

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

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COPYRIGHT IN PUBLICATIONS

Note on United Nations practice for the guidance
of members of the Secretariat

The following note on United Nations practice regarding copyright in its publications was approved by the Publications Board at its 402nd meeting on 9 May 1962.

Definition

1. For the purposes of the present note the term "United Nations publications" means matter produced by printing or some similar process and offered for sale under an authorization of the Publications Board. Such publications are readily identifiable in two ways: they show the United Nations as publisher on their title page, and they bear a United Nations sales number - generally on the reverse of that page.
2. Reference to certain classes of published matter not ranking as United Nations publications but in regard to which members of the Secretariat may from time to time receive inquiries, is made in paragraph 13 below.

General position

3. Under the Universal Copyright Convention, the United Nations is able to retain copyright in appropriate publications on the completion of certain simple formalities.
4. The United Nations does not normally avail itself of this possibility, its policy being rather to facilitate dissemination of the contents of its publications in all reasonable ways.

5. An exception to the general practice is, however, made in the case of the Yearbook of the United Nations and a number of statistical publications. It may also be made in the case of other publications from time to time by decision of the Publications Board. A complete list of the publications at present copyright is attached as Annex A.

6. Whenever a publication is copyrighted, the symbol required by the Universal Copyright Convention (a capital letter "C" enclosed in a circle) is printed on the reverse side of the title page followed by the words "United Nations". Detailed instructions on the procedure for obtaining copyright in the United States and in the countries which are parties to the Universal Copyright Convention are set out in document ST/PB/15.

Reproduction or translation of copyright material

7. Advance distribution of copies of copyright publications to the Press will be arranged by the Office of Public Information. Such copies and any accompanying press release will carry an embargo against publication before the agreed publication date and a notice indicating that, although copyright, the publication may be freely quoted by newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

8. All other requests by commercial publishers, public authorities, societies and private individuals for permission to reproduce or translate copyright publications or extracts from such publications should be referred to the Secretary of the Publications Board who will submit them to the Chairman for such action as he may think fit.

Reproduction or translation of non-copyright material

9. Save in the special cases discussed in paragraph 12 below, publications which are not copyright may be freely quoted without prior permission from the United Nations. Authors and publishers, however, often seek such permission as a matter of courtesy and members of the Secretariat replying to requests of this nature should ask that due acknowledgement be made to the source of the quotation.

10. It follows logically from the policy stated in paragraph 4 above that the Secretariat should give all reasonable encouragement to any reputable publisher proposing to issue a translation of a United Nations publication, which is not copyright, in a language in which the United Nations is not itself publishing it. The prospective publisher should be asked: (a) to make due acknowledgement to the United Nations as publisher of the authentic text; (b) to state clearly on the title page that he takes sole responsibility for the accuracy of the translation; (c) to refrain from using the United Nations emblem in any way likely to convey the impression that the translation is an official United Nations publication.

11. In cases where public authorities, societies and commercial publishers contemplate separate editions of United Nations publications, which are not copyright, in languages in which the United Nations has issued or is preparing to issue the publications in question, the authorities concerned should be invited to consider the alternative of bulk purchase from the United Nations at special rates.

Special cases

12. The authors of articles contributed to United Nations publications or of papers submitted to seminars or other meetings which are to be published by the United Nations sometimes seek permission to publish their articles or papers under their own name as a book or in a professional journal. Where such publication is to take place after the United Nations publication has appeared, the general practice regarding non-copyright publications applies (see paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 above). In some instances, however, permission is sought to reproduce articles or papers prepared for the United Nations prior to their publication by the United Nations itself. In replying to such requests members of the Secretariat should be guided by the following principles:

- (a) The United Nations cannot withhold permission to publish material which has been prepared for it as a technical contribution and for which it has made no payment. The author should, however, be informed of the United Nations intention to publish and should be asked to state that the material was prepared for the United Nations and is to be published by it in such and such a publication or volume of proceedings.

(b) Articles or papers prepared for the United Nations under a Special Service Agreement, on the other hand, are covered by the terms of the Agreement, and it is normal for these to include a clause stipulating that all rights of whatsoever nature in any material produced under the provisions of the Agreement are vested exclusively in the United Nations. Where this is the case, the United Nations is entitled to withhold permission to publish. The author's request should therefore be referred to the Secretary of the Publications Board who will submit it to the Chairman of the Board for such action as he may think fit.

Published matter outside the scope of this note

13. The definition of United Nations publications in paragraph 1 above does not cover UNICEF publications, in particular the annual sets of Christmas cards, or certain publications issued by private firms by arrangement with the United Nations and based on matter compiled or provided by the Secretariat. If copyright has been retained, the fact will be apparent from the reproduction of the copyright symbol followed by the name of the copyright holder.

Guidance

14. Members of the Secretariat requiring further guidance on copyright matters in respect of United Nations publications should apply to the Secretary of the Publications Board who, apart from any other action to be taken, will see that any legal question is at once brought to the notice of the Office of Legal Affairs.

ANNEX A

List of United Nations Copyright Publications

Up to 15 May 1962, the following publications had been copyrighted by decision of the Publications Board. Subsequent additions to or deletions from the list may be made by the Board from time to time and will be brought to the attention of the Secretariat in addenda to this note.

Yearbook of the United Nations
Statistical Yearbook
Demographic Yearbook
Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics
Yearbook of International Trade Statistics Vols. I and II
Current Economic Indicators
Patterns of Industrial Growth
Monthly Bulletin of Statistics
Statistics on World Trade in Steel, 1913-1959
World Trade in Steel
Geological Map of Asia and the Far East
Oil and Natural Gas Map of Asia and the Far East
