

PRACTICES OF  
**DIPLOMATIC  
PROTOCOL**  
IN GENEVA

Alice Hecht  
Jean-Marc Boulgaris  
Idriss Jazairy

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# Letter of the Executive Director of UNITAR

For the past 50 years, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has been developing capacities of individuals, organizations, and institutions to enhance global decision-making and support country-level action for shaping a better future.

Within UNITAR, the Multilateral Diplomacy Programme (MDP) provides capacity-building training to diplomats, international civil servants, and other government officials, alongside resources to strengthen their performance in multilateral working environments. Five years ago, MDP published the first edition of the *Glossary of Terms for UN delegates*. In 2011, the program released the *Manual for UN delegates*, now available in both French and Arabic. It is in line with its mandate and constant endeavour to provide its beneficiaries with the most up-to-date and pragmatic tools that MDP is now making its *Practices of Diplomatic Protocol in Geneva* publicly available.

UN diplomats are requested to respect the protocol rules in place at the office to which they are assigned. In addition to these rules, each duty station operates according to a certain number of specificities. A diplomat accredited to the United Nations in Geneva can thus be called upon to deal with a range of protocol rules issued from three different sources: the United Nations, the Republic and Canton of Geneva and to a lesser extent the Swiss Confederation.

Newcomers to the Geneva diplomatic life are mostly eager to gather information and quality resources that could steer their behavior in society as well as in official meetings. The Multilateral Diplomacy Programme of UNITAR is responding to this demand by providing to all diplomats the keys to understanding the rules to be followed in a multilateral setting, specifically in Geneva.

I take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank Alice Hecht as well as Ambassadors Jean-Marc Boulgaris and Idriss Jazairy for their precious contributions to this publication. I also express my gratitude to the Swiss Mission in Geneva for their support which made the project possible.



Nikhil Seth  
United Nations Assistant Secretary-General  
Executive Director  
UNITAR

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- The authors of this brochure, Alice Hecht, Ambassador Jean-Marc Boulgaris and Ambassador Idriss Jazairy for the remarkable work they accomplished by compiling their knowledge and experience into this instrumental publication;
- The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organizations in Geneva for having contributed to the printing of this brochure;
- The team members of MDP who have contributed to the realization of this publication and in particular Rabih el-Haddad, Manager of the Multilateral Diplomacy Programme of UNITAR, Evelyne de Mevius, Franz Thiel, and Nancy Yacoub.

# Biography of the authors



## Alice Hecht

Alice Hecht is a senior consultant at UNITAR on protocol in multilateral organizations and its impact on the conduct of negotiations. Prior to heading the Office of Protocol of the United Nations Headquarters in New York (from 2006 to 2009), Alice Hecht was the Director of Administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (from 2003 to 2005). In the period between the two Gulf Wars (from 1992 to 2003), Alice Hecht served as Chief Administrative Officer of the United Special Commission on Iraq where she directed the financial, human resources and logistics services required for the implementation of the United Nations mandates on the destruction of weapons of mass destruction. Alice Hecht is also a lecturer at the Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Stratégiques (CEDS), Paris, and at the International School of Protocol and Diplomacy (ISPD), Brussels. Prior assignments have included positions as Economic Affairs Officer and Population Affairs Officer in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Alice Hecht was born and educated in Belgium. She holds a Licence in social sciences from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium.



## Ambassador Jean-Marc Boulgaris

Jean-Marc Boulgaris is a senior consultant at UNITAR and a former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva. He started his career in the diplomatic service in 1968 and has held many postings, including Deputy Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the United Nations in New York, Political Director of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador to Denmark and Colombia. He also represented Switzerland in meetings such as GATT, EFTA, OECD and the International Energy Agency.

In 2003-2004, Ambassador Boulgaris was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He served as member of the UNITAR Board of Trustees and is a member of the Board of the Friends of the Conference of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Economic and Social Council in Geneva, Switzerland.



## Ambassador Idriss Jazairy

An Algerian career diplomat and international civil servant, Idriss Jazairy, M.A. (Oxon), ancien élève ENA (France), MPA (Harvard), was an Adviser to the Presidency of Algeria, an Ambassador to Belgium as well as to the United States and a Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations located in Switzerland. At the multilateral level, Idriss Jazairy was President of IFAD, a UN specialized agency. He is, inter alia, the lead author of “The State of World Rural Poverty – An Enquiry into its Causes and Consequences”(New York University).

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# Chapter 1



## The purpose of this publication

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Expected users of these guidelines

## 1.1 Introduction

When the delegates of the 20 founding Member States of the International Telegraph Conference decided in 1868 that the recently created International Telegraph Union (ITU) would establish a permanent organization in Bern, it started a tradition for States to choose Switzerland as the headquarters of a burgeoning number of international organizations. In 1874, the International Postal Union followed suit and chose Bern as its centre. Following the end of the First World War, Geneva became the *de facto* capital of international organizations.

As a result of the Paris Peace Conference, two major international organizations with headquarters in Geneva were founded. The Treaty of Versailles established the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919 and the League of Nations in 1920. The decision to reinvigorate the importance of international organizations as the core of international peace led to the creation of the United Nations with its main headquarters in New York. At the same time, the founding members of the United Nations decided that Geneva should remain at the centre of international diplomacy. The European Office of the United Nations was created in the Palais des Nations, and became the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) in 1966. The international position of Geneva was strengthened in the subsequent decades when numerous agencies, funds and programmes, research institutes and other international organizations selected Geneva to establish their headquarters.

51 States belonged to the United Nations when the Charter came into force on 24 October 1945. 193 States are now parties to it and all have a representation in New York. Two Observer States, the Holy See and the State of Palestine, also have a permanent mission in New York and in Geneva. The number of States with a permanent mission in Geneva is slightly less important and amounts to 173.

Multilateral diplomacy calls for a renewed awareness of protocol rules and customs with a cross-cultural perspective. These well-established and time-honoured rules allow nations and peoples from a wide range of cultures and values to conduct their activities with dignity in an environment devoid of frictions. Such animosity can easily arise when one of the parties concerned does not feel treated with respect. Hierarchy and structure provide a framework for negotiations, the essence of diplomacy, to be organized in a clear and transparent manner.

Even well-experienced protocol practitioners can find the protocol practices of the multilateral world challenging in comparison to the well-defined protocol rules that reign in a bilateral environment. Newcomers to Geneva are faced with numerous challenges in dealing with the complexity of the multilateral environment. This guide aims to provide answers to the questions that arise when organizing and attending both a public or private event.

Who is entitled to diplomatic privileges and immunities? How is the order of speakers at a conference decided? Many questions can emerge when organizing an official or social event attended by a number of dignitaries. What is the difference between the Head of an agency and the Head of a fund or programme? Who has precedence? What is the status of United Nations officials? How does the Swiss Confederation organize its protocol? Is it appropriate to give a gift to a United Nations official? How should the President of an international corporation, which supports major United Nations related activities, be received?

Current protocol practices are rooted in history but evolve continuously. There is always a legitimate reason behind a protocol rule or practice.

Protocol is not set in stone. It echoes cultural and political environments and has to be flexible in order to serve its main purpose of supporting relationships between actors working in a multilateral environment. A brief history of protocol is presented in the first part of this publication. It provides the rationale behind these processes and is aimed at helping protocol practitioners to make the necessary adjustments in particular situations.

The words “protocol” and “etiquette” are often used indiscriminately. “Protocol” in its strict sense refers to a set of rules and procedures that regulate the relationships between Governments and their representatives on both official and private occasions. “Etiquette” refers to the manners and behaviours of individuals whether on official or private business. All States recognized as such by the United Nations follow the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. International protocol holds that a Head of State takes precedence over all other officials, and that Heads of State rank in the order that they took office. In turn, etiquette and manners reflect a culture specific to a certain country. A handshake is appropriate in some cultures but not in all. Dress codes vary from country to country.

In reality, there are many overlaps between protocol and etiquette. While this publication focuses on protocol, we have requested Ambassador Idriss Jazairy to provide a summary of the etiquette and decorum practices in use in the context of the United Nations at Geneva (UNOG). The reader will find this chapter in the afterword of this publication.

## 1.2 Expected users of these guidelines

This publication is primarily intended for the staff members of the permanent missions in Geneva who are responsible for the on-going liaison between the permanent missions and the United Nations organizations in Geneva, as well as for organizing the attendance of high-Government officials to United Nations events. It also covers subjects of interest to the wide range of international community members in Geneva, whether representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO) or other entities linked to the work of the United Nations.

This publication may also be helpful to participants in other kinds of international meetings and conferences, whether organized by civil society, NGO’s or the private sector.



This publication is not a substitute for the detailed protocol guidelines and administrative instructions provided by the United Nations in New York (UNHQ), the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), the Swiss Confederation and the Republic and Canton of Geneva. These documents are listed in the bibliography at the end of this publication and can in part be found in the annexes of this brochure.

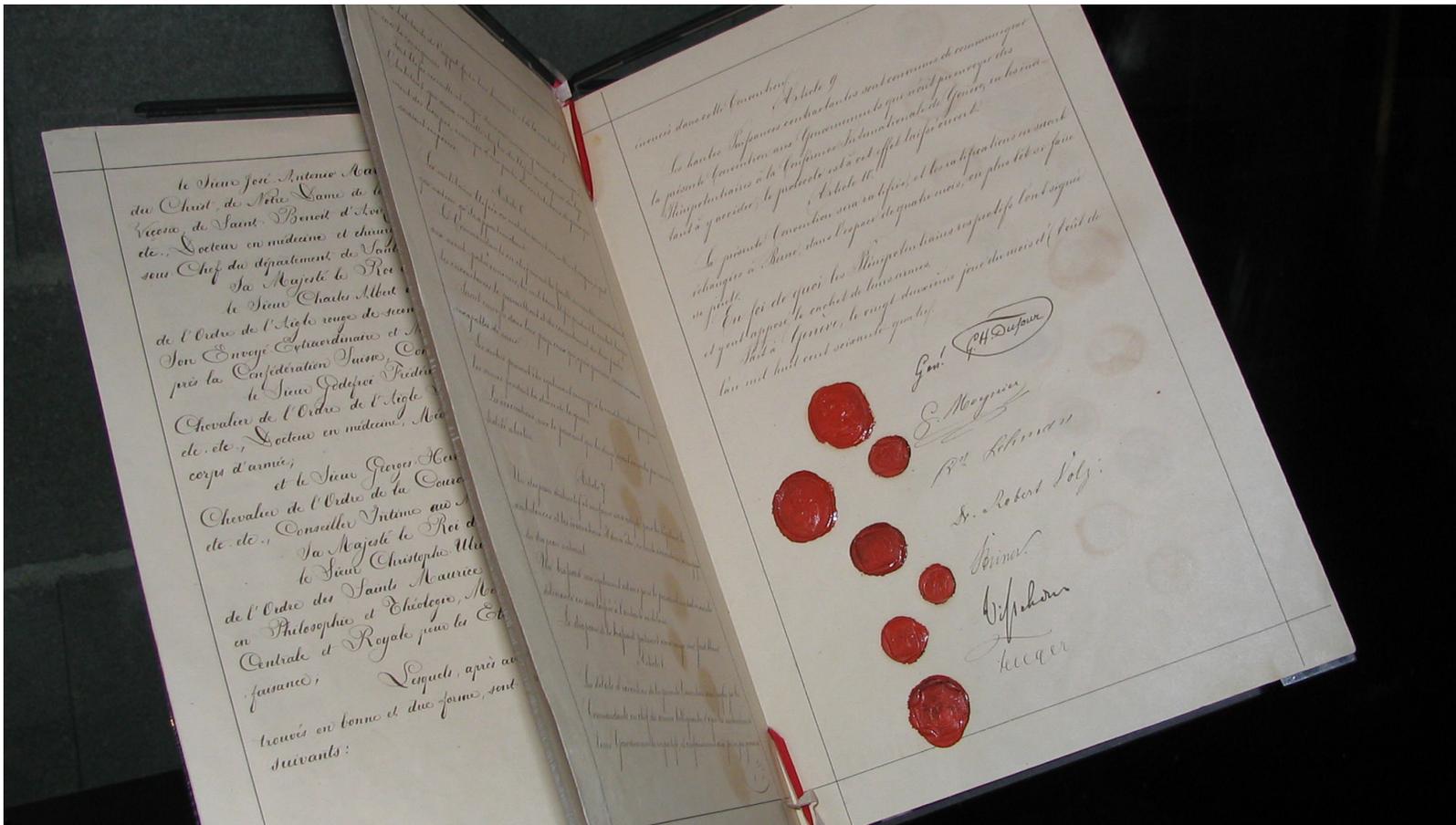
The objective of this publication is to provide an overview of the protocol rules, regulations and customs as practiced within the United Nations family in Geneva.



Whenever we refer to a delegate, an official, a staff member, etc., we could be speaking of either a female or a male. This publication uses the inelegant but understandable wording of he/she, him/her and his/her. Likewise, ‘they’, ‘them’ and ‘their’ imply either gender.



# Chapter 2



## The evolution of protocol in diplomacy and negotiations

- 2.1 The meaning of the word “protocol”
- 2.2 The origins of protocol
- 2.3 Protocol in ancient history
- 2.4 Protocol in the Byzantine Empire
- 2.5 The development of protocol practices in the Catholic Church and the Renaissance
- 2.6 The Congress of Vienna of 1815

## 2.1 The meaning of the word “protocol”

Protocol is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “the official procedure or system of rules governing affairs of State or diplomatic occasions”. The term protocol is derived from the Greek word *protokollen*, a fusion of the words *protos* (first) and *kola* (glue). It referred to a sheet of paper glued to the front of a document to provide it with a seal of authenticity, a practice that serves as a reminder of today’s Letters of Credentials.

The term “protocol” is nowadays used in the medical, scientific, and even legal and political fields. One of the most famous uses of the term “protocol” is the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement on climate change. In the scientific and research arena, a “protocol” will refer to the record of scientific and experimental observations. In all cases, the term provides the idea of strict rules and procedures recognized and accepted by all concerned parties.

In the world of multilateral diplomacy, protocol provides a clear and transparent system that allows for all participants to an event organized by the United Nations, whether public or private, to understand the position they are being given in all aspects of their official functions.

## 2.2 The origins of Protocol

We tend to relate the emergence of protocol with the development of States in the context of international relations. The more global our world has become, the more relevant it is to appreciate the logics and reasons behind a so-called protocol system. Protocol provides a framework to support international relationships and negotiations. The multiplication of States since the creation of the United Nations has given a renewed impetus to the importance of protocol. Of course, rules of protocol have long preexisted States. The need to negotiate issues and to find peaceful solutions to frictions arising out of territorial disputes or interactions between communities with different cultures and traditions is as old as humanity. The exchange of gifts between parties, the recognition of titles associated with a social and political position, the use of emblems to distinguish a group from another and the hosting of social events have always been part of human relations and used as tools during negotiations. Envoys representing the interests of a group in negotiations with another group and the immunity provided to these envoys have always been indispensable for communication between groups and parties.

Formal rules of protocol are not part of the world of private institutions and corporations. However, the same principles apply everywhere. Commercial negotiations that bring together individuals across borders have also always used an unwritten system of precedence. Corporations negotiate with each other through representatives who are entrusted to make decisions on their behalf. Moreover, such negotiations are usually accompanied by a social event under the same principles as the social events organized at the occasion of an international conference.

