



Press Release

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INTERNATIONAL TREATIES GAIN GROUND ON SIDELINES OF UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On the sidelines of the busy opening of the General Assembly session at United Nations Headquarters, 40 States took 87 treaty actions in an annual event that ended today.

“States have again manifested their firm belief in the importance of international treaty law,” said Patricia O’Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel.

The bulk of the 87 treaty actions — which can consist of signing or becoming party to one of the 550 multilateral treaties deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General — were ratifications (30), accessions (24), acceptances (4) and consents to be bound (2), all of which represent the step of becoming party to a treaty.

“The high number of States becoming parties to various treaties makes this one of the most important Treaty Events in recent years,” said Legal Counsel O’Brien, adding that “it really supports and strengthens the rule of law.” It is only by ratifying, accepting, acceding to, or expressing consent to be bound that a State is actually bound by an international agreement. These legally binding international norms and standards then become an important part of the rule of law regulating the conduct of nations.

Participants in this year’s Treaty Event, which took place from 24 to 2 September and 1 to 2 October, included four Heads of State (the Presidents of Madagascar, Nauru, Nigeria and Switzerland), one Head of Government (the Prime Minister of Samoa), 30 ministers, and four Permanent Representatives to the United Nations.

One treaty joined by two new States parties — Indonesia and Swaziland — is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

“This is a strong expression of commitment to protect children from violence and prevent the risk of their exploitation as victims of sale, prostitution or pornography,” said Marta Santos Pais, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Violence against Children.

The Protocol supplements the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provides detailed guidance to support States in their efforts to prohibit, prevent and bring to an end incidents of sexual exploitation of children, and to protect children from being sold for non-sexual purposes, including forced labour, illegal adoption and organ harvesting.

Another Optional Protocol that strengthens the Convention on the Rights of the Child — the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict — was joined by three new States parties: Indonesia, Nigeria and Swaziland. The Protocol serves to ensure that children will not be forced to fight in war or be pressed into military service.

Another important treaty action was Samoa’s ratification of the amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the Crime of Aggression, making Samoa the second State

party to the Rome Statute to ratify the amendments which define the crime of aggression.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities — the first international agreement requiring Governments around the world to uphold the rights of children and adults with disabilities, adopted in 2006 — was ratified by Dominica, Israel, Poland, Russian Federation and Swaziland.

Honduras and Portugal joined the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, a 1954 agreement that requires stateless persons — people who are not considered as nationals by any State, but who are not covered by refugee laws either — to be given the same rights as citizens with respect to freedom of religion and education of their children, for instance.

Malta, Nigeria and Turkey ratified the 2005 Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism designed to criminalize acts of nuclear terrorism and to promote police and judicial cooperation to prevent, investigate and punish those acts.

The International Cocoa Agreement, adopted in 2010 to strengthen the cooperation between exporting and importing countries, entered into force provisionally during the Treaty Event, on 1 October, as foreseen in the treaty.

Background

In September 2000, the United Nations invited world leaders attending the landmark Millennium Summit at United Nations Headquarters to sign a wide range of major international treaties. That year, the Treaty Event titled “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 1,763 treaty-related actions, including signatures, ratifications and accessions.

For more information on the 2012 Treaty Event, please see <http://treaties.un.org>.

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