

UNITED NATIONS VISITORS' SERVICE, NAIROBI

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. *How many Member States does the UN have?*

There are currently 193 Member States of the United Nations. The latest State to join the United Nations was South Sudan (in 2011). According to Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations:

"1. Membership in the United Nations is open to all ... peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.

"2. The admission of any such state to membership in the United Nations will be affected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council."

When did Kenya become a Member of the United Nations?

Kenya was admitted to the United Nations membership in December 1963, immediately after its independence in the same month.

2. *Can a Member State be expelled from the United Nations?*

Article 6 of the Charter reads as follows:

"A Member of the United Nations which has persistently violated the Principles contained in the present Charter may be expelled from the Organization by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council."

This has not happened.

Article 5 of the Charter provides for the suspension of a Member State:

"A Member of the United Nations against which preventive or enforcement action has been taken by the Security Council may be suspended from the exercise of the rights and privileges of membership by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. The exercise of these rights and privileges may be restored by the Security Council."

3. *Meaning of the United Nations emblem and flag*

The Presentation Branch of the United Nations Office of Strategic Services prepared a design for the emblem of the United Nations in April 1945 in response to a request for a button design for the San Francisco Conference at which the Charter of the United Nations was drafted and approved. In its resolution 92 (I) of 7 December 1946, the General Assembly approved the San Francisco design with

slight modifications and recommended that Members of the United Nations should take measures to prevent the use for commercial purposes of the emblem, name or initials of the United Nations without authorization by the Secretary-General.

The symbols in the emblem of the United Nations speak for themselves. The olive branch, symbolizing peace, can be traced back to ancient Greece. The world map is a symbol of the area and universality with which the United Nations is concerned in achieving its main purpose: peace.

On 20 October 1947, it was decided that the flag of the United Nations should be the official emblem adopted by the General Assembly centred on a light blue background. As far as is known, the colours have no special significance.

4. Languages used at the United Nations

Why is everything written in English and French at the United Nations?

English and French are the two working languages of the United Nations, as decided by the General Assembly in 1946. A second Assembly resolution, adopted on 1 February 1946, outlined the rules of procedure with regard to languages. In that resolution, the Assembly decided that:

- In all the organs of the United Nations other than the International Court of Justice, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish shall be the official languages and English and French the working languages.
- Speeches made in either of the working languages shall be interpreted into the other working language.
- Speeches made in any of the other three official languages shall be interpreted into both working languages.
- Any representative may make a speech in a language other than the official languages. In this case he shall himself provide for interpretation into one of the working languages. Interpretation into the other working language by an interpreter of the Secretariat may be based on the interpretation given in the first working language.

The General Assembly added Arabic as an official language in a resolution adopted in 1973. Arabic was added as an official language of the Security Council in 1983.

5. Secretary-General

Who is the Secretary-General? What is the election procedure and what is the length of the term of office?

The current Secretary-General is Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea. He has been in office since January 2007.

The Charter of the United Nations provides that the Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Security Council. The term for a Secretary-General is five

years. Although there is technically no limit to the number of five-year terms the top official and chief administrative officer of the United Nations may serve, no Secretary-General has held office for more than two terms.

What are the qualifications to become Secretary-General?

In most instances, the Secretary-General has had experience serving as a high-level official of his home country, often as Foreign Minister, as is the case with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. His predecessor, Kofi Annan of Ghana, was the only person who rose through the ranks of the United Nations system to become Secretary-General.

Who is the top-ranking official at the United Nations Office at Nairobi?

UNON is headed by a Director-General, at the Under-Secretary-General level, serving as the representative office of the Secretary-General in Nairobi and performing representation and liaison functions with permanent missions, the host-country and other Governments, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in Nairobi, as well as other organizations of the United Nations system in Kenya.

The Director-General of UNON is Ms. Zahle-Work Zwede (Ethiopia), who was appointed in 2010.

6. The United Nations Office at Nairobi

How, when and why was Nairobi chosen as a United Nations headquarters?