## 2.3 Protocol in ancient history

Traces of protocol can be found throughout ancient history. Egypt had the basics of a diplomatic system back in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. when dealing with neighbouring States. By the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., China had organized a system of missions to manage the immensity of its territory.

Messengers were widely used in ancient Greece and Greek mythology; depicting a system of gods led by Hermes to ensure their security. Messengers and envoys were protected through an unwritten but recognized system of immunities from both aggression and arrest. They were the first true diplomats of the Western world. During times of war, they provided an on-going mean of communication between the battling parties.

As early as the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., Greece began to expand throughout the Mediterranean world and established a constellation of city-States linked by a common culture and commercial interests. The model of city-States was very different from how we understand States today. For instance, there was no Head of State, no common Government, not even a common military system. To the contrary, these city-States were often in conflict with each other and established alliances when necessary to defend common interests. The system of city-States eventually dominated all the territories within the Mediterranean Sea. Colonies were set up by Greek emigration.

The prosperity of the city-States and the distances between them led to the development of a system of representation and reciprocity through the use of *Proxenos*. A *Proxenos* is the equivalent of what we would call an honorary consul – a representative looking after the interests of another city-State's citizens. The *Proxenos* was provided with a *Proxenia*, a document that established his credentials.

The *Proxenos*' main function was to defend the economic and political interests of the city-State he represented. The effectiveness of the *Proxenos* rested upon his ability to develop a network of political, economic and social connections that he would use to promote the interests of the city he represented. As such, *Proxenos* needed to have an understanding of the local politics and to be excellent negotiators. Their influence was primordial to prevent disagreements from escalating into military conflicts. They understood that peace was the prerequisite to prosperity. In case of conflict, they were expected to use all their political influence and connections to engage the parties in peace negotiations.

There is one preexisting condition for the materialization of protocol in diplomacy and international affairs: the desire of the parties to solve problems through constructive engagements rather than through the use of force. Throughout history, we can see how diplomacy and protocol progressed when nations abandoned warfare in favour of negotiations.

When nations extend their hegemony through sheer military strength, there is no avenue for diplomacy and protocol to flourish. The Roman Empire in its hegemony had a policy of approaching and solving problems through territorial expansion. Resistance to Rome's rule was met by fierce military power as the Empire used to solve problems by imposing its will through the use of force. As long as it was in full strength, the Empire did not see the need to give consideration to the concerns of its neighbours. The strength of the army coupled with a strong centralized power gave full control to the Empire's leaders to expand the realm of their territorial influence through brutal force.

Peace demands that all parties are treated with respect and that their views are listened to in times of disagreement. Even though States are rarely, if ever, partners of equal political and socio-economic strength, rules of protocol allow for the parties and their representatives to feel that they are treated as equals. In a way, protocol neutralizes the possibility for human emotions to derail collaborative relationships between States by disregarding issues such as pride, inferiority or even the physical size of those involved.

Inevitably, following their separation into two States, with the Eastern Roman Empire having its capital in Constantinople and the remnants of the Roman Empire having its capital in Rome, pre-eminence in world affairs was lost. Neither faction had the ability of imposing its political agenda on other nations through the sheer use of force.

To fill this power vacuum, the political influence of the Church grew further when the Western Roman Empire was destroyed, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century of our era. Precedence and protocol emerged as important tools in the rivalry between the Roman Catholic Church and the Byzantine Empire.

## 2.4 Protocol in the Byzantine Empire

The Emperors in Constantinople developed a system of complex ceremonies and rules of precedence to maintain their political influence. The end of the Western Roman Empire presented the opportunity for the Emperor in Constantinople to claim that he was the legitimate heir of the Roman Empire. The competition for political power with the Roman Catholic Church became fierce. As the importance of the Roman Catholic Church increased all over Europe, so did protocol. The envoys of the Pope from Rome were greeted around Europe – but especially in Constantinople – with sumptuous and complicated ceremonies to provide an image of an Emperor with a level of power and wealth that in reality he did not have. As the Empire was declining, the protocol followed grew more and more painfully intricate and the expression “byzantine” became the definition for situations rendered unduly complicated through the use of complex of processes.

## 2.5 The development of protocol practices in the Catholic Church and the Renaissance

The authority of the Roman Catholic Church expanded throughout Europe and the Pope had Papal emissaries dispatched to the various royal courts. These emissaries had precedence over secular envoys, a practice still followed in some Catholic countries where the Nuncio<sup>1</sup> is granted the deanship of the diplomatic corps regardless of seniority. Rules and directives concerning the status and privileges of Papal envoys developed and served as a model for all secular envoys. Letters of Credentials provided the Papal envoys with the authority to act on behalf of the Pope.

1 The term Nuncio is derived from the word *nuncios* that means “envoy” in Latin.

Northern Italy followed in the steps of the Catholic Church and established its first embassies in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Ceremonies for the presentation of Ambassadors' credentials to the Head of State became the norm. Other European powers saw the benefit of having permanent missions and Ambassadors representing their interests in other countries and diplomatic representations spread to Eastern Europe, Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

As the number of royal courts grew, so did the competition between Ambassadors. Each Ambassador wanted precedence in ceremonies and social events to show the importance of his sovereign. In the absence of a system accepted by all courts, issues of precedence could take monumental proportions. A famous clash occurred in London in 1661 when a precedence issue was raised at the arrival of the carriages of the French and Spanish Ambassadors. War was narrowly averted.

## 2.6 The Congress of Vienna of 1815

The prime objective of the Congress was, in the aftermath of the end of the Napoleonic wars, to provide long-term peace for Europe. Despite its efforts, the decisions taken at the Congress did not prevent wars and conflicts in Europe. Nor did the Congress give birth to any international organization. However, it revealed a new approach for States to settle their disputes by establishing the principle of “conference diplomacy” as a tool for peaceful negotiations between conflicting factions.

It was the first time in the history of diplomacy that a conference of such dimension was organized. The conference lasted six months and was attended by some fifteen members of Royal families, 200 Princes and countless Heads of diplomatic missions. It brought together the victorious countries of Austria, Prussia, the United-Kingdom, Russia and representatives of Spain, Sweden, Portugal, the various kingdoms of Italy, the Holy See, etc. It also included vanquished France.

The presence of a number of Kings, Princes, Dukes, Ministers, and representatives created a quandary in the diplomatic hierarchy as each country wanted to impose its own system. The representatives of the major European powers also recognized the importance of protocol in diplomacy and adopted an international system of diplomatic ranks and titles still in use today: Ambassadors, Papal legates, Ministers plenipotentiary, Ministers resident, and Chargés d'affaires. They furthermore defined an order of precedence between diplomats according to their rank and the date of the presentation of their credentials.

The Congress also decided that country representatives would be seated at meetings according to the French alphabetical order and reaffirmed the principle of diplomatic immunity protecting diplomats from prosecution – a concept famously ignored by Napoleon when he refused to acknowledge diplomatic immunity by imprisoning several British diplomats accused of scheming against France.

The principle of organizing seating according to alphabetical order of country names is still followed today. If the English alphabetical order has taken pre-eminence, the French alphabet is still followed in conferences organized in Geneva and other French-speaking countries.



# Chapter 3



## International treaties on privileges and immunities

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The United Nations Charter, 26 June 1945
- 3.3 The General Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, 13 February 1946
- 3.4 The General Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies, 21 November 1947
- 3.5 The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 18 April 1961
- 3.6 Host Country Agreements

The Netherlands sign the United Nations Charter

26 June 1945  
UN Photo/McLain

## 3.1 Introduction

The fundamentals of diplomatic protocol are rooted in the system of “privileges and immunities”. This system allows diplomats to exercise their duties in a foreign country in full security of their person, the members of their household, their workplace (embassy or mission), their private residence, their documents, etc. When the United Nations was established, the privileges and immunities of its officials and of the Member States representatives needed to be defined. The current legal system is based on a series of international agreements starting with the United Nations Charter up until the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Immunities of 1961.

## 3.2 The United Nations Charter, 26 June 1945



- The codification of diplomatic intercourse and immunities was selected as a topic by the International Law Commission (ILC) at its first session in 1949.
- The issue became a regular agenda item at the meetings of the ILC until the UN Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities met in Vienna from 2<sup>nd</sup> March to 14 April 1961 and adopted the Convention.
- Delegates from 81 countries, 75 of which were members of the United Nations and 6 of related agencies or parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, attended the Conference.

The privileges and immunities of international organizations were largely uncharted territory when the United Nations was established in 1945. The Charter, in its Article 105, paragraph 1, specifies that “[t]he Organization shall enjoy in the territory of each of its Members such privileges and immunities are necessary for the fulfilment of its purposes”. The Preparatory Commission recognized that an adequate system of privileges and immunities was essential for officials of the United Nations to remain free from pressure exerted by Governments and to enable them to discharge their post’s duties efficiently.

## 3.3 The General Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, 13 February 1946

It was with on this background that the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations was negotiated and adopted by the General Assembly on 13 February 1946. Sometimes referred to as the New York Convention, it defines and specifies numerous issues related to the status of the United Nations, its assets and officials, in terms of privileges and immunities that must be granted to them by the Member States in which they reside.

According to the New York Convention, only the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary-Generals and the Assistant Secretary-Generals have diplomatic immunities. All other officials of the United Nations are granted functional immunities. In addition, UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNICEF were established by the General Assembly as funds and programmes of the United Nations. As such, they are covered by the 1946 Convention.

### 3.4 The General Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies, 21 November 1947

Subsequently, the General Assembly recognized the need for agencies to enjoy the status of a legal person and extended their privileges and immunities modelled on those granted to the United Nations. The General Assembly adopted the Convention specific to the agencies in November 1947. The Convention was submitted to the specialized agencies for acceptance and entered into force on 2 December 1948.

### 3.5 The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 18 April 1961

Finally, 16 years after the creation of the United Nations, the Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities took place in Vienna. It adopted the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, an international treaty that enumerates the privileges and immunities granted to the members, premises, and communications of diplomatic missions. It also distinguished between the various categories of the members of diplomatic missions. Two years later, the United Nations adopted a closely related treaty, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

In its preamble, the Vienna Convention enumerates these conditions by clearly stating “that the purpose of such privileges and immunities is not to benefit individuals but to ensure the efficient performance of the functions of diplomatic missions as representing States”.



## 3.6 Host Country Agreements

- The Host Country Agreement between Switzerland and the United Nations was signed on 19 April 1946. It followed the final meeting of the League of Nations held in Geneva on 12 April 1946. This session concerned itself with liquidating the League and transferring assets worth approximately 22 million USD in 1946 (including the Palace of Peace and the League's archives) to the UN. The League of Nations ceased to exist on 20 April 1946.
- Switzerland was a member of the League of Nations but remained an Observer State of the United Nations until 10 September 2002, when, further to a referendum, it decided to become a full Member of the United Nations.
- Switzerland had, despite its non-membership, participated in the interval in a number of specialized UN agencies. It had, for example, been a member of the International Telecommunication Union since 1866 and a member of the Universal Postal Union since 1875.

The relationships between the United Nations and the various host countries are governed by individual Host Country Agreements. These Agreements detail the responsibilities of each party and the level of privileges and immunities granted to the staff of the United Nations. They follow common principles especially with regard to the privileges and immunities of the United Nations, its staff and Government representatives coming to duty stations on United Nations business, as well as regarding security matters, taxation and internal administration. However, each Host Country Agreement has its own specificities.

# Chapter 4



## The United Nations system

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The United Nations
- 4.3 The funds and programmes, the research institutes and other related entities
- 4.4 The specialized agencies of the United Nations system
- 4.5 The related organizations

## 4.1 Introduction

The overall structure of the United Nations family impacts on its protocol and it is therefore important to have a sound understanding of its various components. Lots of confusion can arise when referring to the United Nations. The term is used indiscriminately, especially in the media, in reference to international organizations that are linked to different degrees to the United Nations itself. The mention of the United Nations will sometimes refer to the United Nations Secretariat, sometimes to the funds and programmes, sometimes to the various agencies that are part of the large United Nations family. We will, in this chapter, provide an overview of what constitutes the United Nations in its largest term, that is the United Nations itself, the funds and programmes, the research institutes, the agencies and the organizations associated to the United Nations through specific agreements.

## 4.2 The United Nations

The Charter defines six main organs<sup>2</sup>:

- **The General Assembly (UNGA)**

All Member States are represented at the General Assembly.

- **The Security Council (UNSC)**

Composed of five permanent Member States – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States – and ten non-permanent Member States elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term.

- **The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

The 54 Members of the ECOSOC are elected by the General Assembly.

- **The Trusteeship Council**

The Trusteeship Council is the only organ of the United Nations having completed its mandate.

- **The International Court of Justice (ICJ)**

The ICJ is composed of fifteen judges elected to nine-year terms by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The ICJ has its headquarters in The Hague.

- **The Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General**

The some 45,000 staff of the Secretariat implement, under the



The Trusteeship Council suspended operations on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1994, with the independence of Palau, the last remaining United Nations trust territory, on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed explanation, please visit <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/main-organs/index.html>

leadership of the Secretary-General, the work programmes mandated by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council<sup>3</sup>. As international civil servants, staff members and the Secretary-General answer to the United Nations alone for their activities, and take an oath not to seek or receive instructions from any Government or outside authority. The General Assembly approves the budget of the Secretariat through its Fifth Committee.

### 4.3 The funds and programmes, the research institutes and other related entities

The funds and programmes, the research institutes and the “other entities” that are part of the United Nations were all created by General Assembly resolutions. However, they have their own administrative and executive boards reviewing and approving their work programmes. UN funds and programmes are financed through voluntary contributions rather than assessed contributions. The budgets of all these organizations are reviewed by the same body, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), but are approved by their individual governing bodies.

This category includes:

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Office for Project Service (UNOPS)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- UN Women
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

As well as the following main research and training institutes:

- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
- United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
- United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
- United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)
- United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC)
- United Nations University (UNU)

3 Charter of the United Nations, Chapter XV, Article 97 .

## 4.4 The specialized agencies of the United Nations system

The United Nations specialized agencies<sup>4</sup> are autonomous organizations working with the United Nations and funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions. The agencies have each their own Member States assembly, similar to the UNGA, and are completely independent from both the United Nations and the UNGA with regards to their work programme and budget. The Head of each agency is selected by the agency's own governmental body according to its own rules. Some of the UN agencies, like the ILO, predate the creation of the United Nations. Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations that work with the United Nations and each other through the coordinating mechanism of ECOSOC.

The UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB<sup>5</sup>) provides a forum for coordination and cooperation on a whole range of substantive and management issues common to the United Nations and the United Nations system agencies. The CEB is chaired by the UN Secretary-General. In addition to its regular reviews of contemporary political issues and major concerns facing the UN system, on the basis of recommendations from bodies reporting to it, the CEB approves policy statements on behalf of the UN system as a whole.

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)
- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- World Bank Group (WBG)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- World Tourism Organization (WTO)

## 4.5 The related organizations

Some international organizations have long-term established relationships with the United Nations through individual arrangements:

- Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission (CTBTO PrepCom)
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)

<sup>4</sup> A complete list of the agencies can be found on: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> For further details, please visit: <https://undg.org/home/about-undg/governance-structures/chief-executives-board/>

# Chapter 5



## The four Protocol and Liaison Services of the United Nations

- 5.1 The Secretariat and the Offices away from Headquarters
- 5.2 The responsibilities and functions of the Protocol and Liaison Services
- 5.3 The support of the Host Country
- 5.4 The role of the permanent missions with regard to protocol support

A view of UN Offices in Nairobi

31 March 2011

UN Photo/Mark Garten

## 5.1 The Secretariat and the Offices away from Headquarters

In addition to the Secretariat in New York, referred to as the “Headquarters” (UNHQ), the United Nations has three “Offices away from Headquarters” (OAHs):

- The United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG)
- The United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV)
- The United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON)

These Offices are headed by a Director-General (DG) who acts as the direct representative of the Secretary-General.

