



2009 Treaty Event

Towards Universal Participation and Implementation

Background Press Release

Countries invited to sign, ratify or accede to multilateral treaties during the 2009 Treaty Event on 23-25 and 28-29 September

Annual Event to Focus on Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea

In a continuing effort to bolster international law and promote its implementation, the United Nations will hold its annual treaty event at United Nations Headquarters on 23-25 and 28-29 September 2009. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his letter of invitation to Member States, stated that this year's treaty event "provides a distinct opportunity for States to demonstrate their continuing commitments to the central role of the rule of law at the international and national levels."

A treaty highlighted this year is the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Protocol, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2008, will open for signature on 24 September. This legal instrument will enable the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals or groups who have exhausted domestic remedies concerning alleged violations of the rights set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Covenant provides a wide legal framework for protecting basic human rights, such as work in just and favourable conditions, social protection, an adequate standard of living and access to education. The Optional Protocol will apply a process for filing complaints related to economic, social and cultural rights that is comparable to the one already existing for civil and political rights.

Another new treaty, the Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea (expected to be known as the "Rotterdam Rules") aims at providing a uniform set of rules to modernize and harmonize the carriage of goods by sea. It notably includes provisions that, for the first time, provide a legal basis for electronic transport records and for the recognition of the growing importance of carriage of goods through containers. The Convention, also adopted by the General Assembly in December 2008, will open for signature in Rotterdam on 23 September and thereafter in New York, as part of the 2009 Treaty Event.

Noting that one of his priorities is "to promote global goods and remedies to challenges that do not respect borders," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a letter to Member States that "to this end, the treaties highlighted this year cover areas of global reach such as climate change, terrorism and the use of nuclear and other weapons that adversely affect civilians."

The some 40 treaties highlighted this year cover human rights (11), terrorism and crime (11), protection of the environment, sustainable development and climate change (8), UN staff's privileges, immunities and safety (5) and disarmament (3).



United Nations

During the Treaty Event, the more than 500 treaties deposited with the Secretary-General are all open for ratification, acceptance, approval or accession in accordance with their respective provisions.

Background

In September 2000, the United Nations invited world leaders attending the landmark Millennium Summit to take advantage of their presence at United Nations Headquarters to sign a wide range of major international treaties. That year, a successful side event called “An Invitation to Universal Participation” offered a platform for Governments to showcase their commitment to strengthening the rule of law at home and in the global arena. Since then, the Treaty Event has been held annually, usually coinciding with the General Debate of the General Assembly in September. Since 2000, the Treaty Events have resulted in nearly 1500 new signatures, ratifications, acceptances, accessions and other treaty-related actions.