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Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva



Human Rights
**A Compilation of
International Instruments**

Volume I (First Part)
Universal Instruments



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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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Introduction

This revised compilation of universal human rights instruments is issued in two parts. It replaces volume I of the two-volume compilation of international instruments published by the United Nations in 1993. It has been prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Volume II of the compilation, published in 1997, contains regional instruments.

For reasons of space, the compilation is not a comprehensive collection of all international human rights instruments. However, the opportunity has been taken in this new edition of volume I to broaden as well as to update the selection, which contains documents adopted up to 18 December 2002. The first part now includes the Declaration and Programme of Action of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Instruments on the rights of persons with disabilities have been brought together in a single section.

In the second part of volume I a new section is added that contains the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions. There is also a new section on the Right to Health, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is included in the section on the Rights of Migrants. The Statute of the International Criminal Court and those of the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are included in the second part.

The compilation includes instruments adopted by the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Complete listings can be found on the relevant web sites (www.ilo.org, www.unesco.org, www.unhcr.ch).

The legal status of the instruments contained in the compilation varies. *Declarations, principles, guidelines, standard rules* and *recommendations* have no binding legal effect.

Nevertheless, such instruments have an undeniable moral force and provide practical guidance to States in their conduct. The value of such instruments rests on their recognition and acceptance by a large number of States and, even without binding effect, they may be seen as declaratory of broadly accepted goals and principles within the international community.

International treaties, referred to variously as *covenants, statutes, protocols* or *conventions*, are legally binding for those States that ratify or accede to them. Treaties adopted within the United Nations are open for signature and ratification by all

States, while those adopted by regional organizations are normally open only to members of the organization concerned.

Up-to-date information on ratifications and the status of the United Nations treaties contained in the first volume of the Compilation is to be found at the Office of the High Commissioner's web site (www.ohchr.org).

It is hoped that the compilation will contribute to a wider knowledge and awareness of international human rights standards and will be a valuable resource for all involved in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Foreword

Human rights are the foundation of human existence and coexistence. They are universal, indivisible and interdependent. And they lie at the heart of everything the United Nations aspires to achieve in its global mission of peace and development.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly in 1948, Governments have discussed, negotiated and agreed upon many hundreds of fundamental principles and legal provisions designed to protect and promote an array of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

This publication brings together, in one place, some of the most important of those conventions, treaties, declarations and agreements.

It seeks to inform the world about human rights. The more people know their own rights, and the more they respect those of others, the better the chance that they will live together in peace.

It aims to show the commitments that Governments have made, and to encourage States to sign and ratify these important universal standards if they have not done so already.

It is also intended as a tool for Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, human rights defenders, individual citizens and international organizations such as the United Nations. Indeed, though Governments have the primary responsibility to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has a role to play in this endeavour.

The world has made significant progress in raising global awareness of human rights, setting out the legal framework, and establishing institutions and mechanisms for protection, redress and justice. But our work is far from done. We must improve upon the record of the last century, and make respect for human rights a reality for every man, woman and child. This compilation of major human rights instruments is meant as a contribution to that effort, and I recommend it to the widest possible global audience.



Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General