New York, Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi host permanent missions with Permanent Representatives accredited to the respective United Nations Offices. These three Offices facilitate diplomatic activities and are major centres of United Nations conferences. While the United Nations maintains an important presence in many other countries, there are no other locations with permanent missions accredited to the United Nations.

The UNHQ and the three Offices away from Headquarters have each a Protocol and Liaison Service. Each of these offices acts as a liaison between the United Nations and the permanent missions of Member States, the Observer States, international organizations, other organizations of the United Nations system and entities approved by the General Assembly. It is to be noted that agencies of the UN system have their own protocol service.

## 5.2 The responsibilities and functions of the Protocol and Liaison Services

The core responsibilities and functions of the Protocol and Liaison Services in all four duty stations are similar:

- Provide assistance for the opening of new permanent missions;
- Plan and execute the ceremony for the presentation of credentials of newly appointed Permanent Representatives;
- Prepare and coordinate the visits to the United Nations by Heads of State, Heads of Government, Cabinet Ministers and other high-level officials, as well as the programme for their spouses;
- Receive and escort dignitaries during their visit at the United Nations;
- Coordinate with the various United Nations Offices for the visit of high-Government officials i.e Office of the Secretary-General, security, media, conference services, etc.;
- Accredite all Government officials, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and others accredited to the General Assembly, the representatives of non-governmental organizations, etc. attending United Nations events and provide the appropriate access passes;
- Register members of the diplomatic community and liaise with the Host Country on visa issuances and other administrative issues for the international diplomatic community;

- Accompany the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, and the Director-General on some official foreign travels, and provide protocol coverage of their activities at major international events;
- Organize the meetings of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, and the respective Directors-General with international dignitaries;
- Plan the social diplomatic events for the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, and the respective Directors-General, as well as those for their spouses;
- Oversee the planning and execution of United Nations ceremonies;
- Provide guidance and advice to permanent missions of Member States, permanent observer missions and permanent observer offices, and other requesting clarifications on United Nations protocol usage and practice, diplomatic etiquette, order of precedence and the use of the United Nations flag;
- Publish and maintain lists of dignitaries: the Manual of Protocol, the United Nations “Blue Book”, a list of Heads of State, Heads of Government, and Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and a list of United Nations senior officials<sup>7</sup>.

### 5.3 The support of the Host Country

The Host Country provides key services to the diplomatic community including:

- Airport arrival, departure and diplomatic “special” aircraft over flight and landing clearances;
- Security support for visiting dignitaries and for the diplomatic community, according to set rules and standards;
- Provision of diplomatic identity cards, privileges and immunities;
- Liaison with local authorities.

### 5.4 The role of the permanent missions with regards to protocol support

Permanent missions work together with the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service and the Host Country to ensure that the visits of their dignitaries to the United Nations are managed without flaws. This practice starts from the point of arrival to the point of departure in the duty station. Their duties in this regard can be summarized as follows:

- Be responsible for all logistic support for the visit of dignitaries i.e hotel, limousines, family, etc.;
- Liaise with the Host Country on airport courtesy, security arrangements, airport landing clearance, etc.;
- Inform the Service of protocol of the arrival of a new Permanent Representative and of any change in the diplomatic staff of the mission;
- Request the accreditation for the visit of the dignitaries;
- Request the proper passes for the dignitaries, their entourage, the accompanying press and media;
- Be responsible for all the official activities of dignitaries outside the United Nations.

<sup>7</sup> For further details, please visit <https://www.un.int/protocol/>



# Chapter 6



## Precedence at the United Nations

- 6.1 Order of precedence between Government and United Nations officials
- 6.2 Order of precedence between the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General
- 6.3 Order of precedence between Government representatives at the United Nations
- 6.4 Order of precedence between United Nations senior officials
- 6.5 Seating arrangements for the General Assembly and United Nations conferences
- 6.6 Order of speakers at the General Debate

A view of the Human rights Council Chamber

10 June 2014

UN Photo / Jean-Marc Ferré

## 6.1 Order of precedence between Government and United Nations officials

The task of establishing precedence is probably more complex at the United Nations than in any traditional national apparatus, simply because, as a rule, protocol and social functions involve several groups of participants. These include Heads of State or Government, Cabinet Ministers, Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers, senior United Nations officials, intergovernmental organizations and the larger UN family of specialized agencies. The task is compounded by having to balance the numerous national titles, such as State Secretary and Director-General or senior Vice-Minister and Special Adviser with cabinet rank, and to give each of them their proper due.

It is notable that the Manual of Protocol of the United Nations prepared by the New York Protocol and Liaison Service opens with the following statement: “This publication is by no means an exhaustive review of protocol matters and diplomatic etiquette”<sup>8</sup>.

The issue of precedence of Government representatives to the United Nations was settled in 1968 through a Note from the Secretary-General. The fact that it took twenty-three years after the creation of the Organization to come up with a satisfactory solution is a clear indication that the issue was the subject of heated debates<sup>9</sup>.

## 6.2 Order of precedence between the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General

The President of the General Assembly is held to be the most senior official, followed by the Secretary-General when the General Assembly is in session. That order is reversed for the rest of the year when the Assembly is not in session. This situation is rather unique in the world of multilateral diplomacy.

The underlying reason therefor is that the President of the General Assembly is elected by Member States for a one-year period and remains an official of his/her Government during his/her term as President. He/she presides over the General Assembly, which is the main deliberative, policy making, and representative organ of the United Nations. The General Assembly provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion, which encompasses the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. It meets in regular session from September to December each year, and thereafter as required.

The Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year, renewable term. He/she heads the Secretariat which carries out the day-to-day work of the Organization according to the work programme set up by the General Assembly. He/she also services the other principal organs of the United Nations and administers the programmes and policies laid down by them.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Precedence of representatives to the United Nations: note by the Secretary-General, DOCUMENT A/CN.4/L.129, 3 July 1968.

When the Secretary-General travels outside the duty stations, he/she is usually received with the same protocol as bestowed to a Head of State or Head of Government, and at a minimum, a Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is up to the Host Country to decide on the level of protocol required when organizing the visit of the Secretary-General.

### 6.3 Order of precedence between Government representatives at the United Nations

The precedence of Government representatives takes into account a combination of criteria. In accordance with international practice, Heads of State have precedence over Heads of Government, Deputy Heads of Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Cabinet Ministers.

However, a specific order of precedence is used when meeting senior officials elected to United Nations main organs. This order can be summarized as follows<sup>10</sup>:

- President of the General Assembly
- President of the main organs: Security Council, ECOSOC, Trusteeship Council and ICJ
- Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly with the rank of Minister of Foreign Affairs or Cabinet Minister
- Heads of State
- Heads of Government
- ex-Presidents of the General Assembly
- Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- Other Cabinet Ministers, Chairmen of the General Assembly Committees
- Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- Permanent Representatives

### 6.4 Order of precedence between United Nations senior officials

The Secretary-General has precedence over all senior officials of the United Nations system. Precedence between United Nations senior staff members follows a number of unwritten practices and takes into consideration the hierarchical rank of their position.

The Director-Generals of UNOG, UNOV and UNON are given first precedence over other United Nations officials at their duty station. Heads of agencies and Heads of funds and programmes have precedence over Under-Secretary-Generals and Assistant Secretary-Generals.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 5.

The following order is commonly used:

- Secretary-General of the of the United Nations
- Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Director-Generals of UNOG, UNOV, UNON
- Heads of agencies
- Heads of funds and programmes
- Under-Secretaries-Generals
- Assistant-Secretaries-Generals
- Directors

When an international event is hosted by a Member State, the State will determine the order of precedence it wishes to apply taking into account the practices followed at the United Nations.

Chapter 9 outlines the details of the orders of precedence followed in Geneva.



A small ceremonial accompanies Heads of State when they address the General Assembly. A special armchair with a high back is placed on the podium when a Head of State addresses the General Assembly. The Chief of Protocol will escort the Head of State to the armchair while the audience applauds. The Chief of Protocol will then escort the Head of State from the armchair to the lectern. The same, in reverse, will apply when the Head of State concludes his/her speech.

## 6.5 Seating arrangements for the General Assembly and United Nations conferences

The criterion of alphabetical order of the names of States is used for seating at the sessions of the General Assembly and international conferences<sup>11</sup>. Since it would be inequitable to always have the countries whose names appear early in the alphabet sitting at the front, the name of the country from which the alphabetical order will start as of the following year is drawn by the Secretary-General every year. This happens right before the opening of the General Assembly session. That country will occupy the front-most left position.

The alphabetical order is usually designated in the English language unless the meeting is held in a French-speaking country, in which case the French alphabetical order prevails. The French alphabetical order is followed in Geneva.

11 *Ibid.*

## 6.6 Order of speakers at the General Debate

The order of speakers is given first to Member States, then to Observer States and finally to intergovernmental organizations with an observer status. Any other observer entity will have a chance to speak at the end of the Debate, if so desired.

The order of speakers for the opening session is:

- The Secretary-General of the United Nations
- The President of the General Assembly
- The President of Brazil, by tradition since the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly in 1955
- The President of the United States, as President of the Host Country

If the Head of State of the President of the General Assembly wishes to speak at the opening meeting, it is customary to grant him/her the floor after the President of the United States has finished his/her speech.

While Heads of State are given precedence over Heads of Government, it is also common, for scheduling purposes, to have Heads of Government speak at the same session as Heads of State. The Holy See, the State of Palestine and the European Union are invited to participate in the General Debate. Their speaking slot is determined by the rank of their representative.



# Chapter 7



## The Swiss Confederation and the United Nations in Geneva

- 7.1 The Swiss Confederation
- 7.2 Bern and Geneva
- 7.3 The Republic and Canton of Geneva
- 7.4 The political system of Geneva
- 7.5 The importance of Geneva as a centre of international diplomacy

Secretary-General Addresses Swiss Parliament

11 September 2012

UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

## 7.1 The Swiss Confederation

Protocol traditions in Geneva emanate from the political structure of the Swiss Confederation. To understand the way protocol is applied in Geneva, it is important to grasp the principles of the political system in place in Switzerland. The official name of Switzerland is the Swiss Confederation and not the Helvetic Confederation as it is sometimes referred to. The use of the term “Confederation” reflects the Swiss political system as it existed before 1848. The Confederation is since that date a federal State composed of 26 Cantons and half-Cantons. The system operates on a constitutional division between the federal and cantonal levels. The Cantons retain many jurisdictions ranging from education to health care and public safety. The main areas of competence retained by the federal Government comprise foreign affairs, defence, finance, economics, external trade, social insurances, energy and law. Some shared competencies with the Cantons include justice, social security, economy and transport.

The Government is called the Federal Council. It is composed of 7 members and acts as a college. The Federal Council is the Head of State. However, each year, a member of the Council is elected as President of the Confederation according to a principle of rotation. As such, he/she fulfils certain ceremonial functions as if she/he were the Head of State.

The parliament consists of two chambers. The National Council is composed of 200 members and represents the people. Similarly, the Council of States hosts 46 members and represents the Cantons. The presidents of both bodies are elected for a period of one year. When a member of the Federal Council represents the latter in a public ceremony at the national level, an usher wearing a cocked hat and a red and white coat accompanies him/her.

## 7.2 Bern and Geneva

One should remember that the capital of Switzerland is Bern – where all bilateral embassies are located. One Agency of the United Nations system, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), has since its establishment in 1874 been headquartered in Bern.

Due to the Swiss federal structure, diplomats based in Geneva can be found, depending on the circumstances, in the position of having to adhere to certain federal or cantonal protocol rules. However, the federal protocol applies only in the rare cases when senior Swiss officials are on visit in Geneva. For everything related to the United Nations, the rules prevailing in the Republic and Canton of Geneva together with the practices followed at UNOG apply.

## 7.3 The Republic and Canton of Geneva

Due to the federal system enshrined in the constitution of Switzerland, the Republic and the Canton of Geneva works in close cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, the representative of the Host Country, in all protocol matters related to the United Nations’ organizations in Geneva.



## 7.5 The importance of Geneva as a centre of international diplomacy

Over the last century, the number of international organizations that have established their headquarters in Geneva has grown exponentially. Today, Switzerland is home to 24 international organizations, 21 of which are headquartered in Geneva.

Close to 250 non-governmental organizations – most of which are affiliated to the United Nations – are based in Switzerland. Geneva is recognized as the world's centre for international conferences and is as such regarded as a major operational base for activities in both the economic and social fields.

Since joining the UN in September 2002, Switzerland has been active in all United Nations programmes, notably in issues ranging from security, peace, combating poverty, and human rights adherence and promotion, to the safeguarding of natural resources. Membership offers Switzerland the opportunity to participate in the search for solutions to global problems, and to accept its share of responsibilities for exerting a positive influence on world affairs. However, the UN also offers Switzerland the ideal forum within which to represent its own national interests. Reaching agreements between all States is essential for dealing with the major challenges facing today's world, and contributes to the stability of the international system.

It is therefore in the interest of Switzerland to help promote a strong and well-functioning UN. To this end, Switzerland participates actively in the debates on UN reforms, and, by contributing with ideas and pragmatic proposals, helps drafting tangible solutions. Switzerland has managed to make itself heard on an important number of questions including the creation of a Human Rights Council, the reform of the Security Council, international policies on the environment, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, promotion of the rule of law, as well as a number of financial and administrative issues.<sup>12</sup>



Five agencies of the United Nations family have their headquarters in Geneva:

1. The International Labour Organization (ILO)
2. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
3. The World Health Organization (WHO)
4. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
5. The World Intellectual Property (WIPO)

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has its headquarters in Bern.

<sup>12</sup> For more details, please visit: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intorg/un.html>

# Chapter 8



## The complex situation of diplomatic protocol in Geneva

- 8.1 The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)
- 8.2 The four actors of protocol in Geneva
- 8.3 The two Permanent Missions of the Swiss Confederation in Geneva
- 8.4 The Republic and Canton of Geneva and the City of Geneva
- 8.5 The Protocol and Liaison Service of UNOG
- 8.6 The Diplomatic Committee

## 8.1 The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)

The core of the United Nations activities in Geneva is the United Nations Office at Geneva housed in the Palais de Nations. With over 1,600 staff, UNOG is the second largest United Nations Office, after the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

UNOG is responsible for the administrative and other support services for various United Nations organizations. However, its main function is to provide conference facilities for the United Nations meetings held in Geneva as well as for United Nations conferences held in other locations; both within and outside Switzerland. In any given year, UNOG services more than 8,000 meetings.

Heads of State, Heads of Government, Ministers, Government officials of all ranks, thousands of delegates, representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and leaders of international corporations meet in Geneva on an on-going basis to address international issues, exchange ideas, and debate. The Palais des Nations offers a unique opportunity for personnel to meet privately in the various rooms available and discuss in all secrecy.

## 8.2 The four actors of protocol in Geneva

The protocol arrangements in vigour to guide the activities of diplomats accredited to the United Nations in Geneva involve various actors:

- The Host Country represented by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organizations in Geneva;
- The Canton and Republic of Geneva;
- The Protocol and Liaison Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva; and
- The Diplomatic Committee.

