. Compilations of General Assembly Resolutions

Once General Assembly resolutions appear in published compilations, the texts are arranged first by the originating U.N. committee, then by number. This is usually the practice in both the U.N.'s own compilations as well as commercial publications. Checking indexes or tables of contents will easily solve any difficulties raised by this unique arrangement.

a. Official Compilations:

General Assembly Official Records (GAOR) Supplements: The official compilation of General Assembly resolutions appears as the last numbered supplement (usually in 2 volumes) which is issued yearly at the end of a session. As noted previously, from the 42nd session (1987-1988) onwards, Supplement No. 49 has been designated to contain the resolutions and decisions of a given regular session.

The GAOR supplements do not provide voting record information. The press release version remains the easiest to use for such information, although voting records are also itemized in the Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly as well as being available on the United Nations Digital Library at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/ One can locate the full text of UN press releases from 1995, at the UN Meetings Coverage & Press Releases website at: https://www.un.org/press/en
Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the General Assembly. (United Nations, 1946-).

Print: (47th session, 1992-) SL1: KZ 5006.2 .U54]

Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the General Assembly during its ... Special Session. (United Nations, Dept. of Public Information, 1946-)

Print: SL1: KZ 5006.2 .U545

Online:

HeinOnline, United Nations Law Collection

Microform (1946-):

[Note: GAOR supplements are easy to locate in the U.N. microfiche collection. They are noted as such on the guide cards. For individual resolutions, the U.N. microfiche headers prominently display the designation A/RES and "resolutions." They are filed near the beginning of the GAOR microfiche set.]


Starting with the 37th Session (1982), this microfiche collection of UN Official Records also includes documents issued by the various U.N. Human Rights bodies as well as other organizations within the U.N. system such as the International Court of Justice, the International Seabed Authority, and the International Criminal Court.


The official records of the major bodies (Economic and Social Council, General Assembly, Security Council, Trusteeship Council), as well as documents from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) are reproduced. An understanding of the structure of the official records and familiarity with U.N. document symbols is necessary in order to locate documents within this set. A particularly useful feature of the set is the inclusion of resolution texts, which are filed at the beginning of each body's documentation and are clearly marked on the microfiche headers as containing resolutions.

b. Unofficial Retrospective Compilations

Locating General Assembly resolution texts and voting information is greatly simplified by the following publications:


While this is an unofficial commercial reproduction, these volumes contain direct reproductions of the official version as they appear in the General Assembly Official Records (GAOR) Supplements described above.
Original pagination and text layout, along with all U.N. document symbols, are preserved. Thus, the set may suffice even when citation to official sources is required. This set covers the period 1946-1986.


This is a selective, unofficial compilation of 419 of the most important General Assembly resolutions arranged in broad subject categories. Entries include vote counts for each resolution and citations to the appropriate document symbol when resolutions reference a particular U.N. document.

**VII. Security Council Resolutions**

**A. Numbering**

Security Council resolutions are numbered in the format *S/RES/795*. Unlike the current practice of the General Assembly, the Security Council does not renumber its resolutions with each new year. Thus, a Security Council Resolution number “Security Council Resolution 795" does identify a unique resolution, although for citation purposes other information is also needed. Later, when official compilations are published, resolutions appear in the S/INF/ series.

**B. Publication**

1. **Mimeographed (Masthead) Version**

A Security Council resolution is first issued as a paper mimeographed (masthead) document under its U.N. document symbol. The Library does not hold a print collection of U.N. mimeographed documents. To obtain a resolution in mimeograph format:

Use the same sources described in this guide under "VI (B) General Assembly Resolutions - Publication - Mimeographed Version." As noted above official compilations of resolutions appear under the S/INF/ symbol (ie., *S/INF/45* is the sessional compilation of resolutions and decisions of the Security Council for its 45th session.)

[Note: *International Legal Materials (I.L.M.*) includes a higher percentage of Security Council Resolutions than General Assembly Resolutions because of their binding force on member states.]

