

GUIDE TO UNITED NATIONS DOCUMENT SYMBOLS

United Nations document symbols are composed of capital letters and Arabic numerals. A slash (/) separates the components of a symbol. (Until 1978 Roman numerals were sometimes used to designate the number of a United Nations “session”)

The first letters indicate the main organ of the UN in which the document was submitted:

A/-General Assembly
E/-Economic and Social Council
S/-Security Council
T/-Trusteeship Council
ST/-Secretariat

Documents of the International Court of Justice carry the initials of the Court - I.C.J.

The symbol after the first slash indicates which subsidiary body of the main organ produced the document. Here are some examples:

-/AC. .../-Ad Hoc Committee or similar body
-/C. .../-Standing, permanent, main committee
-/CN. .../-Commission
-/CONF. .../-Conference
-/GC. .../-Governing Council
-/SC. .../-Sub-committee
-/Sub. .../-Sub-commission
-/WG. .../-Working Group

Subsidiary bodies may be assigned an Arabic numeral that is usually in the consecutive order of their establishment. For example, A/CN.10/- stands for the Disarmament Commission of the General Assembly.

Specific symbols also designate certain subsidiary organs of the United Nations. For example:

CERD/-Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
DP/-United Nations Development Programme
TD/-United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP/-United Nations Environment Programme
WFC/-World Food Council

The General Assembly

The Main Committees of the General Assembly are identified by the following symbols:

A/C.1/-First Committee (Political and Security)
A/C.2/-Second Committee (Economic and Financial)
A/C.3/-Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural)
A/C.4/-Fourth Committee (Decolonization)
A/C.5/-Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary)
A/C.6/-Sixth Committee (Legal)

A/SPC/-Special Political Committee

Beginning with the 31st session of the General Assembly (1976), a new system for numbering General Assembly documents was adopted. Instead of the consecutive numbers previously in use (e.g., A/10115, A/10116, etc.), documents are now numbered in a separate series for each session. Each General Assembly session is indicated by the Arabic numeral that comes after the specified symbol of the body or subsidiary organ concerned (e.g., A/C.1/40/-). The final element of the symbols is consecutive for each series of documents. For example, A/40/2 is the second in the series of main documents for the 40th session of the General Assembly, and A/C.5/40/12 is the twelfth of the Fifth Committee for that session. Documents of meetings follow the same system. Thus A/40/PV.1 is the text (provisional verbatim) of the first plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its fortieth session. A/C.2/40/SR.10 is the tenth Summary Record (and meeting) of the Second Committee of the General Assembly at the same session.

The following letters are sometimes included in document symbols to denote the nature of the document:

- /BUR/-General Committee documents
- /DEC/-Decisions
- /INF/-Information series (procedural questions)
- /Min./ -Minutes
- /NGO/-Statements by Non-Governmental Organizations
- /PC/-Preparatory Committee
- /PCN/-Preparatory Commission
- /PET/-Petitions
- /PV/-Provisional Verbatim record of meetings
- /RES/-Resolutions
- /SR./ -Summary Records
- /WP./ -Working Paper
- /L./ -Draft Documents for limited distribution

To indicate the modification of documents, the following are used:

- /Add.- -Addendum - indicates an addition
- /Summary -Official summary of a report prepared for the committee
- /Excerpt -Excerpt of a document where only part is needed
- /Rev. -Revision - new version of document
- /Amend. -Amendment - alteration to original document
- /Corr. -Corrigendum - Corrects error in original document text
- /-* -Indicates document was reissued for technical reasons

Economic and Social Council

The sessional committees of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) are identified by the following symbols:

- E/1986/C.1/-First Committee (Economic)
- E/1986/C.2/-Second Committee (Social)
- E/1986/C.3/-Third Committee (Programme and Co-ordination)

Sessional subsidiary bodies may also be established (e.g., E/1986/WG/1., the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant On Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights).

The document symbols of the Economic and Social Council and its sessional committees consist of: the identifying letter of the Council (E/-); the year; any subsidiary body or a symbol denoting the nature of the document; then the numerical order in which the document is issued (e.g., E/1985/1, E/1985/SR.1, and E/1985/C.1/SR.1). Note however, E/RES (or DEC/1985/1) for the Council's resolutions and decisions.

In January 1978, the Economic and Social Council modified the numbering of its sessions to current practice. Three sessions of the Council are held each calendar year. They are the organizational session, the first regular session, and the second regular session, as opposed to the consecutive numbers previously used. Should special sessions be held, they are assigned consecutive numbers within each year (e.g., first special session, 1978; second special session, 1978).