The following chapter will systematically detail how these actors collaborate to provide protocol support to the permanent missions, the United Nations and other international organizations based in Geneva.

## 8.3 The two Permanent Missions of the Swiss Confederation in Geneva

The Swiss Confederation is represented in Geneva by two Permanent Missions.

### 8.3.1 The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organizations in Geneva

Usually referred to as the Swiss Mission, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organizations in Geneva<sup>13</sup> represents the Host Country in its relations with the international organizations and other permanent representations. It has a dual role.

The Multilateral Division performs all tasks specific to multilateral diplomacy. It:

- Represents and protects national interests;
- Participates in the activities of the various organizations;
- Negotiates on behalf of the Swiss Confederation, etc.

The Host Country Division endorses the core responsibilities that usually fall under the jurisdiction of a federal service of protocol. It:

- Operates as the Protocol Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Manages the status of 24 international organizations, 253 permanent missions and close to 40,000 employees;
- Deals with all questions raised by the regime of privileges and immunities;
- Is responsible for issuing and withdrawing the “cartes de légitimation” provided by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA);
- Is the diplomatic channel to all the Swiss authorities (federal, cantonal and municipal) for all matters related to international organizations, permanent missions and their staff.

It is the Swiss Mission that represents the federal Government at the arrival of dignitaries on official duty at Geneva airport.

### 8.3.2 The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the WTO and the EFTA focuses on economic issues and monitors the work of the related United Nations bodies: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

13 For further details, please visit: <https://www.dfae.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/international-organizations/un/ch-missions-un/mission-geneva.html>

## 8.4 The Republic and Canton of Geneva and the City of Geneva

The Swiss federal system gives to the Cantons of the Confederation a large autonomy in several sectors. The Republic and Canton of Geneva thus has a central role to play in hosting international organizations located on its territory. It has developed specific protocol rules contained in the “Règlement concernant le Protocole” (Geneva Protocol Regulations, see Annex 1)<sup>14</sup>.

The authorities of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the City of Geneva and the Canton of Vaud support the Swiss Mission in many of its protocol and liaison functions through specific activities located in the following services and offices:

- The Protocol Service of the Republic and Canton of Geneva
- The Public Relations Service of the City of Geneva
- The Office of Public Affairs of the Canton of Vaud

One of the most common occasions for diplomats to be confronted to the Geneva protocol is at the arrival and departure of dignitaries at the Geneva International Airport (AIG), coordinated by the AIG Protocol Office (Service Accueil et Protocole).

The arrival ceremony is often organized according to the following scheme in the event of a motorcade:

- The Chief of Protocol of the Republic and Canton of Geneva greets the person arriving at the arrival gate/ladder and accompanies him/her to the receiving line;
- The first person on the receiving line is an usher with a red and yellow coat and a hat. He/she should not be greeted. The usher is only there to accompany the member of the Government of Geneva. According to Geneva protocol practices, he/she has to be at the right hand side of the member of Government in all ceremonies held in Geneva;
- The President of the State Council of Geneva or a member of the Council heads the receiving line;
- The Chief of Protocol presents each person on the receiving line;
- Parties enter their cars;
- Upon departure, the Protocol Service is always present but the presence of a member of the Geneva Government is not compulsory.

In the Republic and Canton of Geneva, public buildings permanently fly the flag of Geneva. Most permanent missions raise their national flag at their chancery but seldom at the residence.

Geneva protocol foresees that missions and residences should raise their flags at least on the following days of each year: May 5<sup>th</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup>, August 1<sup>st</sup>, December 11-12<sup>th</sup>, and December 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, which are all commemorative days in Geneva.

14 The “Règlement concernant le Protocole” goes together with a Law on Protocol, the “Loi sur le Protocole”, published by the Grand Council of the Canton and Republic of Geneva in September 2011: <http://www.ge.ch/legislation/rsg/main.html>.

## 8.5 The Protocol and Liaison Service of UNOG

Located within the Office of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Protocol and Liaison Service of UNOG<sup>15</sup> provides all the protocol and liaison functions required by the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, the Director-General of UNOG, and the diplomatic community associated to the United Nations in Geneva.

The Protocol and Liaison Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva has compiled guidelines on diplomatic courtesy in Geneva for the convenience of the diplomatic community. These guidelines aim for a better understanding of Geneva's diplomatic scene and provide useful information for the diplomatic community. The guidelines detail the process required to open a permanent mission, the presentation of credentials by a newly appointed Permanent Representative, protocol upon assuming functions and end of tenure, registration forms, etc. (see Annex 2 – Guidelines on diplomatic courtesy in Geneva).

## 8.6 The Diplomatic Committee

The Diplomatic Committee is a tripartite forum for consultation and discussion of all issues that have an impact on the work of the diplomatic community in Geneva. It seeks to promote and strengthen the relations between the Host Country, the diplomatic community in Geneva, and UNOG.

The Committee meets periodically and is composed of two representatives at an ambassadorial level nominated by each regional group, as well as by the Representative of China. The Chairman of the Committee is selected among the members of the diplomatic community on a geographical rotational basis for a one-year term, starting on 1<sup>st</sup> January of each calendar year. A Vice-President is also selected to act in the absence of the Chairman and automatically assumes the presidency the following year.

The Committee may consider all questions of general interest, including privileges and immunities, housing, transport and insurance, with a view to expressing opinions and proposing solutions to the Host Country or to the Director-General of UNOG. The Committee may also discuss questions related to the security of missions and their personnel with the Host Country.

Representatives of the Host Country regularly participate in the meetings of the Committee. The Director-General of UNOG, the Chief of the Protocol and Liaison Service, and the Legal Adviser of UNOG also participate in the work of the Committee. They provide assistance, and bring to notice questions of mutual interest concerning the Headquarters Agreement concluded by international organizations and the Swiss Federal Council in April 1996.

15 For further details, please visit: [http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600583A0B/\(httpPages\)/C74E8320A262FCAEC12578540038D46F?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EE600583A0B/(httpPages)/C74E8320A262FCAEC12578540038D46F?OpenDocument)



# Chapter 9



## The specificities of protocol at Geneva

- 9.1 Order of precedence within the United Nations family
- 9.2 Order of precedence between senior Government officials
- 9.3 Order of precedence between Permanent Representatives accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva
- 9.4 Order of precedence between members of permanent missions and other delegates
- 9.5 Order of precedence between the representatives of the Republic and Canton of Geneva and the diplomatic community

## 9.1 Order of precedence within the United Nations family

Geneva's status is rather special due to the number of international organizations, programmes and specialized agencies having their headquarters in the City of Calvin.

The Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations have precedence over all other officials of any international organization whether or not the organization is part of the United Nations system.

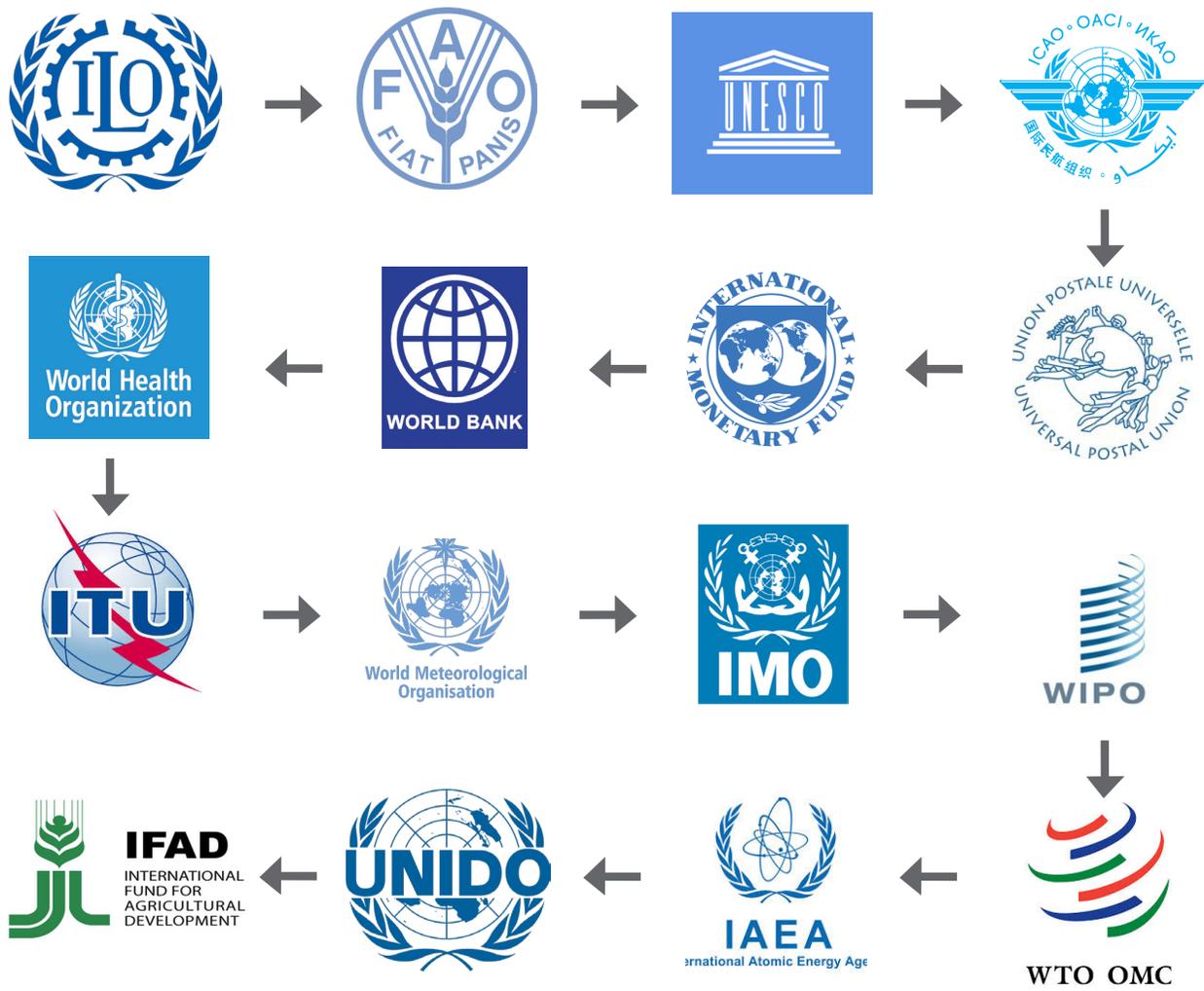
In the absence of the Secretary-General or the Deputy Secretary-General, the Director-General of UNOG has precedence over the Director-Generals and Secretary-Generals of international organizations.

In turn, the Heads of international agencies have precedence over the Heads of United Nations funds and programmes, subsidiary organs, research institutes, etc. The logic behind this rule is that the Heads of international agencies represent intergovernmental organs that are independent from the United Nations General Assembly, while the Heads of United Nations funds and programmes, subsidiary organs, research institutes, etc. represent organizations that are all subsidiary to the General Assembly. The custom is that Heads of agencies are ranked according to the date the specialized agency signed an agreement with the United Nations. Heads of United Nations programmes are ranked according to the date of the creation of the programme. However, the UNDP Administrator has, by tradition, precedence over the Heads of other United Nations programmes.

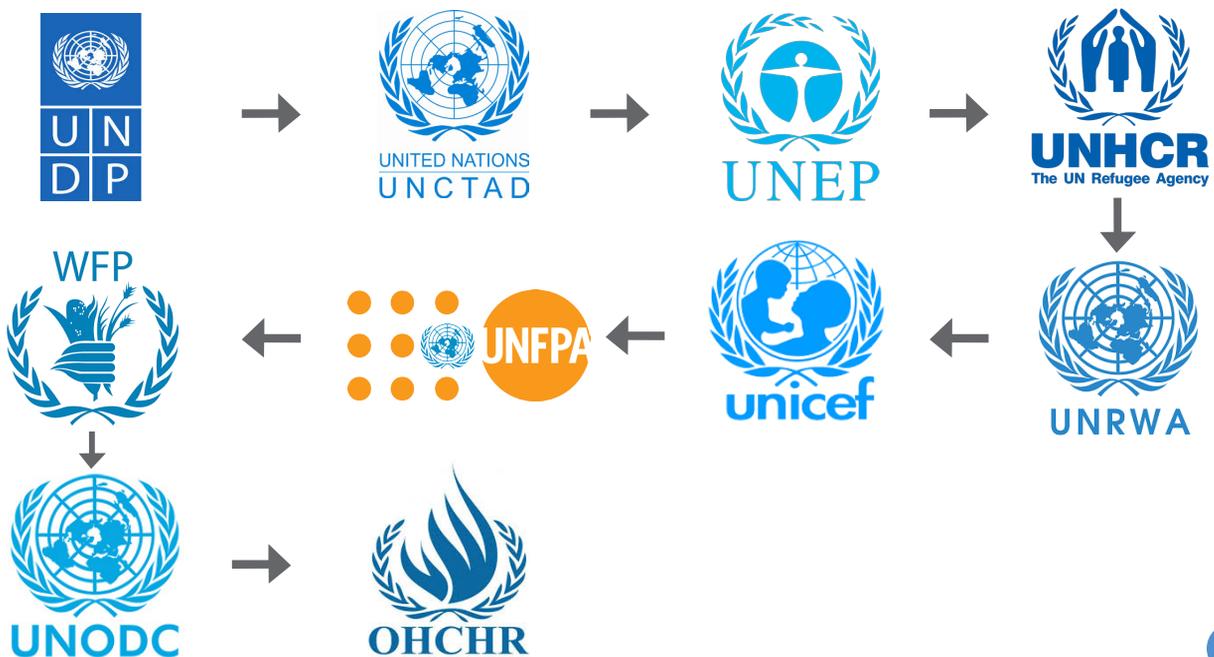
The order of precedence in Geneva would be as follows:

- Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Director-Generals of UNOG, UNOV, UNON
- Heads of ILO, FAO, UNESCO, ICAO, UPU, IMF, WBG, WHO, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, WTO, IAEA, UNIDO, IFAD
- Heads of UNDP, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNHCR, UNRWA, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNODC, OHCHR
- Under-Secretaries-General
- Assistant Secretaries-General
- Directors

The ranking of the specialized agencies can be pictured as follows:



The ranking of the funds and programmes and subsidiary bodies is as follows:



## 9.2 Order of precedence between senior government officials

The United Nations follows international practices with regards to precedence of government officials:

- Heads of State
- Heads of Government
- Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- Other Cabinet Ministers
- Permanent Representatives
- Others

## 9.3 Order of precedence between Permanent Representatives accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva

Permanent Representatives who are Head of a delegation are ranked after the Ministers. They are then followed by their collaborators, starting with those with the rank of Ambassador. Importantly, as it is up to each country to rank people within its own delegation according to its own rules, the mission will need to notify the Protocol and Liaison Service of a newly arriving representative and his/her rank within the mission. Although the order within missions can differ, the following list represents the norm used by most missions to organize their order of precedence:

- Minister
- Permanent Representative
- Ambassador
- First Secretary
- Second Secretary
- Others

There are three governing principles of precedence between members of diplomatic missions<sup>16</sup>:

- The class of the individual in the sending State's diplomatic service;
- Whether or not the person is the Chargé d'affaires of the mission;
- The date/time the individual assumed her/his responsibilities.

The nature of an event will often dictate whether a Permanent Representative will be given precedence over another even if he/she has a more recent date of receiving credentials. For example, when dealing with representatives of the WTO also covering UNCTAD and UNECE, precedence is always given to the Permanent Representatives at UNOG as they are accredited to the United Nations. The same rule applies even if an Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament represents his country in one of the United Nations organs' meetings.