2. **Official Compilations**


*INF*="information", designating the document as an official version

*27*=year of Security Council Session (number used and actual year of session may differ slightly (e.g., SCOR for 27th year appears in *S/INF/28*)

This compilation may be found for the period 1946- present at the Security Council’s website at: [http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/volumes/](http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/volumes/)
Report of the Security Council

According to the Security Council’s website the “Security Council’s annual report covers questions considered by the Security Council and matters brought to its attention as well as the work of the Council’s subsidiary bodies during the reporting period (1 August - 31 July). In addition, it contains annexes relating to the membership of the Council, the representatives accredited to it, Presidents in the reporting period as well as meetings held and actions taken by the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

Online:

HeinOnline, United Nations Law Collection

United Nations Security Council website

A useful checklist for earlier sessions (with includes the proper S/INF/ number in many cases) and subject index to older Security Council resolutions is:


Another useful reference tool for identifying UN Security Council resolutions is:


Besides providing a detailed subject index to Security Council actions for a given year, this index also includes a check-list of meetings, an index to speeches, a list of documents issued for that year, a checklist of resolutions adopted by the Security Council, and a voting chart of resolutions.

Online (1964-):

HeinOnline, United Nations Law Collection

Other sources for Security Council documentation can be found here:

Online (1946-):

UN Documentation Centre: http://www.un.org/documents/


Microform (1946-):


This microfiche collection of UN Official Records includes documents issued by the UN Security Council. The official annual compilation of resolutions is found in the collection, filed under its U.N. Document symbol (e.g. S/INF/no.)
The official records of the major bodies, including the Security Council are reproduced. The microfiche headers contain the designation S/RES/ followed by the resolution numbers covered.

3. Unofficial Retrospective Compilations

*Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council; Résolutions et Décisions du Conseil de Sécurité.*  
(Oceana, 1988).  
[Location: SL1: KZ 5036 .U55]

The task of locating the texts of Security Council resolutions and voting records is greatly simplified by this set. Although slow to be published, the volumes contain reproductions of the official Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council volumes in the S/INF/ series of the Security Council Official Records (SCOR). Since the original page numbers, text layout, and all U.N. numbering is preserved, these reproductions may suffice even when a citation to the official U.N. sources is required.

**Print:** SL1: KZ 5036 .U55

Wellens, Karel L., ed.  

Security Council Resolutions are arranged by subject, with introductory notes. A chronological list by resolution number appears as an annex. Unlike the Djonovich set described above, this compilation is not a direct reproduction of the official version issued by the Security Council and does not contain all of the information usually necessary for proper citation.

**Print:** SL1: JZ 5006.7 .R47 2001

4. Other Useful Security Council Reference Sources

a. Sources for Security Council Practice

*Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council.*

According to the Security Council’s website, the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* “provides comprehensive coverage of the Security Council’s interpretation and application of the United Nations Charter and its own Provisional Rules of Procedure since 1946. The material presented in the Repertoire is exclusively based on official documents of the Security Council. Each supplement to the Repertoire covers a period from two to six years and is published in English and French.” It is available at:  

Chesterman, Simon.  
*Law and Practice of the United Nations : Documents and Commentary.*  

Conforti, Benedetto,  
*The Law And Practice Of The United Nations.*  
[Location: SL1: KZ4986 .C6613 2010]


*The UN Secretary-General and the Security Council: a Dynamic Relationship.* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Available on Oxford Scholarship Online
The text of the Charter of the United Nations is available in numerous document compilations.

