UNITED NATIONS

ORGANIZATION

OF THE

SECRETARIAT

NEW YORK, 1951
SECTION 8
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

General responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Department:

To provide substantive and technical services and secretariat assistance to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, to the Economic and Social Council and to several of its functional committees, other ad hoc committees and working groups, and to all organs or branches of the Secretariat which may require information, technical advice and other services in the field of social welfare and development, human rights, demography and narcotic drugs;

To carry out certain of the functions and other activities formerly performed by the League of Nations in connexion with the conventions on narcotic drugs, child welfare, traffic in women and children, and in obscene publications; to elaborate or undertake, at the request of the relevant organs, similar responsibilities for new conventions in the fields of human rights, freedom of information and of the Press, narcotic drugs, suppression of the traffic in persons and assistance to indigent aliens;

To maintain liaison and develop working relations on technical problems: on the one hand with Member Governments and with the specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies and other research and professional organizations which are concerned with international or regional problems in these and other social fields; and on the other hand with the departmental and organizational units of the Secretariat which are interested in the social aspects of the work of the Organization;

To undertake the publication of periodicals, annual reports from governments, yearbooks and technical reports and studies in the social field;

To advise the Secretary-General on all matters in the social welfare fields as set out in Chapter IX and X of the Charter;

To undertake such additional tasks as may be assigned to it by the Secretary-General.

Organization

Office of the Assistant Secretary-General

Division of Human Rights
Division of Narcotic Drugs
Population Division
Division of Social Welfare
Cartographic Unit

Functions

Office of the Assistant Secretary-General

Plans, directs and co-ordinates the substantive and administrative work of the Department; supervises the progress of work assigned to the divisions;

Maintains, co-ordinates and collates the over-all reports from the Department to the Secretary-General, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly;

Co-ordinates the publications programme of the Department and reviews the reports and other publications prepared by the organizational units of the Department to ensure consistency with approved policies;

Plans, co-ordinates and provides, in part, services for the Third Committee of the General Assembly and such other committees of the Assembly when items of direct interest to the Department are discussed, and the Social Committee of the Economic and Social Council.

Division of Human Rights

General responsibility

The general responsibilities of the Division are:

To provide substantive and administrative services to all bodies of the United Nations when they deal with human rights and related subjects, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, the General Assembly Committee on a draft Convention of Freedom of Information, the Plenipotentiary Conference on the Status of Refugees, the ad hoc
Committee on Slavery, the ad hoc Commission on Prisoners of War, and the Committee on the Repatriation of Greek Children (partial responsibility); To prepare documentation for the proposed Plenipotentiary Conference on the draft Convention on Freedom of Information and the Ad Hoc Joint United Nations-International Labour Organisation Committee on Forced Labour; To assist the Secretary-General in carrying out any work in the field of human rights arising from his over-all responsibilities under the relevant Articles of the Charter; To provide other branches of the Secretariat with such technical advice with regard to human rights as they may need; To prepare and publish studies and reports on all aspects of human rights; To maintain and develop working relationships with specialized agencies, inter-governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations concerned with problems of human rights; To obtain and analyse information and prepare reports on the promotion and observance of human rights throughout the world; To survey the development of, and prepare studies on, international agreements relating to all aspects of human rights; To assist in the negotiation and drafting of such agreements, and in formulating plans and procedures with respect to the implementation of human rights. The Division is organized into the Office of the Director, five sections, and the Secretarial Pool. The Office of the Director Plans, directs and co-ordinates all administrative and substantive functions of the Division; Maintains working relationships with governments, delegations, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, experts, consultants, and the public on questions relating to all aspects of human rights. Section I performs the following functions: Provides substantive and administrative services to the Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in connexion with the preparation of the International Covenant on Human Rights and measures for its implementation; Prepares studies and reports on developments concerning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Human Rights; Studies constitutional and other questions relating to the application of the Covenant to constituent units of federal States and to Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories; Studies questions concerning the protection of personal rights and civil liberties; Studies questions concerning the promotion of political, economic, social and cultural rights; Studies the entire problem of implementation of the Covenant, including the establishment of fact-finding and conciliation machinery and the procedure for handling petitions; Studies the question of instituting a system of annual reports on human rights, including a possible questionnaire on human rights and a procedure for reviewing annual reports; Studies the question of an International Court of Human Rights; Studies questions relating to a twenty-year programme for the promotion of human rights; Deals with the question of reports by governments on the implementation or recommendations in the field of human rights; Handles such substantive questions as may arise from time to time concerning genocide, reservations to multilateral conventions and information concerning human rights arising from the trials of war criminals. Section II performs the following functions: Provides substantive and administrative services to United Nations bodies working on those aspects of the human rights programme assigned to it, such as freedom of information, trade union rights, forced labour and measures for its abolition, the plight of survivors of concentration camps, the repatriation of prisoners of war, old age rights, and the rights of the child; Compiles data, conducts research and prepares surveys, analyses and reports on developments in these fields for the interested organs of the United Nations; Undertakes special assignments and missions related to any of these fields; Obtains from information enterprises and international and national professional associations, in connexion with its responsibilities in the field of freedom of information, comments and suggestions concerning the draft International Code of Ethics and analyses these comments for study by the appropriate organs of the United Nations; Obtains from governments information concerning new legislative and administrative measures which they may take with regard to freedom of information; Obtains from information enterprises and associations reports or surveys concerning the current status of freedom of information in any part of the world; Undertakes the substantive and administrative tasks arising out of the redrafting of the draft Convention of Freedom of Information and the formulation of a final text of the International Code of Ethics; Maintains liaison and consults with the International Labour Organisation in connexion with forced labour and allegations of infringements of trade union rights; Undertakes measures to alleviate the plight of survivors of concentration camps; Undertakes measures to assist in the repatriation of prisoners of war; Studies measures to promote the rights of aged persons and of children. Section III performs the following functions: Provides substantive and administrative services to the Commission on the Status of Women;
Prepares documentation for the Commission, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations on such questions as political rights of women, political education of women, status of women in public law and in private law, equal pay for equal work for men and women workers, etc.;