16 Precedence of representatives to the United Nations: note by the Secretary-General. DOCUMENT A/CN.4 L.129, 3 July 1968.

One should note that the seats in the meeting rooms are arranged in alphabetical order. This implies that there is no order of precedence during the sessions, as each country is considered as sovereign to nominate its representatives. However, if a social event takes place in this framework, the order of precedence will be applied.

## 9.4 Order of precedence between members of permanent missions and other delegates

### 9.4.1 Order of speakers at an international conference

The order of speakers at an international conference in Geneva would be as follows. After the Executive Director opens the conference, follow:

- Heads of State
- Heads of Government
- Ministers
- Regional group representatives
- Delegates from Member States
- Intergovernmental organizations
- Specialized agencies
- Non-governmental organizations

### 9.4.2 Precedence between Permanent Representatives and Heads of secretariats of international organizations

The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva takes precedence over Permanent Representatives.

Directors-General or Secretaries-General of specialized agencies should be given precedence over Permanent Representatives when invited by a Permanent Representative.

As to other intergovernmental organizations, their Heads should be given precedence over Permanent Representatives when this practice is in conformity with the nature of the social gathering in question.



In social gatherings in honour of a famous figure, the latter takes precedence over all other guests. In such cases, this should be mentioned in the invitations. In social gatherings organized by or in connection with special bodies, their established practices prevail.



## ICRC

Traditionally, in view of the long-presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Switzerland, the President of the ICRC takes precedence over Permanent Representatives, while the latter take precedence over other officials of the ICRC.

### 9.4.3 Precedence between Permanent Representatives and other delegates attending conferences

In social gatherings related to a conference, precedence between Heads of delegation is determined either according to the alphabetical order of the countries represented, or in conformity with the established practices of the conference in question. Presiding officers may take precedence over other Heads of delegation. In gatherings that are not related to a conference, precedence is usually given to Permanent Representatives.

### 9.4.4 Precedence between Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors

According to the Guidelines on Diplomatic Courtesy in Geneva, between Permanent Representatives accredited to the Geneva Office and the Permanent Representative of the Host Country, precedence can, by courtesy, be given to the latter. It should be noted, however, that Heads of mission with dual accreditation to the United Nations and to the Swiss Confederation should respect the federal protocol rules in the course of the performance of their official duties as Ambassadors to Switzerland (see Annex 3 – Protocol Regulations for the Swiss Confederation).

## 9.5 Order of precedence between the representatives of the Republic and Canton of Geneva and the diplomatic community

The Republic and Canton of Geneva and the City of Geneva organize various events jointly with the Swiss Confederation such as receptions, concerts, and opera performances for the diplomatic corps. When an event is organized and includes political representatives from the Republic and Canton of Geneva as well as the international community in Geneva, the Geneva Protocol Regulations apply. Often, when two or more parties are ranked at the same level, the Geneva representative is given precedence as “host”. If there are two (or more) parties in addition to the local representative, the protocol of the United Nations (or whichever applicable body, e.g. churches/teaching bodies) will apply. Swiss protocol is only used when a member of the Swiss Federal Council attends a ceremony, which is seldom the case. Otherwise, it is the Geneva protocol that applies.

# Chapter 10



## Policy on gifts at the United Nations

- 10.1 Gifts by Member States to the United Nations
- 10.2 Gifts to the Secretary-General
- 10.3 Gifts to United Nations officials and staff

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Receives Gift from Senegalese Artist

12 March 2008

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

The exchange of gifts is part of a long-term tradition in protocol. At the same time, the United Nations has to be very careful in the ways in which it handles gifts, awards, decorations, etc. in order to ensure that it maintains the highest ethical standards. In that regard, the United Nations distinguishes between gifts from Member States to the Organization and gifts to United Nations officials.

## 10.1 Gifts by Member States to the United Nations

The United Nations Office at Geneva inherited a considerable number of works of art from the League of Nations, whose headquarters were located in the same building, the Palais des Nations. Since the Second World War, and especially during the past decade, this collection has been enlarged to a remarkable extent, largely due to the many generous donations from the United Nations Member States. Today, the collection comprises a large number of works of art, including sculptures, frescoes, stained glass panels, tapestries, paintings, portrait drawings, engravings, prints, posters and even caricatures. The work of some artists is characterized by the use of unique or unusual materials and techniques.



Note from the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: “The good name of the United Nations is one of its most valuable assets, but also one of its most vulnerable. Integrity and accountability should be the guideposts for each and every one of us”.

In principle, Member States are limited to one gift, but in a few instances, more than one offering has been accepted. They are usually substantial in size and/or in value. Member States are therefore responsible for the installation of the offered artefacts to the Organization and their maintenance.

At UNOG, proposals for donations are presented to the Cultural Activities Committee, which decides whether the proposed work is consistent with the principles of the United Nations art collection, and whether the practical requirements for its installation can be met.

Individual artists and non-governmental organizations often seek to present works of art to the United Nations. While some were accepted in the past, the policy that has been strictly observed for the last 20 years is to accept gifts only from Member States. The ceremonies for the unveiling of these gifts are conducted and coordinated by the Office of Protocol.

## 10.2 Gifts to the Secretary-General

The exchange of gifts is a traditional part of diplomatic courtesy. Dignitaries who visit the Secretary-General will often come with gifts. These gifts are always received by the Chief of Protocol on behalf of the Secretary-General. They need to be checked by security and are therefore not opened during a public ceremony. This is also a discreet way to avoid any possible embarrassing situation. What is an appropriate gift in one culture might not be so appropriate in another. When in travel, the Secretary-General regularly receives gifts from visiting officials in New York and other travel destinations. These gifts are considered personal and it is left to the discretion of the Secretary-General to dispose of them.

## 10.3 Gifts to United Nations officials and staff

The United Nations Organization is very concerned with ensuring both the independence and impartiality of its staff members. As such, it prohibits its officials to receive any favours, gifts or remuneration from governmental and non-governmental sources<sup>17</sup>. Given the refusal of a gift would cause embarrassment to the Organization, a staff member may receive it on behalf of the Organization and entrust it to the Secretary-General or its designated officials. In practice, “consumable goods” (e.g., alcohol, chocolates, etc.) may be kept by the officials, after having been reported to the appropriate office, but must be shared with colleagues. Nominal gifts (for example calendars or books) can also be kept by the officials. All other gifts have to be deposited with the United Nations.

17 Staff regulation 1.2 and staff rule 1.2 and ST/AI/2010/1 Reporting, retaining and disposing of honours, decorations, favours, gifts or remuneration from governmental and non-governmental sources.



# Chapter 11



## Protocol for mourning at the United Nations

- 11.1 The United Nations flag
- 11.2 Book of Condolences
- 11.3 Commemoration ceremonies

The United Nations flag at headquarters flies at half-mast in memory of the United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in Sierra Leone

30 June 2004

UN Photo/Mark Garten

## 11.1 The United Nations flag

The flag of the United Nations was adopted by the General Assembly as an official emblem of the Organization on 7 December 1946. Subsequently, the Secretary-General issued a Flag Code on 19 December 1947<sup>18</sup>.

The United Nations flag is flown at half-mast upon the death of a Head of State or Head of Government of a Member State for one day. The Flag Code specifies that the flag should be flown at half-mast immediately upon learning of the death. However, the practice has evolved and nowadays, the Chief of Protocol will ask the permanent mission which day the flag should be flown at half-mast. Many Member States opt for the day of the funerals. When the United Nations flag is lowered, no other flags are flown. The flags are not lowered once they are already flying. This means that the United Nations flag will be at half-mast from sunrise to sundown.

The Secretary-General can decide to fly the flag at half-mast for more than one day under exceptional circumstances. The United Nations flag was flown at half-mast for two days in 2003 after the bombing of the United Nations building in Baghdad; and for seven days after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 that claimed the lives of more than 200 United Nations personnel and their family.

The Head of each duty station will decide when the United Nations flag should be flown at half-mast at the duty station.

## 11.2 Book of Condolences

Upon the death of current and past Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the mission will send a “Note Verbale” to the Chief of Protocol indicating when the Book of Condolences will be available. There is no order of precedence to sign the Book of Condolences. In general, the first page is reserved for the Chief of Protocol. He/she usually signs the Book of Condolences on behalf of the Secretary-General, who might in some cases wish to sign the book in person. The Secretary-General may also decide to send a personal letter to the Government and to the family of the deceased.

18 The United Nations Flag Code and Regulations, UN ST/SGB/132, 11 November 1952.

## 11.3 Commemoration ceremonies

Commemoration ceremonies for fallen staff or other ceremonies of remembrance are fortunately not in the standard repertoire of a Protocol Officer. And yet they have to be held on occasion, not only to remind the world of the many risks that men and women take in order to create a more peaceful world. Components of a commemoration ceremony may include:

- A Guard of Honour;
- Depending on the circumstances, a statement by the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Force Commander or other senior officials;
- The reading of victims names;
- A minute of silence;
- A wreath-laying ceremony;
- A tribute to the United Nations flag;
- Music played or poems read.



# Afterword



Etiquette and decorum in the  
context of multilateral diplomacy  
for use at the United Nations Office  
at Geneva

By Ambassador Idriss Jazairy

## Introduction

The arrangements effective in the field of multilateral diplomacy dealing with diplomatic protocol regulate the official relationships between State representatives accredited to the United Nations, Office in Geneva (UNOG), the specialized institutions, and the multilateral agencies of the United Nations in Switzerland.

These arrangements draw on bilateral protocol pertaining to this specific type of negotiations that is called “diplomacy” since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

Its legal framework comprises, among others, the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961 and on Consular Relations of 24 April 1963 as well as the Headquarters Agreements signed by the host country with the United Nations on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1946 and with the World Trade Organization on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1995.

Nevertheless, there is no set code on etiquette, which refers to a cluster of mostly unwritten practices that are intended to foster a conducive environment for multilateral diplomacy exercises.

Etiquette encompasses special care and symbols of consideration in relations between officials that are likely to promote dialogue, harmony and trust. These practices are hardly ever invoked explicitly, hence the relevance of the present chapter.

What we call “etiquette”, “decorum” or “savoir-vivre” varies over time as well as when one crosses national borders.

As regards greetings for instance, the handshake was hardly ever used in the United Kingdom until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In France, the *baise-main* is still in use but is becoming old-fashioned. Be that as it may, one should be aware that in this case, the man’s mouth never touches the hand of the woman when greeting, that this gesture of respect is limited to married women and that it is never practised in open spaces.

Likewise, in some countries of the Middle East today, a mere handshake in the same situation is precluded. In the highlands of Western Algeria where I hail from, a belch at the end of a meal is a tribute paid to the quality of the meal, a habit that would clash with the Geneva decorum.

We also regard it as customary for the host at a stag meal to remain standing to take care of his guests invited to a seated meal, while in the multilateral context of the United Nations, it is the host/hostess, when seated, who signals the beginning of the meal by taking hold of his cutlery after having made sure all his/her guests have been served.

These differences, and many others, are but the expression of the diversity of cultures, each of which finds its justification in its specific national context.

One can of course decide to apply such forms of decorum belonging to a specific culture in the context of Geneva.

The purpose of the present chapter is thus to allow each diplomat to make an informed decision as to whether or not to comply, in whole or in part, with the forms of decorum in use in Geneva to the extent that this may facilitate the achievement of his or her mission.

Apart from the previously discussed customs, the information and communications technological revolution introduces encroachments from commercial parlance on diplomatic language as well as a mix of gallicisms and of anglicisms. Thus, when mentioning a delegate in a conference speech one refers to him however much one disagrees with the person as “The distinguished delegate of...(name of country)” in English and as “L’honorable délégué de...(name of country)” in French. More often than not French speakers will use an anglicism by saying “Le distingué représentant de...” while fewer English speakers will use the gallicism of “The honourable delegate of”.

Indeed, diplomatic language has its own linguistic constructs, at times esoteric, that should be adhered to. It is not the only activity that has its own language rules. Thus sailors will refer to a jib or a mainsail sheet. If you talk to them about “ropes”, they’ll know you are new to the sport. Likewise if you talk of the “fur” of a horse rather than to its coat, horse-riders will draw the same conclusion; so also would hunters if you refer to a horn as a “trumpet”.

Likewise in diplomacy, for the host/hostess to say to his/her guests “Enjoy your meal” (in French: “Bon appétit”) is inappropriate, this expression being drawn from commercial language in use in the catering trade. The same would apply to the French expressions “Au plaisir” rather than the correct form of “Au revoir” upon departure or of “Messieurs-dames” rather than the correct form of “Mesdames, messieurs” when addressing a number of people collectively.

The text hereunder will strive to offer *à-la-carte*, as it were, a non-exhaustive menu of suggestions in the field of diplomatic etiquette, leaving it to each reader to determine, in terms of behaviour as well as of language, the ones that she or he will deem worth keeping in mind.

## 1 - Business cards

It is recommended to carry engraved rather than printed or coated business cards. The engraving is made on a single copper plate that then allows for multiple issues of engraved cards when needed.

It is preferable to write on the business card the first name and surname of the holder in square font with, underneath, his/her function in calligraphic font. Some protocol manuals indicate the possibility of mentioning, before the name “Mr.”, “Mrs.” or “Mr. and Mrs.”. Some even authorize that an Ambassador call him/herself “His/Her Excellency”.

All these additions should be avoided.

A business card will be folded at the upper left angle to announce the visit to an absent person, to send a gift, to bid farewell (with the handwritten mention “ppc”), to get acquainted (with the handwritten mention “pfc”) or to extend greetings for the National Day (with the handwritten script of “pfn”).

A second business card carrying more detailed personal data can be used as a working instrument to exchange with interlocutors with whom one maintains relations on a continuous basis.

Whichever data the business card shows, it should never be signed.

## 2 - Invitation cards

For National Day events, the card may be worded as follows:

“The Ambassador, Permanent Representative of ... (Country) (followed, if applicable by) and Mrs./Mr. (first name and surname of the spouse) have the honour...”

This invitation announcing the occasion of the reception does not have to bear the name of each guest. In this case, the formula “has/have the honour to invite you”, will be used to avoid tedious secretarial work.

However, an invitation to a more restricted reception or to a dinner will have to mention the name of the person or couple invited on the dotted lines provided for that purpose.

The card will bear, at the lower right angle, the mention RSVP. It is polite to reply promptly to such invitations in order to allow time for the host, if need be, to bring the relevant modifications to his/her seating arrangement in due time.

The card will indicate the dress wear: evening dress, dark suit, informal, casual.

General practice in Geneva varies between dark suit and informal (which contrary to “casual” requires wearing a tie).

## 3 - Courtesy calls

These visits are paid after presentation of credentials and start with the dean of the Permanent Representatives, followed by the chairpersons of the regional groups to which the new Permanent Representative belongs.

In Geneva, the work pressure limits the number of courtesy calls paid by a new Permanent Representative after he/she takes up duty.

## 4 - Correspondence

All diplomats are familiar with “notes verbales” . When writing such notes, one should avoid switching from the third person singular to the first or second person plural. It is also advisable, in order to clarify the text written in the third person, to use a capital letter when the other party is referred to, e.g.: “The Mission of ... (country of the author of the “note verbale”) requests the Mission of...(addressee) to let it know if It would consider favourably, etc...”.