**Online:**


**Print:**

*Yearbook of the United Nations.* (United Nations, Dept. of Public Information, 1947-).  
[Location: SL2: JZ 4947 .U55]

Note: The *Yearbook* and other sources will provide accurate texts, but even the Yearbook, while “based on official sources, is not an official record.” The Charter of the UN is reprinted in Appendix 2 of the *Yearbook.*

The *Yearbook of the United Nations* is also available online at: [http://unyearbook.un.org/](http://unyearbook.un.org/)

Numerous treatises and journal articles have been published which discuss the U.N. Charter. Use JACOB, the Library’s catalog, to locate books in the Library discussing the U.N. Charter. Use the “Advanced Search” feature and change the field pull-down menu to "Subject." Typing "United Nations Charter" in this will produce a list of relevant titles. Two noteworthy secondary sources discussing the U.N. charter are:


[Location: SL1: KZ4986 .C44 2008]

[Location: SL1: KZ4991 .F37 2009]


IX. Documents of the Founding Conference of the United Nations

This 25 volume set compiles over 5,000 documents of the founding conference and includes a separate index volume. The texts of the draft and final versions of the United Nations Charter and the Statute of the International Court of Justice are reprinted in the set.

**Online:**

*HeinOnline, United Nations Law Collection*


**Print:** SL1: KZ 4991 .A21945 .F3 1945

**Online:**

*HeinOnline, United Nations Law Collection*

X. United Nations Treaty Information

A. Treaty Texts

*Texts of Latest Registered Treaties:*


Because of delays in publication, the UNTS is of limited use for locating recently concluded treaties. This site provides the texts of selected multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General that have not yet been published in the UNTS. They can be found under the “Latest Registered Treaties” heading.

*United Nations Treaty Series (UNTS).* (United Nations, 1946-).

This is the official set for texts of multilateral and bilateral agreements on a worldwide basis for the years 1946 forward. Texts are provided in multiple languages. Citations to the set follow standard legal citation format to volume and page (e.g., 679 UNTS 378). "Cumulated Index" volumes are part of the set, but these are not truly cumulative. Each index volume covers 50 volumes of the set (earlier volumes cover 100 volumes). The publication delays for the index are 10 years or more.

**Online:**


*HeinOnline: United Nations Law Collection, Treaty Publications*

**Print:** SL1: KZ 172 .T74: volumes 1-400; 801-

**Microform:** LL1: Microfiche: volumes 1-890
The predecessor of the UNTS is the League of Nations Treaty Series (LNTS). This is a collection of treaties and subsequent treaty actions registered with and published by the Secretariat of the League of Nations pursuant to Article 18 of its Covenant and it covers the period 1920-1944. Before 1920, there was no international organization publishing a comparable set.

**Online:**


*HeinOnline: United Nations Law Collection, Treaty Publications*

**Print:** SL1: KZ170.5 .T74

**Microform:** Available on microfilm as part of the *League of Nations Documents and Publications, 1919-1946* microfilm set [Location: LL1: Microfilm 120].

**B. Indexes to UN Treaties**

*Status of Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary General; Status as at 31 December.... New York: United Nations, 1968-. Annual.*

This is an indispensable index for locating multilateral treaties (two or more parties) deposited with the U.N.. Citations are provided to the UNTS set, if available. Otherwise, references are to other U.N. documents that contain the text. Texts of the treaties are never reproduced, but the texts of reservations, understandings, and declarations are reprinted. Detailed information about date of entry into force, signatories, and ratifications is also given.

One can further update the information in this source by telephoning the U.N. Treaty Section office in New York City at 212-963-2523 or send email to treaty@un.org

**Online:**

*[http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx)*

*HeinOnline: United Nations Law Collection, Treaty Publications*


Coverage is 1648-1995. This book is an excellent source for locating multilateral treaties around the world. Multilateral treaties are listed chronologically and citations are provided to treaty texts in official and unofficial sources. Information regarding amendments, modifications, extensions and terminations to a treaty is also included.

**Print:** Ready Reference: KZ 118 .W55 1998
C. U.N. Multilateral Treaty Travaux Préparatoires

The travaux préparatoires (preparatory works) are the official record of the negotiations or “legislative history” of a treaty. According to article 32 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties “[r]ecourse may be had to supplementary means of interpretation, including the preparatory work of the treaty and the circumstances of its conclusion.” There are a number of sources for locating information about the negotiation of a particular treaty under the auspices of the United Nations.