At the invitation of the Government of Kenya, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established its headquarters in Nairobi in 1972. In 1975, the Government of Kenya provided a location for the organization, donating 100 acres of land to the United Nations, followed by an additional 40 acres in 1983. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) also established its headquarters in Nairobi in 1978. Moreover, over the years around 50 UN programmes, funds and specialized agencies opened their country and regional offices in Nairobi and were consolidated on the compound. In 1996 the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the UN Headquarters in Africa, was established by the General Assembly and since then is one of the four main duty stations of the United Nations, the others being Geneva, New York and Vienna.

How many people work for the United Nations in Kenya?

More than 3,800 staff members from over 100 countries work for the organizations based at UNON. About one third of those staff members are Kenyan nationals.

The organizations headquartered in Nairobi are:

- [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#), currently headed by Mr. Achim Steiner (German/Brazilian)
- [United Nations Human Settlements Programme \(UN-Habitat\)](#), currently headed by Mr. Joan Clos (Spanish)

The organizations with regional offices in Nairobi are:

- [United Nations Children’s Fund \(UNICEF\)](#)
- [United Nations World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#)
- [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#)
- [and many more...](#)

More information on the United Nations Office at Nairobi can be found on the website:

- [United Nations Office at Nairobi \(UNON\)](#)

7. Visiting the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)

How can I visit the United Nations Office at Nairobi?

Guided tours of UNON are open to everyone. Multilingual guides from different countries will inform you about the work of the United Nations and the Nairobi-based organizations. During your tour, you will receive a presentation of the UN’s history, structure and work. You will then visit modern conference rooms, see various artwork donated by member states, explore the one-of-a-kind “green building” (Headquarters of UNEP and UN-Habitat) and much more! Finally, you will get an opportunity to take pictures with the **karibUNI** sign!

Tours are available from Mondays to Thursdays from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Prior registration via email or phone is required. Tours are conducted in English and Swahili. Other languages may be possible based on a tour guide’s availability.

For groups with a special interest, such as university students, teachers, military or police officers, government employees or company workers or members of non-governmental organizations, the Visitors Service also offers special interest briefings on the various areas of work of the United Nations, such as peacekeeping, climate change, sustainable development, slum upgrade or human rights, and of the Nairobi-based organizations.

To obtain further information or to book a guided tour, contact:

United Nations Visitors Service Nairobi
United Nations Information Centre
United Nations Office at Nairobi
P.O. Box 67578
00200 Nairobi
Tel.: +254 (0) 20 762 2034
E-mail: un.tours@unon.org
Website: <http://visitors.unon.org>
Twitter: [@unvisitorsnbi](https://twitter.com/unvisitorsnbi)
Facebook: [United Nations Visitors’ Service Nairobi](#)

The United Nations Office at Nairobi is located in Gigiri, opposite the Embassy of the United States of America. A valid identification document (National-issued ID/Passport/Driver's Licence) is required to enter the compound.

For your tour please wear a pair of comfortable walking shoes, bring a hat (when sunny) or an umbrella (when rainy) as most of the tour is conducted in the open. Children below 5 years are not permitted. Refreshments are not provided.

8. Following the United Nations Visitors' Service Nairobi on Social Media

The United Nations Visitors' Service Nairobi is on various social media channels. Find us online:

- on [Facebook](#)
- on [Twitter](#)
- on [Youtube](#)
- on [Google+](#)

Visitors can also write a review on [TripAdvisor](#) after their visit.

9. How does one become a tour guide?

United Nations tour guides are called "the United Nations ambassadors to the public" because of their direct contact with the people who visit the Organization every day. The guides play a pivotal role in shaping people's perceptions of the work of the United Nations. They are young people from all over the world who have different backgrounds but share a common interest in international issues. Most guides speak two or more languages. In addition to having excellent communication and presentation skills, they need to show a keen interest in the work and values of the United Nations, as well as in current affairs.

Tour guides in Nairobi are employed as full-time staff or part-time consultants. Interested candidates are requested to check [our website](#) as well as the [UN Careers website](#) for vacancy announcements.