

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS, FROM A TO Z
(*ABC des Nations Unies*, Groupe de Boeck, Bruxelles, Édition Bruylant,
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In 2011, the Department of Public Information of the United Nations published the updated edition of a book published regularly since 1947, which plays the role of a key introduction in the UN universe. Later, in 2012, the book was also translated and published in French.

In the fundamental bibliography of the domain, *ABC des Nations Unies* is a “sine qua non” presence, whilst also being a key element in the important book collection regarding international relations; it showcases the UN’s structure, its organizational mechanisms, its activities and main preoccupations. With a preface written by Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General of the organization, the book can be read in several ways, depending on the interest and professional level of each individual. An official document on the one hand, a manual on the other hand, the text has its temporal limits (which justifies its regular editing and reprinting) and limits its terms of its perspective (the self-critical vision is almost non-existent).

The emphasis falls on the organization’s contribution to international peace and security in the political, technological, socio-economic development, human rights, humanitarian actions, disarmament policy, international law and decolonization domains.

This edition presents the latest updates in all these areas, the way in which the largest international organization, whose main goal is to ensure “world peace”, “the upholding of human rights”, “international cooperation” and “the upholding of the international law” coped with and adapted to the challenges in this field. Thus, for example, during 2010, ONU-Femmes (UN Women) was created, which has a substantial contribution to the optimization of the UN’s programs in all areas, standing testimony to the progress made in gender equality and the empowerment of women in general. (V.)

Designed as a complete and compact manual, as described by its publishers in the brief presentation on the back cover, the volume contains data on the member states, the peacekeeping operations, it shows the ways in which the organization’s information centers can be contacted.

The body of the text is divided in seven chapters, each with corresponding subsections. The first is dedicated to the UN Charter, to the United Nations’ structure and system. The UN Charter, namely its goals and principles, the composition and official languages are described in detail. Also, the essential information regarding each component, i.e. the General Assembly, the Security

Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, the Secretariat and the budget is systematically structured.

The programs, funds, research and training institutions and other similar entities from the UN's system are brought into discussion one by one, emphasizing their key aspects.

Great detail is put into describing the specialized institutions and other very well-known bodies, such as: WHO – the World Health Organization, IMF – the International Monetary Fund, ILO – the International Labor Organization, UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, ICAO – the International Civilian Aviation Organization, IMO – the International Maritime Organization, ITU – the International Telecommunications Union, UPU – the Universal Postal Union, WMO – the World Meteorological Organization, WTO – the World Tourism Organization and others similar to these, which are the largest international organizations from various fields.

In the second chapter, *Peace and international security*, the focus falls on the Security Council, the General Assembly, the conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace enforcement policy, the sanctions that can be applied to states and, last but not least, on how to consolidate peace. Electoral assistance is one of the main mandates of the missions conducted by the UN.

In the following, the actual way in which the UN acts on the field is presented, through the UN missions, which have already been completed or the ongoing ones. These are broken down by continents, namely countries where the presence of the organization was required.

Disarmament, with all its ramifications, namely which are the disarmament mechanisms employed by the organization and how it defines the weapons of mass destruction, are the subject of a different subsection, as well as is the topic of the peaceful use of space.

Since we are discussing about a reference volume in the field, an authentic reference point for international relations specialists, as well as for the UN mission officials and members, we believe that a complete synchronization would be required, between the information listed throughout this text and the ones on the official website of the organization, as well as the exact mention of the names of the missions, with all possible variants thereof. We should note, in the spirit of rigor, by way of example, a discordance regarding MINUNEP, *La Mission des Nations Unies au Népal*, a term used in this volume as an abbreviation of syntagm in French, official UN language (115-116), whilst we can find the same mission on the UN's official website, at <http://un.org.np/unmin-archive/>, accessed on 07.01.2016, under a different name, i.e. UNMIN, *United Nations Mission in Nepal*, which comes from English (also an official language of the UN).

The Nepal mission, MINUNEP/UNMIN, was a mission to support the peace process in the region, created based on the no. 1740 resolution of the Security Council, on the 23rd of January 2007, and ended on the 15th of January 2011, according to the official website previously mentioned.

In the next chapter, regarding *Economic and social development*, the text is divided in four subsections: the coordination of the activities for development, the economic development (*this refers to specific fields and the related international organizations, such as the development of agriculture through the UN Food and Agriculture Organization – FAO, the industrial development through the International Labor Organization and others*), the social development (*the policy of fighting against hunger, of reducing poverty, the health policy – fighting against polio, the UN’s battle against HIV/AIDS, against malaria and tuberculosis; about education, research and development, social integration, crime, drugs, terrorism, about science, culture and communication etc.*) and sustainable development (*major topics are tackled here, such as: environment friendly actions, climate change and global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, biodiversity, pollution and overfishing, the protection of the marine environment, meteorology, climate and water; natural resources and energy; nuclear security*).

In the fourth chapter, *Human Rights*, the focus falls on the tools and bodies activating in this sector, as well as the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights. Subjects aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights, the fight against discrimination and many others are also promoted.

Next, in a logical order, follows a chapter dedicated to *Humanitarian action*. Here, there are presented the coordination methods of the humanitarian actions; the assistance and protection activities; the international protection and assistance given to the refugees etc., in the end bringing into discussion the assistance offered to the Palestinian refugees.

The sixth chapter, *International Law*, begins with the judicial regulation of disputes, continuing with the development and encoding of the international law; the international trade law; the environmental law; maritime law; the international humanitarian law and international terrorism.

The last chapter, *The Decolonization*, addresses the following topics: the international trusteeship regime; the non-autonomous territories and the declaration granting independence to the colonial countries and peoples.

The volume concludes with the appendices and the UN member states, the adhesion dates, the quota-part norm and the population of each country; the years when the new members joined, the number of countries belonging to the organization and their names; the concluded and ongoing peacekeeping missions; other data and information directly linked to the UN.

Documented, but at the same time synthetic, the volume in question constitutes the faceted mirror of the United Nations’ activity globally, concentrating the fundamental information which constitutes the cornerstone of any subtle incursion in the activity or conceptual organization of this polymorphous entity, with involvement on the horizontal, as well as the vertical axis of the contemporary human society’s structure.