First, the travaux may have already been compiled for you. Try a keyword search in the catalog JACOB (https://www.law.gwu.edu/library) using the name of the treaty and the term “travaux préparatoires”. A second method for finding information about the negotiating history of a multilateral treaty is by consulting a work called a “commentary.” Generally arranged by article or thematically, they discuss the drafting history of a particular treaty in addition to identifying relevant case law and state practice. Be sure to check the footnotes for cites to relevant drafting documents. Thirdly, a law review or journal article may discuss the travaux of a particular treaty. Use the periodical databases discussed in part XVI of this guide to locate these. To search for a commentary in JACOB, simply search by keyword using the terms “commentary” or “guide” and the name of the treaty you are interested in.

There are also a number of useful websites for locating the travaux for a particular treaty. For major multilateral treaties there is generally a website for the treaty secretariat. These will generally include the negotiating documents in a separate section of the website. The following websites may also be helpful:

Historical Archives of the Audiovisual Library of International Law

The historical archives provides a list of multilateral treaties by date as well as subject. For each treaty included, a useful procedural history is included as well as a list of important preparatory documents.

International Law Commission
http://legal.un.org/ilc/

The International Law Commission (ILC) is a body of international legal scholars which was tasked by the General Assembly of the U.N. with codifying and developing international law. Numerous important international law documents have been drafted by this body. Their website provide access to the documentation of their annual sessions as well as other documentation.
According to the website, it “provides access to the official records of a series of diplomatic conferences, convoked by the United Nations in order to negotiate and adopt several treaties based on drafts worked out by the International Law Commission and considered by the Sixth (Legal) Committee of the General Assembly.”

XI. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), sometimes popularly known as the World Court, is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The ICJ has its own publications program separate from the U.N., which means that many of the indexes and finding tools that focus on the U.N. do not include coverage of ICJ materials. ICJ publications are identified by their own unique sales numbers and do not use U.N. document symbols.

The ICJ’s first case was submitted in 1947. Prior to that time, for the period 1920 to 1946 the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), under the sponsorship of the League of Nations, was the predecessor court to the ICJ.

The Court has both advisory and contentious jurisdiction. Under Article 96 of the U.N. Charter the "General Assembly or the Security Council may request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on any legal question." (Art. 96(1), U.N. Charter) In addition, "other organs of the United Nations and specialized agencies, which may at any time be so authorized by the General Assembly, may also request advisory opinions of the Court on legal questions arising within the scope of their activities." (Art. 96(2), UN Charter).

A. Sources of ICJ Documents and Guides to the Court

1. ICJ Documentation


This is the official set of the Court's judgments, advisory opinions, and orders. Issued within a few months of a decision, these documents first appear as paperbound slip opinions. These paperbound versions contain the permanent pagination found in the bound volumes for each year. Indexes are published after a three or four year delay. All material is bilingual, with English and French on facing pages.

**Print:** SL1: KZ 214 .I58

**Online:**

The ICJ web site contains information on the establishment and history of the Court, its rules of procedure, and its judgments, advisory opinions, orders, oral pleadings, and written statements.

**LEXIS ADVANCE** (1947-)

**WESTLAW EDGE** (1947-)

**HeinOnline:** United Nations Law Collection (1947-2017)
Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents/Memoires, Plaidoiries et Documents. The Hague: International Court of Justice, 1947-.

The Pleadings contains the documentation relating to cases decided by the ICJ, including written pleadings, record of oral proceedings, correspondence, and other materials. Documents are either in English or French, depending on the original language. Because of the length and number of documents relating to a case, there may be several volumes of pleadings for one case. The publication of the Pleadings volumes is slow and irregular. As of this writing, the set is not available in electronic format.

Print: SL1: KZ 218 .P54

Online: ICJ web site: http://www.icj-cij.org/

See the individual case on the ICJ’s website for links to documents, oral arguments, etc.

Yearbook. The Hague: International Court of Justice, 1946/47-.

The Yearbook contains biographies of judges, descriptions of cases before the Court and a list of the major publications of the Court. The publication delay of about 2 to 3 years detracts some from this otherwise highly useful reference source.