In a private correspondence in English between Permanent Representatives, one could write: “Dear Colleague”, “Excellency”, or if the exchange takes place between officials who are not Heads of mission, “Dear Mr/ Mrs. ...” followed by the family name of the recipient. (In the latter case, the family name would never be mentioned in a letter written in French).

In an official letter, one may write “Excellency”, “Mr/Madam Ambassador/Permanent Representative” (in French, “Excellence” ou “Monsieur/Madame l’Ambassadeur/le Représentant permanent”).

It has to be remembered that, in the context of the United Nations, States are represented by Permanent Representatives. In this context, the title of Ambassador is a national rank, and not a function in relation to the organization to which he/she is accredited.

Consequently, the spouse of a Permanent Representative, if a lady, is not “an Ambassadrice” (in French) but the “spouse of the Permanent Representative”.

The wording on a letter to a Permanent Representative should be as follows:

“His/Her Excellency X...Y ... (first name and surname)  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of ... (country)”

The following wording that is frequently misused should be avoided:

“ His/Her Excellency Ambassador, Permanent Representative of (country) Mr/Madam ... (first name and surname”, or “His/Her Excellency Mr/Mrs X ...Y... Ambassador, Permanent Representative of... (country)”.

In other words, when addressing a letter to a President, a Minister or a Permanent Representative, the “Excellency” has to be followed immediately in English by the person’s first name and surname and neither by a “Mr/Mrs X...Y...” nor by a function. One should say “The President, His/Her Excellency (first name and surname)” and not “His/Her Excellency the President”. The same applies to Ministers and Ambassadors.

The same rule applies in French except that in this case the “His Excellency” is followed first by “Mr/Mrs” before the first name and surname of the person concerned.

Monarchical institutions have distinct rules for dignitaries from capitals. So also in the United States, the dignitaries' names may be preceded by "The Honorable...". In France, the title "His/Her Excellency" is seldom used for French dignitaries. Be that as it may, the abovementioned remarks remain fully valid for Permanent Representatives.

Each time an interlocutor is addressed in a correspondence, the title appears in full when he/she holds the rank of Ambassador/Permanent Representative: "His/Her Excellency (first name, surname) ..." followed by the function. In all other cases, the abbreviated formula "H.E." can be used. The title of "Madam", preceding the function of a female dignitary when the person is directly spoken to, in a letter or orally, will not be abbreviated.

The female holders of functions such as Chief of mission or agency will respectively be "Madam Permanent Representative of" or "Madam High Commissioner".

## 5 - Organization of, or participation in a meal

### a) Seating arrangement and menu

The seating arrangement can be displayed on a leather platter which is in the shape of the table and which has name tags bearing the name of each guest. Should this table plan not be available, the seating arrangement can be drawn on a sheet of drawing paper. It can then be nailed to a board of plywood and placed on an easel at the entrance of the dining room. The names corresponding to the seating arrangement will be written on cards folded in half and displayed on the right side of each place. On these cards, the use of abbreviations is allowed.

The names of the host/hostess and his/her spouse will be mentioned by the formula "Host" or "Hostess".

A menu will be placed on the right side of each plate or on a holder. In the latter case, there can be one menu for two guests.

### b) Nature of meals

One can organize a working meal or a social meal.

A social meal can take place with or without spouses; whereas a working meal will always be without a spouse.

Common remarks:

- There are two traditions regarding toasts (remarks of the host/hostess followed by the raising of glasses filled with water or another beverage, alcoholic or not): the Nordic tradition whereby the toast takes place at the beginning of the meal or the classic tradition whereby the toast comes after the dessert.
- The male guests wait for the hostess and/or the ladies present to be seated before taking their seats.

### *Working meal*

The “Nordic” formula is preferable: the host/hostess announces the purpose of the meal. He/she mentions he/she will ask each guest to give his/her opinion on a specific question by posing the *problématique* and without prejudging what the solutions should be. The host/hostess will then raise his/her glass to the participants. When all guests have received the first dish, the host/hostess will seize their own cutlery, cast a circular gaze on the guests to give the signal, with a smile, of the beginning of the meal. The guests shall not start eating before the host/hostess, not even the bread that was given to them. The host will avoid using the commercial expression “Bon appétit”.

Between Arab speaking persons in Geneva, however, it is a habit for the host/hostess to give the signal of the beginning of a meal by using the expression “Bismillah”.

The host/hostess, after having invited each guest to speak on the theme outlined, will decide whether it is necessary to organise a discussion and will conclude after dessert is served.

### *Social meal*

Whether the “Nordic” or “classic” formula is applied, it will allow for the host/hostess to state the occasion for which the meal (usually a dinner) is held. If there is an important guest, the host/hostess will praise his/her presence then individually or collectively mention the other guests. In this case, the important guest or the dean responds directly to the host/hostess. The rest of the scenario developed above also applies in this case. However, in the case of a social meal, it is polite to send, before the reception starts, flowers with a business card instead of arriving at the reception with a bouquet.

### *Welcome or farewell meals*

A scenario similar to that of the working meal applies. The arriving or departing official is praised by the host/hostess and he/she announces that he/she will give the floor to all other guests and that the guest of honour will reply after the round is complete. At the end of the meal, in regard to the farewell reception, a gift is given in the name of a regional group to the departing diplomat. In this case, the latter will ask the host, out of pure form, if he/she can open the present and, upon the latter’s approval, will exhibit it to all guests (souvenir picture).

### c) Table manners

A meal is an occasion to share ideas, not just dishes. The host/hostess will make sure all guests can take the floor and will strive to detect where a consensus can be built, even more so in the case of a working meal.

The guests' place their hands, not their forearms on the table. They sit in an upright position with their shoulders kept back.

As it is not courteous to speak with one's mouth full, the bites will be smaller than usual to allow for a guest to swallow quickly before reacting to an idea.

During the meal, elbows remain in contact with the sides of the body, moving laterally along the ribs without losing contact. The fork is held in the left hand. The knife in the right hand will push the content of a small bite on the convex part of the fork. The knife will remain in contact with the plate and will be placed on the plate once the charge is put on the fork. At this stage, the right hand is free and the left forearm lifts the bite on the fork towards the mouth without balancing of the body that remains straight. When the mouth closes on the bite, the fork is placed on the plate. At that stage the two hands are free until the guest is ready for the next bite. In the meantime, fork and knife draw an angle on the plate. The cutlery handles remain squarely in the plate and do not touch the table. If the dish served is soup, the content is absorbed by the lateral part of the spoon while avoiding a sucking sound.

When the plate is finished, fork and knife are placed parallel to each other on the right side of the plate, which gives the signal that the plate can be taken away.

Bread is only eaten with soup or cheese. The piece of bread is held on the right by the major of the right hand and a small parcel is detached with the index and thumb of the same hand. Only the right hand is used. Bread is not bitten into. The piece of bread is then chewed without having anything else in one's mouth, certainly not liquid. At the end of the meal, the napkin is placed unfolded on the table.

## 6 - Receptions

Receptions are organised, among other events, on the occasion of National Days. At the beginning of the reception, the Permanent Representative, his/her spouse, their close collaborators and their spouses, are aligned at the entrance. The mission that organizes the event can have a photographer at the entrance. The pictures of the guests greeting the Permanent Representative can then be sent by the latter with a business card to selected visitors. After three quarters of an hour, the Permanent Representative and his/her spouse join the guests and are replaced by the first Deputy Chief of mission.

There are no greetings at the departure of the guests.

Some missions organize statements of the Head of mission on this occasion. The acoustics have to be carefully tested in order to ensure that the sound can be heard despite the prevailing level of background noise. The speech will have to be short and, if possible, include as appropriate some humour.

## 7 - Introductions

One introduces persons of lower to higher protocol rank, and not the opposite. The first words exchanged in English are “How do you do?”, the person answering repeating the same. It would be entirely inappropriate in English to translate from the formula which is acceptable in French and say: “Delighted/glad to meet you” or to reply to “How do you do?” by saying: “Very well, thank you”.

To introduce oneself, one will call oneself “Mr./Mrs. or Miss/Ms. X” only when talking to a subordinate, a delivery agent for instance. In other cases, one always gives his/her first name and surname followed by his/her function, if applicable, or by his/her status of spouse of the Permanent Representative of ... (country) or of another diplomat.

## 8 - Courtesy

Courtesies owed to a lady can be challenged by feminist approaches that are opposed to all forms of distinctions in treatment between men and women even if they are meant to benefit the latter (in the name of “tokenism”). The habit of letting a woman walk in front of a man when passing through a door or for a man to walk in front of a woman in a staircase still continues to be considered as elements of “savoir-vivre”. In the same spirit, the driver of a car, whether a chauffeur or a male diplomat (without a chauffeur), will take care of closing the door of a female passenger after she is seated in the vehicle.

Idriss Jazairy

# Acronyms

List of Acronyms, in order of appearance

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)  
Multilateral Diplomacy Programme (MDP)

## Chapter 1

Non-governmental organization (NGO)  
International Telegraph Union (ITU)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)

## Chapter 3

International Law Commission (ILC)

## Chapter 4

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)  
United Nations Security Council (UNSC)  
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)  
International Court of Justice (ICJ)  
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
International Trade Centre (ITC)  
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
World Food Programme (WFP)  
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)  
United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)  
United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)  
United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)  
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)  
United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC)  
United Nations University (UNU)  
UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
International Maritime Organization (IMO)  
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)  
UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)  
Universal Postal Union (UPU)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)  
World Bank Group (WBG)  
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)  
World Tourism Organization (WTO)

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission (CTBTO PrepCom)  
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)  
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)  
World Trade Organization (WTO)

## Chapter 5

United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ)  
“Offices away from Headquarters” (OAHs)  
The United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG)  
The United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV)  
The United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON)  
Director-General (DG)

## Chapter 7

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)  
International Computing Centre (ICC)  
International Trade Centre (ITC)  
Office of the High-Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

## Chapter 8

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)  
European Free Trade Association (EFTA)  
Geneva International Airport (AIG)

# References

Most of the information referred to in these guidelines are available on the internet.

The website of the United Nations: [www.un.org/en](http://www.un.org/en) provides information on the structure of the United Nations structure and of the funds and programmes, agencies and research institutes.

The website of the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service at Headquarters: [www.un.int/protocol/](http://www.un.int/protocol/)  
The website is continuously updated and contains the following information:

- The Manual of Protocol
- The Blue Book for the New York diplomatic community
- The list of Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers for Foreign Affairs
- The list of senior officials of the United Nations.

The web site of the UNOG Protocol and Liaison Service: [www.unog.ch](http://www.unog.ch) contains a range of information of use to the diplomatic community including:

- The Blue Book available for purchase
- Diplomatic guidelines
- Accreditation
- UNOG guidelines on diplomatic courtesy in Geneva.

Other UN documents available on the Internet:

- Charter of the United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>
- Precedence of representatives to the United Nations: note by the Secretary-General. A/CN.4 L.129, 3 July 1968, [http://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/a\\_cn4\\_l129.pdf](http://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/a_cn4_l129.pdf)
- The United Nations Flag Code and Regulations, UN ST/SGB/132, 11 November 1952, <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/maplib/docs/stsgb132.pdf>.

The website of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of the Swiss confederation: <https://www.dfae.admin.ch/eda/en/home.html> provides information for the diplomatic community including information on privileges and immunities, household employees, etc.

The website <https://www.dfae.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/international-organizations/un/ch-missions-un/mission-geneva.html> provides information on the Swiss Permanent Representations in Geneva.

The website of the Republic and Canton of Geneva: <http://www.ge.ch/protocole/> provides information on the activities and practices of protocol in Geneva.

# Annexes

1. Règlement concernant le protocole - République et Canton de Genève<sup>19</sup>

2. Guidelines on diplomatic courtesy in Geneva - UNOG

3. Protocol regulations for the Swiss Confederation<sup>20</sup>

19 The strength and validity of the Geneva legislation exclusively derives from its publication in the official Letter bills of the Republic and Canton of Geneva.

20 UNITAR expresses its gratitude to the Protocol Service of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, to the Protocol Service of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation, and to the Protocol and Liaison Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva for allowing the Multilateral diplomacy programme to reproduce the following texts in this brochure.



POST TENEBRAS LUX

# RÈGLEMENT concernant le PROTOCOLE

*Unofficial and Approximate Translation from French*

*(original version in French available online at:  
[http://www.geneve.ch/legislation/sq/fs/rsg\\_b1\\_25p04.html](http://www.geneve.ch/legislation/sq/fs/rsg_b1_25p04.html))*

8 December, 1970

(Entry into force: 1 January 1971)

The COUNCIL OF STATE of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, having regard to Articles 101, 122, paragraph 2, and 128, paragraph 1, of the Constitution of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, 24 May 1847 hereby:

## Chapter I Precedence

Art. 1 Official Events

1 The order of precedence to be observed at events and official functions outlined in the tables annexed to this Regulation.

The precedence between two State Councillors shall, first, by the function (President, Vice-President), then the original date of election and, alternatively, with age.

3 For the Grand Council, the order of precedence is:

- a) the President;
  - b) the office;
  - c) former presidents they are members or not supported;
  - d) groups in order of their importance and, if their importance is equal, in alphabetical order.
- 4 The municipal authorities shall take precedence in the following order:
- a) City of Geneva;
  - b) municipalities having a board of directors, in alphabetical order;
  - c) no joint administrative board, in alphabetical order.
- 5 For officials, precedence is determined by class treatment and, alternatively, by the date of appointment.
- 6 If several people have the same rank, precedence is determined, generally by seniority in the public and, alternatively, by age.

## Chapter II Receptions, ceremonies, events

Section 1 Oath

Art. 2 Swearing

The ceremony of swearing in of the Council of State is organized by the State Chancellery, in agreement with the office of the Grand Council, as the traditional protocol.

Section 2 Official functions (7)

**Art. 3 (7) Invitations Form**

- 1 The State Council may invite one or jointly with the Federal Council or the Administrative Council of the City of Geneva.
  - 2 In principle, the Council of State offers no receptions Sunday.
  - 3 Party representation
  - 3 For purposes of representation, the State Council, one of its members or the chancellor of State invite VIPs from the diplomatic, political or economic.
- These four receptions invitations can occur in both places generally vest ceremonial receptions in facilities for these purposes or other private premises.

**Art. 4 Visit a Confederate government**

During a visit to a Confederate government, a reception, hosted by the State Council, held at the Town Hall. (1)

2 The flags of Switzerland, Geneva and the canton concerned are flown at the entrance of City Hall.

**Art. 5 Visit of ambassadors accredited to Bern**

When an ambassador accredited to Bern expresses the desire to make a visit to Geneva government, he was received into the hall of the State Council, the Town Hall.

- 2 The flags of Switzerland, Geneva and the country are flown at the entrance of City Hall.
- 3 The reception is followed by lunch.

**Art. 6 Visit six permanent delegates**

The Heads of Permanent Missions who wish to make a courtesy call to the government are received by the President of the State Council, or in his absence the Vice-President with the Chief of Protocol. Mayor of Geneva is invited to attend this visit.

**Art. 7 Federal Magistrates**

The State Council is organizing a ceremony appropriately during:

- a) the election of a Federal Council in Geneva, the Federal Court, the Federal Insurance Court;
- b) the election of someone from Geneva to the presidency of the Confederation, the National Council, the Council of States, the Federal Court, the Federal Insurance Court, the Military Court of Cassation. (2)

**Art. 8 (2) General Officers and senior**

The Council of State calls in the rule, every 2 years old and the new general and senior officers who hold or have held a command or function relevant to the Canton of Geneva.