Keeps up to date with relevant developments in these and other fields of special interest to women, obtaining information and preparing and publishing surveys, analyses, studies and reports;

Assists in preparing draft international conventions, or recommendations to governments, on the status of women;

Compiles and analyses replies received in response to questionnaires on the legal status and treatment of women and undertakes other studies in this field requested by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women;

Collects and analyses information regarding constitutional provisions, national legislation, and administrative practices affecting the status of women, and the progress of women in various countries;

Maintains contact with women’s and other organizations interested in promoting realization of the principle of non-discrimination as between men and women;

Prepares for publication studies, study guides, pamphlets, and other material designed to assist in improving the political, economic and social status of women;

Collaborates with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in improving educational opportunities for women throughout the world, and in eliminating obstacles to equality between the sexes in this field;

Undertakes the substantive handling of certain problems of special interest to women which arise from time to time, such as the problem of Greek mothers whose children have not been repatriated.

Section V performs the following functions:

Provides substantive and administrative services to United Nations bodies working on those aspects of the human rights programme assigned to it, such as prevention of discrimination, protection of minorities, freedom to choose a spouse, abolition of servitude and other forms of servitude, the status of refugees, the status of stateless persons and the elimination of statelessness;

Compiles data, conducts research and prepares surveys, analyses and reports on developments in these fields for the interested organs of the United Nations;

Collects and studies legislation, judicial decisions, and other types of action which have been found to be especially useful in preventing discrimination;

Collects and studies data on the problems of freedom to choose a spouse;

Assists the Commission on Human Rights in its study of minorities called for by the General Assembly;

Prepares, with respect to the abolition of slavery and other forms of servitude, documentation for the Committee of Experts on Slavery and for other bodies working in this field.

Undertakes work relating to categories of refugees not covered in the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and will in the future undertake work in connexion with the elimination of statelessness. Section V performs the following functions:

Prepares for publication materials on general aspects of the human rights programme, such as the “Yearbook on Human Rights” and various bibliographies and pamphlets;

Implements resolutions of the Economic and Social Council on communications relating to human rights;

Is responsible for substantive aspects of liaison with specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations in respect of human rights;

Undertakes development of the human rights educational programmes, in co-operation with the Department of Public Information, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and local human rights committees;

Assists in the preparation of various general reports such as the “Annual Report of the Secretary-General” and the reports of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly; and edits documentation prepared by the Division;

Checks texts prepared for other publications of the United Nations in so far as they deal with human rights.

Division of Narcotic Drugs

General responsibility

The Division, comprising three sections and one unit, reporting daily to the Director, has the following general responsibilities:

To provide the substantive and technical services required for the Narcotic Drugs Commission and other ad hoc committees or conferences, or international conferences on narcotic drugs that may be convened by the Economic and Social Council;

To undertake all functions deriving from the several international conventions, protocols and agreements, relating to narcotic drugs;

To undertake responsibility for all the tasks assumed or entrusted to the Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Secretary-General under resolution 9 (1) of the Economic and Social Council;

To ensure close co-operation between the United Nations and the Permanent Central Opium Board and the Narcotic Drugs Supervisory Body and the Expert Committee on Drugs Liable to Produce Addiction of the World Health Organization.