Print: SL1: KZ 6273 .I68


2. Treatises on the Court


Devaney, James Gerard, Fact-finding before the International Court of Justice. (Cambridge University Press, 2016) Available on Cambridge Core


This is an unofficial but handy compilation of key documents relating to the ICJ. The Charter of the U.N., the Statute of the Court, various versions of the Rules of Court, relevant U.N. resolutions, and declarations accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court are reprinted in this work.

**Print:** SL1: KZ 6277 .D63 1991


The fourth edition of this excellent four volume work covers the organizational and procedural issues of the Court and includes primary materials, cases, and a bibliography.

**Print:** Reserve: KZ 6275 .R67 2016 vols. 1-4 (Earlier edition on SL1)


Excellent one volume article-by-article analysis of the statute of the International Court of Justice.


**XII. International Arbitration Awards**

International arbitration involves the resolution of disputes between states by means of a tribunal appointed by the parties. Individual tribunals vary greatly in origin and structure. Because there has been no systematic collection of decisions made by the various arbitral tribunals, the U.N. has attempted to fill the gap by publishing the set described below.

*Reports of International Arbitral Awards.* (United Nations, 1948-).

This set compiles the texts of international arbitral awards, and it includes retrospective coverage back to 1920. Texts are in either English or French, but the headnotes appear in both languages. Most volumes have an index, but there is no cumulative index. The preface of volume I notes other sources for earlier international arbitral awards.

**Print:** SL1: KZ 203 .R47

**Online:**

XIII. United Nations Information on Bloomberg Law, Lexis, and Westlaw Edge

The newspaper and journal databases on Lexis Advance and Westlaw Edge provide the full text of articles discussing and analyzing U.N. activities, but as of this writing, neither service provides comprehensive electronic access to U.N. documentation. Westlaw Edge also has UNCITRAL databases that provide model laws from the U.N. Commission on International Trade Law as well as the texts of arbitration and conciliation rules adopted by the U.N. Commission on International Trade Law, as published in *International Legal Materials (ILM)* and the International Economic Law Documents database. The *U.N. Chronicle* is also available in Westlaw Edge for the years 1984-present.

Both services provide the full text of *International Legal Materials (ILM)* (Westlaw Edge: 1980 to date and Lexis Advance: 1962 to date). *ILM* selectively republishes documents of importance to international law, and such documents frequently include selected U.N. items, particularly Security Council resolutions.

As of this writing, Bloomberg Law does not provide access to UN materials.

XIV. United Nations Information on the Web

The UN website [http://www.un.org/](http://www.un.org/) serves as the starting point for many areas of UN research. In addition, many specialized agencies of the UN such as the FAO and the WHO maintain their own websites.

The *Directory of United Nations System Organizations* ([http://www.unsceb.org/directory](http://www.unsceb.org/directory)) provides a listing of all United Nations Organizations (UNOs), their acronyms and the location of their headquarters. If a particular organization maintains a website, a link is provided. The following is a selective list of UN websites:

- [https://library.un.org/](https://library.un.org/) - Dag Hammarskjold Library
- [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/Home.aspx) - Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- [http://www.unhchr.org/](http://www.unhchr.org/) - UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- [http://www.iло.org](http://www.iло.org) - International Labour Organization (ILO)
- [http://www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) - UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- [http://www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org) - UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
In addition, there are also several unofficial sites which contain useful information about the UN:

**University of Minnesota, Human Rights Library**
http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/

The Human Rights Library website contains a substantive body of international human rights research material for the U.N. Charter and Treaty-based human rights organizations as well as links to other sources of human rights documentation.

**Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS)**
http://www.acuns.org/

The ACUNS is an international association of scholars, teachers, and practitioners who are active in the work and study of international organizations. Their website offers access to their newsletter and publications.

**United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA)**
http://www.unausa.org/

The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan national organization. Their site includes many links to policy documents and updates on U.S. participation in the United Nations.

United States Mission to the United Nations (United States Representative to the United Nations)
https://usun.state.gov

The U.S. Mission's site provides access to speeches and policy documents concerning U.S. participation in the United Nations.