**Art. 9 Home for guests**

- 1 At a reception held in common or not the Federal Government or the Administrative Council of the City of Geneva, guests are welcomed by a representative of each authority inviting.
- 2 Representatives of other authorities present at the reception are considered guests.
- 3 The State Council may be represented by one of its members, the chancellor of state, the Chief of Protocol or by any officer of the Grand Council.
- 4 A balliff at least is always present.

Division 3 Representation of the Council of State ceremonies and other events

**Art. 10 General principles**

When one accepts the State Council to be represented at an event, it may be one or more of its

members, normally no more than 3, the chancellor of state or chief of protocol, or by a board member of the Grand Council.

In Rule 2, when the event includes a parade or a speech by the representative of the State Council, it is accompanied by a balliff.

- 3 Unless exceptional circumstances, the Council of State is not represented at the ceremonies or events taking place on Sunday.

**Art. 11 Patriotic**

- 1 The Council of State participated in the ceremonies of 1 June, 1 August, in memory of Geneva soldiers died serving their country, the Escalade and the Restoration. The constituent bodies are represented.
- 2 In the rule, the president of the State Council delivered the speech for the occasion on June 1 at Port-Black.

**Art. 12 Private Corporate Events**

As a rule, except for the celebrations of important anniversaries, as 25th, 50th, 75th, or 100th anniversary, the Council of State is not represented in the events of a commercial private.

- 2 If a department head is involved as a private, another manifestation of the same kind, in principle, it does not speak.

## Chapter III Order of speeches

**Art. 13 Order of speeches**

- 1 As a rule, he who has the highest rank gave his last speech.
- 2 However, when a federal adviser gave a speech at an event or reception, her speech is given, in principle, in the first place. The speakers who followed him speak in the order specified in paragraph 1.

## Chapter IV Patches and Flags

**Art. 14 national flags**

1 Swiss and Genevan flags are hoisted on the City Hall, the Courthouse, the Cathedral of St. Peter and the main administrative buildings:

- a) 5 May (Europe Day);
  - b) 1 June;
  - c) 1 August;
  - d) 11 and 12 December;
  - e) 30 and December 31. (1)
- 2 They are half-masted on the day of the funeral: (1)
    - a) the buildings mentioned in paragraph 1 at the death of an adviser to a federal, state councillor, president of the Grand Council, the Attorney General,
    - b) at the Hotel de Ville, on the death of the head of a State which maintains a consular office based in Geneva, a National Councillor of Geneva, Geneva member of the Council of States, a federal judge in Geneva, Chancellor of State, a member or a mayor, he is also a former Federal Councillor of Geneva, a former State Councillor and a former president of the Grand Council;
    - c) at the courthouse, on the death of a magistrate of the judiciary, a former Federal Court judge

in Geneva or the Federal Insurance Court, former Attorney General, a former president of a court.

Art. Patches and 15 foreign pavilions

- 1 The national flag of the sending State may be flown and its coat of arms of this state placed on buildings occupied residences of heads of consular posts and diplomatic missions, as well as their means of transport. ( 1)
- 2 However, according to the practice from Geneva, the foreign flag is flown daily from the National Day of the sending State and the Swiss and Geneva parties mentioned in Article 14, paragraph 1.

## Chapter V Funerals

Art. 16 General

- 1 The official funeral is held by the State Chancellery, in agreement with the family of the deceased when the latter is a state councillor, president of the Grand Council, Attorney General or Chancellor of State (1).
- 2 The protocol lends its assistance to the family of the deceased for the funeral of the order in which government figures are represented.
- 3 The three wishes of the deceased or his family are crucial.
- 4 When the Council of State was represented at the funeral, he is always accompanied by a bailiff and a crown is sent. In all cases, a letter of condolence be sent to the family of the deceased and his immediate superior.

Art. 17 Federal authorities

- 1 If the deceased is from Geneva, the Council of State, in corpore, attends the funeral. Federal Councillor
- 2 If the deceased is Confederate, a delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. Former Federal Councillor
- 3 If the deceased is Geneva, a delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. Chancellor and Vice-Chancellors of the Confederation
- 4 The Chancellor attends state funeral. National Councillor, Member of the Council of States, a federal judge
- 5 If the deceased is Geneva, a delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The ceremony is set according to the secretariat of the Federal Assembly and the courts. Senior officer
- 6 If the deceased is in Geneva or had under his command units Geneva, a delegation of the State Council attended the funeral.

Art. 18 Geneva authorities

- 1 The Council of State in corpore attends the funeral. The ceremony is set according to the protocol established by the State Chancellery. President of the Grand Council
- 2 The State Council in corpore attend the funeral. The ceremony is set according to the office of the Grand Council, according to the protocol established by the State Chancellery. Attorney General
- 3 The State Council in corpore attend the funeral. The ceremony is set in agreement with the President of the Court of Justice, according to the protocol established by the State Chancellery.

(1)

- Member of the Grand Council
- 4 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The ceremony is set according to the chairman of the Grand Council. President of court
- 5 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The ceremony is set according to the Attorney General. Former State Councilor
- 6 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. Former President of the Grand Council
- 7 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The event is set in consultation with the Chairman of the Grand Council. Former Attorney General
- 8 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The ceremony is set in consultation with the Attorney General. Mayors
- 9 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The ceremony is set according to State Councilor in charge of the Department of Interior and mobility (10). State Chancellor
- 10 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. The ceremony is set according to the protocol established by the State Chancellery.

Art. 19 Other authorities

- State Councillor of another canton
- 1 If the deceased is Romand, or Oberland Ticino, a delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. Bishop of the Diocese
- 2 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral. Director of an international organization
- 3 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral service taking place in Geneva at the death of the Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and CEOs of intergovernmental organizations based in Geneva. Permanent Delegate
- 4 A delegation of the State Council attended the funeral service taking place in Geneva on the death of a head of permanent mission accredited to the UN in Geneva and specialized agencies with the country which the Confederation has diplomatic relations. The Chief of Protocol provides his services to the post in mourning. Other personalities
- 5 On the decision, the State Council may be represented. ( 1)

## Chapter VI Consular Corps

Art. 20 Definition

Consular Corps of Geneva is made up of all consuls general, consuls and vice consuls stationed in the township, whether or not a career.

Section 1 Arrival and duties of a head of consular post

Art. 21 Arrival of the head of

1 Upon arrival in Geneva or if it is allowed to exercise his functions, the head of consular visits to the chief of protocol that sets out the ceremonial of the hearing official duties. The head of states, where applicable, the names of employees he wishes to be accompanied at the ceremony.

2 The Chief of Protocol shall, at the request of the head of a consular post, all the necessary information on political organization and the Geneva cantonal and municipal governments, it also indicates that courtesy is customary do after taking office.

Art. 22 Exequatur and hearing duties

1 The Council of State is informed of the granting of federal enforcement to the new head of the consular post and fixed the hearing official duties.

2 On the appointed day, the State Council receives formal hearing the new head of the consular post may be accompanied by consular officers assigned to his post. The Mayor of the City of Geneva is invited to attend the hearing. In general, when receiving only of welcome and words of courtesy are exchanged. Dress for the ceremony is the dark attire, uniform or national dress. (1)

3 If the consular post headed by an honorary consular officer, the chief post and possibly some of his associates received formal hearing by the Chairman of the State Council with the Chief of Protocol. The Mayor of the City of Geneva is invited to attend the hearing. (1)

Art. 23 (1)

Section 2 Precedence

Art. 24 Heads of diplomatic mission

The leaders of a career consular post shall rank in each class following the date of grant of enforcement.

2 The order of precedence between two or more heads of consular post of the same rank, who obtained the execution on the same date, is determined by the hearing date of entry on duty.

3 If a future head of the consular post may lead to the post on an interim basis prior to obtaining the enforcement order, it is considered as acting head.

Art. 25 Heads of post fees

Heads of consular posts shall rank fees in each class, after the heads of career consular post in order and according to rules established in articles 24 and 26.

Art. 26 Interim Managers

The interim managers rank after all heads of consular posts. Between them, they rank according to the dates they took office as acting.

Art. 27 Consular Officials

Career consular officers and honorary, not heads of posts shall rank in each class according to the date of notification of commencement of employment. Precedence is given to career civil servants.

Section 3 receptions, ceremonies and Hearings

Art. 28 Official Ceremonies

The Consular Corps in principle take part in official ceremonies. The Chief of Protocol shall send the invitations and give him the necessary information.

Art. 29 Audiences Miscellaneous

The Chief of Protocol is available to heads of consular posts to fix the date and time of the hearings they want to get President's Council of State, a department head or any other appointment that you may desire.

Section 4 Temporary absences and reminders heads post

Art. 30 Interim Managers

The head of the consular leaving temporarily or permanently, the consular district shall inform the Chief of Protocol and shall indicate the name of the person to temporarily manage the consular post.

Art. 31 Termination of functions

Upon notice of the date of leaving office, the head of the consular post shall notify the Chief of Protocol, which shall inform either the State Council, is Chairman of the State Council to establish a possible farewell audience.

Art. 32 (1) Hearing leave and interim managers

On the appointed day, the State Council or the Chairman of the State Council receives in audience of leave, the head of consular post, which employees can join. The Mayor of the City of Geneva is invited to attend the hearing.

Section 5 deaths

Art. 33 Head of State or foreign government

Upon the death of a head of state or government of a state maintaining a consular post in Geneva, President of the State Council or in his absence, a state councillor, accompanied by the chief of protocol, went to the post consular report to head of the condolences of the Council of State and, where appropriate, to sign the condolence book.

2 The same protocol is applied when the deceased's country has diplomatic relations with the Confederation, but is represented in Geneva by a permanent mission, not a consulate.

3 If a funeral service was celebrated in Geneva, the State Council shall be represented.

Art. 34 Head of consular post

1 The Council of State must be notified immediately of the death of a chief of the consular post. The Chief of Protocol provides services to the post in mourning.

2 If a funeral service was celebrated in Geneva, the State Council shall be represented.

Art. 35 Consular officer

Upon the death of a consular officer, not chief post, condolences were expressed by a letter from the Chief of Protocol to the head of consular post.

2 If a funeral service was celebrated in Geneva, the State Council shall be represented by the Chief of Protocol.

## Chapter VII Final and Transitional

Art. Repealing Clause 36

The regulations concerning the Protocol of 12 November 1965, is repealed.

Art. 37 Entry into force

This Regulation comes into force on 1 January 1971.

## GUIDELINES ON DIPLOMATIC COURTESY IN GENEVA

### Opening of a new permanent mission

1. It is current practice for a Government to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in writing, through the intermediary of its permanent mission in New York, of its intention to establish a permanent mission in Geneva. The Secretary-General then informs the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Director-General informs the Chief of Protocol who brings this to the attention of the Head of the Permanent mission of the host country. The current practice is that a Government informs also the Swiss Government of its intention to establish a mission in Geneva.

### Credentials

2. Credentials of permanent representatives are issued either by the head of State or Government, or by the minister for foreign affairs, and they are addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and handed to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva during the presentation of credentials ceremony. Through a press release issued by the Information Service, the United Nations Office at Geneva then notifies the directors and/or secretaries-general of the specialized agencies concerned.

## GUIDELINES

### ON DIPLOMATIC COURTESY IN GENEVA

United Nations

**Precedence**

8. (a) United Nations: Precedence among the Organization of the United Nations is the following: Secretary-General of the United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNHCR, UNRWA, UNICEF, UNEFA, WFP, UNDCP, OHCHR, under-secretaries-general, assistant-secretaries-general, directors.
- (b) Between permanent representatives accredited to the Geneva Office: Precedence among permanent representatives who hold the rank of ambassador is determined by the date of presentation of credentials. Under the next category fall permanent representatives who do not hold the rank of ambassador; acting permanent representatives take precedence after permanent representatives, irrespective of their title, in accordance with their last nomination as such.
- (c) Between permanent representatives accredited to the Geneva Office and the Permanent Representative of the host country: Precedence can, by courtesy, be given to the latter.
- (d) Between other members of permanent missions: Precedence is determined by rank, and within each group (ambassadors, ministers and ministers counsellors, counsellors, etc.) according to date of arrival.
- (e) Between permanent representatives and heads of secretariats of international organizations:  
The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva takes precedence over permanent representatives;

**Protocol upon assumption of office of permanent representatives**

3. Upon assumption of office by a permanent representative, the permanent mission should ask the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service in Geneva to make arrangements for the presentation of credentials. For the brief ceremony of presentation, the Chief of Protocol will accompany the permanent representative.
4. It is customary for a new permanent representative to send individual letters to other permanent representatives informing them that he has presented his credentials.
5. It is the practice for a new permanent representative to call on the directors and/or secretaries-general of specialized agencies and other international organizations to which he is accredited.
6. Given the large number of permanent missions in Geneva, it is left to the discretion of the permanent representative as to which colleagues he might wish to call upon. It is advisable to pay a visit to the Chairman of the Geneva Diplomatic Committee and to the Head of the Permanent Mission of the host country.
7. The Authorities of the Republic and Canton, as well as of the City of Geneva, appreciate courtesy calls by newly-arrived permanent representatives. However, given the large number of diplomatic and consular missions in Geneva, such courtesy calls are left entirely to the discretion of the newly-arrived permanent representative.



Office at Geneva and other permanent missions about temporary absences of permanent representatives, naming the member of the permanent mission in question who will be in charge.

**Changes in the diplomatic personnel of the permanent missions**

15. Permanent missions must advise the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service in Geneva of changes in the diplomatic personnel (arrivals, departures, official titles, promotions, etc.).

organization might greet the permanent representatives at the entrance and see that they are ushered to their seats.

10. In a ceremony to which permanent representatives are invited collectively rather than as members of national delegations, and during which representatives of international organizations, local authorities, and the like, are seated on a podium, the possibility should be considered of inviting the Chairman of the Geneva Diplomatic Committee or, in his absence, one of the vice-chairmen, to the podium.

11. It is desirable that permanent representatives be given access to all meetings at which their country is represented, irrespective of whether they have been formally notified as members of delegations to such meetings.

**End of tenure of office of permanent representatives and members of permanent missions**

12. When a permanent representative relinquishes his post, the current practice is that he pay a farewell visit to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and to the directors and/or secretaries-general of the specialized agencies and other international organizations to which he is accredited and that he inform other permanent representatives, in writing, of his departure. The United Nations Office at Geneva correspondingly informs the Permanent Mission of the host country. Attention is also, mutatis mutandis, drawn to paragraph 7 above.

13. There is no institutionalized practice of farewell gifts from permanent representatives to a departing permanent representative.

FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

# PROTOCOL REGULATIONS FOR THE SWISS CONFEDERATION

Approved by the Federal Council  
9 December 2002

The terms used in these regulations to describe functions (President of the Confederation, Chancellor of the Confederation, Head of Protocol, Head of Mission, etc.) refer to both genders.

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## PART 1

### Competence regarding protocol and ceremonial

1. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs is the competent authority to determine matters of protocol and ceremonial concerning the Federal Council and the President of the Swiss Confederation.
2. Protocol of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (hereafter Protocol) ensures coordination with the other Departments and with the federal, cantonal and communal authorities.

## PART 2

### Protocol regulations

#### I. Agrément of a new Head of Mission

1. Agrément of a new Head of Mission is sought by the sending State either through its diplomatic mission in Switzerland or through the Swiss diplomatic mission in that State. A curriculum vitae is to be enclosed with the request.
2. The procedure remains secret up to the moment when agrément is communicated to the authorities of the sending State through the same diplomatic channel used to submit the request.
3. The Swiss authorities do not issue a press release when agrément is given.

#### II. Arrival of a new Head of Mission

1. The arrival of a new Head of Mission is notified without delay to Protocol.  
The new Head of Mission is officially welcomed by a representative of Protocol if arriving at Berne railway station or at Belpmoos airport, near Berne. However, a Head of Mission is not accorded an official welcome on arrival in Switzerland at a border post or elsewhere than in Berne.
2. During the first days following arrival in Berne, the Deputy-Head of Protocol pays a visit to the new Head of Mission. New Heads of Mission without a permanent residence in Berne present themselves directly to the Head of Protocol.

### III. Presentation of credentials/lettres de cabinet

1. When visiting the Head of Protocol, the new Head of Mission presents true copies of his credentials and of his predecessor's letters of recall. From that moment, the new Head of Mission can fully exercise his functions.
2. The Head of Protocol describes in broad terms how the federal administration and, in particular, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs is organised. He explains ceremonial for the presentation of credentials, and indicates the day this will take place.
3. On the appointed day, as confirmed by note verbale, a representative of Protocol, accompanied by an usher in full dress and a police escort, arrives to collect the new Head of Mission in an official car and accompany him to the Federal Palace. The Head of Mission may be accompanied by a maximum of three members of his diplomatic staff.  
On arrival, the Head of Protocol welcomes the Head of Mission and conducts him to the *Salon d'honneur* of the Federal Council to be introduced to the President of the Confederation and the Chancellor of the Confederation. If prevented from attending, the President is, in principle, represented by the Vice-President of the Federal Council.
4. No speeches are made nor written communications exchanged at the time of presenting credentials so as to leave more time for informal discussion. Photographs are taken during the ceremony which, in principle, does not exceed 15 minutes. The Head of Mission is escorted back to his residence as soon as the ceremony has finished.
5. Dress code for this ceremony: dark suit, national costume or uniform.
6. A press release on the presentation of credentials is issued by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.
7. The *Chargé d'Affaires en pied* is accompanied by a representative of Protocol in an official car to the Federal Palace where he is conducted to the office of the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for the presentation of lettres de cabinet.

### IV. Absences and recall of the Head of Mission

1. A Head of Mission temporarily leaving Switzerland informs Protocol by note verbale and indicates the name of the member of his diplomatic staff who will run the mission as *Chargé d'Affaires ad interim* during his absence. If the Head of Mission is unable to do this before leaving, the name of the *Chargé d'Affaires ad interim* must be notified to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Protocol) in a fax message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the sending State. On his return, the Head of Mission notifies Protocol of his resumption of duties.

2. The Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim* sees to it that his country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs notifies the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Protocol) in advance by fax of any temporary or permanent absence from Switzerland, including the name of the person designated to take over his functions as Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*.
3. When a Head of Mission who has carried out duties in Berne for three years or more is to leave permanently, a farewell luncheon is given in his honour by the Secretary of State, the Secretary General or a Director of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Federal Council.
4. Farewell visits to members of the Federal Council are not required. However, Heads of Mission who wish to pay a farewell visit to the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and possibly to other members of the Federal Council, should contact Protocol to organise such visits.

#### V. Audiences

Following the presentation of credentials, Protocol is at the disposal of Heads of Mission to arrange the dates and times of audiences they wish to have with the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs or other members of the Federal Council. These audiences, to be requested by note verbale, are however not obligatory and should, for preference, be combined with a diplomatic demarche.

#### VI. Visits to the cantonal authorities

1. Official visits that Heads of Mission wish to make to the cantonal authorities are neither considered obligatory nor are they truly customary. According to the Federal Constitution, foreign affairs fall within the competence of the Confederation.
2. Each canton is sovereign in this respect, however, and determines its own criteria for receiving guests.
3. Visits primarily occur in the cantons where the relevant States have particular interests and with which they cultivate close relations. This applies in particular to cantons where the States maintain consular representations, where they have direct commercial interests, or where a significant number of their citizens reside.
4. The Head of Mission shall take care to limit the number of such visits to two per year, making each request by note verbale to Protocol, which ensures co-ordination with the cantons. Only visits to the Berne cantonal authority are arranged directly by the interested Mission.

#### VII. Presentation of New Year wishes

1. The President of the Confederation receives New Year wishes and responds to the speech by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.
2. The Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs attends this ceremony.

3. As a general rule the ceremony takes place during the second week in January. Each Head of Mission may be accompanied by a member of the diplomatic staff of the Mission, but not his spouse. Protocol establishes the programme for receiving the Heads of Mission. Dress code for this ceremony: dark suit, national costume or uniform.

#### VIII. Official receptions in honour of the Diplomatic Corps

1. Every two years (in odd-numbered years), the Federal Council organises a cultural event followed by a reception.

The Heads of Mission and Chargés d'Affaires *ad interim* who have been officially notified to Protocol are invited together with their spouses.

Dress code is determined by Protocol.

2. Alternating with this (i.e. in even-numbered years), the Federal Council organises an excursion, with invitations restricted to the Heads of Mission and Chargés d'Affaires *ad interim* who have been officially notified to Protocol, accompanied by their spouses.

#### IX. Invitations from the Diplomatic Corps

1. The members of the Federal Council and the Chancellor of the Confederation do not in principle attend receptions given by Heads of Mission on their countries' national days.
2. The members of the Federal Council may, on the other hand, personally accept invitations to lunch or dinner, or any other reception given in their honour.  
Invitations are communicated via Protocol.

#### X. Official visits

1. *State visits*  
A State visit is one made in Switzerland by a Head of State, at the invitation of the Federal Council. As a general rule, there are one or two State visits a year.  
The programme of the visit is prepared by Protocol and the diplomatic mission in Switzerland of the State concerned. The foreign guest is, in principle, offered accommodation at a major hotel in Berne.  
A State visit lasts two days. During the first day, the Federal Council *in corpore* (including the Chancellor of the Confederation) officially welcomes the guest at the Federal Palace. In the evening, the Federal Council hosts a reception in honour of the guest. The remaining part of the visit is generally devoted to excursions.

Military honours are paid and the national anthems played during the official welcome in Bern's *Bundesplatz*, and, in principle, at the airport on the Head of State's departure.

2. *Official visit by a Head of State*

An official visit by a Head of State is one made in Switzerland by a Head of State at the invitation of the Federal Council.

The programme of the visit is prepared by Protocol and the diplomatic mission in Switzerland of the State concerned. The visit is, in principle, devoted to official meetings with a delegation of Federal Councillors and to a luncheon, dinner or reception hosted by the Federal Council in honour of the guest. An excursion may follow.

As a rule, the foreign guest is offered accommodation at a major hotel in Bern.

Military honours are paid and the national anthems played, in principle, during the official welcome at the Lohm Manor in Kehrsatz.

3. *Official visit by a Head of Government*

An official visit by a Head of Government is one made in Switzerland by a Head of Government at the invitation of the Federal Council.

The programme of the visit is prepared by Protocol and the diplomatic mission in Switzerland of the State concerned. As a general rule, the visit is devoted to official meetings with a delegation of Federal Councillors, preceded or followed by a luncheon or a dinner. An excursion may follow.

As a rule, the foreign guest is offered accommodation at a major hotel in Bern.

4. *Official visit by a member of government*

An official visit by a member of government is one made in Switzerland by a member of a foreign government at the invitation of that government member's counterpart in the Federal Council.

The programme of the visit is prepared by the Federal Department concerned, the relevant diplomatic mission in Switzerland and, if necessary, in consultation with Protocol. The visit is devoted to official meetings preceded or followed by a luncheon or a dinner. An excursion may follow.

As a rule, the foreign guest is offered accommodation at a major hotel in Bern.

5. *Official working visit*

An official working visit by a Head of State, Head of Government or member of government is less formal than an official visit. It is therefore subject to simplified protocol, comprising a welcome to Bern and official meetings, preceded or followed by a luncheon or a dinner.

6. *Courtesy visit*

A courtesy visit is one that a Head of State, Head of Government or member of a foreign government staying in Switzerland wishes to make to the President of the Confederation or another member of the Federal Council. The Department concerned organises such visits in collaboration with the diplomatic mission of the relevant State. Protocol organises courtesy visits by a Minister of Foreign Affairs to the President of the Confederation. Courtesy visits, which normally are brief, are subject to simplified protocol.

7. *Spouse of a Head of State, Head of Government or member of government*

As a general rule, programmes for the spouse of a Head of State, Head of Government or member of government are organised by Protocol on the occasion of a State visit only.

**XI. Private stay or transit visit to Switzerland by a foreign dignitary**

There is no particular protocol for a private stay or transit visit to Switzerland by a foreign Head of State or Sovereign, Head of Government or member of government. The diplomatic mission of the State concerned should give official advance notice of the stay to Protocol. That being done, the competent Swiss authorities can make available appropriate facilities on arrival and departure, taking account of the visitor's status. These authorities will also take the security measures that they consider necessary provided that they are duly informed by note verbale from the diplomatic mission in Switzerland of the State concerned.

**XII. Deaths**

1. In case of the death of a Head of State or Head of Government, the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, accompanied by a close adviser and the Head of Protocol, goes to the residence of the Head of Mission or to the chancery of the diplomatic mission in Switzerland of the State in mourning to present the condolences of the Federal Council, and to sign the condolence book.

If the Head of Mission is a Chargé d'Affaires *en pied* or a Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*, the visit is made by the Head of Protocol.

If the diplomatic mission of the State in mourning organises a funeral service, the Federal Council is appropriately represented there.

2. In case of the death of a Head of Mission accredited to the Federal Council, members of the deceased's family in Berne are visited by the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs accompanied by a close adviser and the Head of Protocol.

If the deceased was a Chargé d'Affaires *en pied* or Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*, the Head of Protocol makes the visit.

During the funeral, a wreath is laid on behalf of the Federal Council. If the deceased was a Chargé d'Affaires *en pied* or Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim*, the wreath is laid on behalf of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Federal Council or the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs are represented appropriately at the funeral ceremony or service.

3. In case of the death of a member of the diplomatic staff of a diplomatic mission in Switzerland, condolences are presented in a letter from the Head of Protocol to the Head of Mission.

#### XIII. Federal flag

*The federal flag is flown:*

1. On the House of Parliament, i.e. the central building of the Federal Palace, during federal parliamentary sessions;
2. On all buildings belonging to the Confederation on 1 August.

*The federal flag is flown at half-mast:*

1. On all buildings belonging to the Confederation, from the day on which a Federal Councillor dies in office until the day of the funeral;
2. On the West Wing of the Federal Palace on the day of the death and on the day of the funeral of:
  - a) a Head of State in office of a country with which the Confederation maintains diplomatic relations, and in other circumstances as decided by the Federal Council;
  - b) the Chancellor of the Confederation in office;
  - c) a Head of Mission accredited to the Federal Council.

*The Federal Palace and the City of Berne are decked with flags:*

During State visits.

#### XIV. Decorations

1. The Federal Law of 23 June 2000 on titles and decorations granted by foreign authorities prohibits certain Swiss citizens from accepting titles or decorations that a foreign government may wish to confer on them. The same law prohibits foreign distinctions from being accepted or worn by members of the Swiss armed forces.
2. Diplomatic missions whose governments intend to confer a distinction or title on a Swiss citizen are requested to consult Protocol in advance, in each case.

#### XV. Wearing of foreign armed-forces' uniforms in Switzerland

1. Wearing the uniform of foreign armed forces is forbidden in Switzerland. In some very specific cases, special authorisation may be granted by the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports.
2. All requests must be submitted to Military Protocol using appropriate forms.
3. As an exception to points 1 and 2 above, Defence Attachés and Deputy Attachés accredited in Switzerland are authorised to wear uniform while carrying out their duties, without having to submit a request for authorisation.

#### XVI. Order of speeches

As a general rule, the speaker with the highest rank speaks last.

#### XVII. Precedence

1. *General remarks*
  - a) The order of precedence to be observed at official ceremonies and receptions is indicated in the following lists and tables. Protocol is at the disposal of diplomatic missions in Switzerland that would like specific details on this matter.
  - b) Where a number of persons have the same rank, their respective precedence is, as a general rule, determined by their seniority and age. In principle, spouses share the same rank.

2. *Precedence of members of the Diplomatic Corps*

1. Apostolic Nuncio
2. Ambassadors
3. *Chargés d'Affaires en pied*
4. *Chargés d'Affaires ad interim*
5. Minister-Counsellors
6. Counsellors
7. Secretaries of Embassy
8. Attachés

In each category, the order of precedence is set by the date when credentials were presented or when the diplomat concerned took up duties. This is indicated in the list of Diplomatic Corps members. The respective ranking of *Chargés d'Affaires ad interim* is determined by the date on which their assumption of duties was notified to Protocol.

3. *Precedence of members of the Consular Corps*

1. Consuls General
2. Consuls
3. Vice Consuls
4. Consular agents

The Heads of Post take their rank in each category according to the date the exequatur was granted. Other consular agents take their rank according to the date they took up their duties, as indicated in the list of members of the Consular Corps.

4. *Precedence of foreign Defence Attachés and their Deputies*

A) The precedence of Defence Attachés and their Deputies is determined on an individual basis, according to the following indications of equivalence:

General	=	Ambassador
Colonel	=	Counsellor
Lieutenant Colonel and Major	=	First secretary

Attachés take precedence over deputy attachés.

B) Within the Corps of Defence Attachés, the order of precedence is determined by the date on which duties were taken up. The Defence Attaché with residence in Switzerland who assumed office earliest is the Dean of the Corps of Defence Attachés, regardless of rank. The Defence Attaché with residence in Switzerland appearing immediately after the Dean on the list of precedence is Vice-Dean. In the absence of the Dean, the Vice Dean performs the Dean's function. The order of precedence for Deputy Attachés follows the same procedure as that applying to Attachés, regardless of rank.

Military Protocol will supply the precedence list in force to authorities that request it.

Military Protocol is the liaison office between the Defence Attachés accredited in Switzerland and the civilian and military authorities, the armed forces' commands and Swiss military dignitaries.

5. *Public ceremonies and official acts*

Order of precedence in Berne:

1. President of the Confederation
2. Vice President of the Federal Council
3. Federal Councillors in the order of precedence determined by seniority of their election by the Federal Assembly
4. President of the National Council
5. President of the Council of States
6. Chancellor of the Confederation
7. President of the Federal Supreme Court
8. President of the Federal Insurance Court
9. Former Federal Councillors
10. Presidents of the cantonal governments in the order given in the Constitution (Art. 1 Fed. Const.)
11. Apostolic Nuncio
12. Ambassadors accredited in Berne
13. Secretaries of State
14. Members of the National Council
15. Members of the Council of States
16. Swiss dignitaries and government officials, according to the precedence list attached
17. *Chargés d'Affaires en pied*
18. *Chargés d'Affaires ad interim*
19. Other guests

Protocol is available to provide any further information and to determine, depending on the circumstances, the order of precedence for Swiss officials not included in this list.

**PART 3**

**International organisations**

1. The Federal Council determines the protocol and ceremonial reserved for the Secretary-General of the United Nations during official visits to Switzerland.
- 2) As a general rule, it is the prerogative of the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs or of another Federal Department to settle questions relating to visits by director-generals of international organisations. The programme of visits is drawn up by the Department concerned, in co-operation with Political Affairs Division III of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and Protocol

**PART 4**

**Final provisions**

The Protocol Regulations of 2 May 1990 are hereby revoked.

These Regulations come into effect on the date when they are approved by the Federal Council.