**XV. Locating UN Materials Using JACOB, the Law Library's Catalog**

**JACOB** provides information about materials found in the Law Library's collection, providing information such as author, title, publisher, date of publication, latest issue of a journal or supplement received, whether the material is on the shelf or checked out, and its location. A **JACOB+** search will also return references to periodical literature and other sources about the United Nations.

Many materials from and about the United Nations or its various sub-bodies can be identified by using https://www.law.gwu.edu/library.

**A. Author or Subject Search**

- Using the “Advanced Search”, search "United Nations" as an author or subject.
- Search under the specific name of the U.N. sub-body, e.g., "United Nations General Assembly," "United Nations General Assembly Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination," "United Nations Human Rights Committee."
Given the large number of possible author and subject entries, and the intricacies of the U.N. hierarchy, one reasonable approach is to begin by using the general author or subject entry "United Nations" and then scroll through the lists of more specific entries.

Independent U.N. institutions can be searched under their own name. For example: to locate materials by the ICJ, click on “author” and type "International Court of Justice."

B. Keyword Search

Keyword searching provides great flexibility in searching when trying to locate a document and only a few words of a title are known. Select “Any field” from the pull-down menus in the advanced search template.

Connectors (“and”, "or" or “and not”) can be used to combine words. They may be selected by using the pull-down menus in the advanced search template.

If you wish to search for a specific phrase, enclose the search expression in quotes.

Words may be right-hand truncated using an asterisk ('*') in place of other characters. The '*' wildcard may also be embedded in a search string. You may use '?' to replace a single character anywhere within a word.

Example: United Nations and treat* will retrieve books, reports and other documents that contain these words in the title, author, subject and note fields of a bibliographic record.

Due to the multilingual nature of U.N. publications, titles whose brief form appears in a language other than English may in fact have an English language title included.

(Example: Recueil des Arrets/Reports of Judgments: A keyword search in JACOB using words in either language would retrieve the title.)

Clicking on the “Advanced Search” link provides greater flexibility in limiting searches to particular fields (ie., author, title, subject, note) or limiting to particular types of materials (ie., journal, book microform, etc.)

XVI. Legal and Non-Legal Periodical Indexes and Full Text Databases

Citations to and/or full text articles discussing the U.N. and its various institutions and activities can be found through the following databases:

Current Index to Legal Periodicals (CILP)

Published by the Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library, University of Washington Law School, this publication indexes articles under broad topics (“International Law,” “Constitutional Law,” “Administrative Law,” etc.) from over 300 legal publications. The index is published weekly.

Online:
http://law.gwu.libguides.com/cilp/cilp_issues

WESTLAW EDGE: (most recent 8 weeks)
**LegalTrac (1980-)**

Online:

*LegalTrac* database via Burns Law Library

**Legal Source (1918-present)**

Online:

*Legal Source* database via Burns Law Library

Legal Source provides indexing to articles appearing in over 500 law reviews, journals, yearbooks and government publications.

**HeinOnline**


Provides access to hundreds of full text law reviews and journals. Most notably, it provides access to the full run of the American Journal of International Law and International Legal Materials. [http://www.law.gwu.edu/Library/Research > Database Subscriptions](http://www.law.gwu.edu/Library/Research > Database Subscriptions).

**Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals (1985-)**

Online: *HeinOnline:*


Provides indexing to non-U.S. and U.K. law journals.

**Gelman Library Databases: [http://www.gelman.gwu.edu/](http://www.gelman.gwu.edu/)**

Gelman Library provides access to non-legal bibliographic and full text databases on a variety of topics. To access international databases from Gelman Library’s homepage:

- Select “Subject Databases” under search bar in middle of the home page > Select “International Relations” under the “Social Sciences” heading on the “Databases by Subject Area and A-Z” page.

**XVII. Recommended Reading about the United Nations**

**A. International Organizations**


**B. The United Nations Generally**


**C. Reform and the Future of the United Nations:**


**D. The United Nations and Human Rights**


E. Peacekeeping and Collective Security


