

Organization terminology and organization types

Many attempts have been made to group and categorize international organizations. Few of them reflect the rich variety of organizations and fewer still are of any immediate, practical use. This article explores the significance of the descriptor in the title of an organization as an aid to categorizing organizations. It is extracted from « International organisations; diversity, borderline cases, functional substitutes and possible alternatives », which will be published as chapter 2 of - International organisations : a conceptual approach » edited by Paul Taylor and A.J.R. Groom, (inpress).

International organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, use any of an extensive range of terms in their official titles: union, association, office, alliance, centre, etc. There is a great deal of confusion in the meanings attached to these terms in practice so that it is not usual to attempt to order them in any way (A « centre » can resemble most « associations » and an « association » can be more like a « centre »). The following breakdown of the terms used does however help to clarify the current situation. This is achieved by relating the organizations to meetings by which they were established or through which they work. The numbering system in parenthesis following the term links it, where appropriate, to Diagram. The numbers in parenthesis following each named organization in the text refer to the reference number of that organization as described in Section A or Section B of the 16th edition of the Yearbook of International Organizations 1977.

0. General

association	fellowship (*)	foundation
federation	academy (*)	club
society	college (*)	league
confederation	brotherhood (*)	movement
organization	solidarity (*)	brigade (*)
union	guild (*)	chamber (*)
alliance	order (*)	

In each case this may mean an organization of individuals, an organization of national organizations, or any possible variation on these. Intergovernmental bodies only use those terms without an asterisk. Examples of use of these terms include :

International Chamber of Shipping (A 1492)
Association of South East Asian Nations (A0165)
Alliance for Progress (A1062)
International College of Surgeons (A1513)
World Assembly of Youth (A3456)
Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionists (A0200)
Rosicrucian Order (A3163)
European Broadcasting Union (A0598)
Confederation of Asian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (B0390)

Society for International Development (A3228)
League of Arab States (A2903)

An important variant in the case of some intergovernmental bodies stresses the domain for which the body is responsible.

West African Economic Community (A3424)
East Caribbean Common Market (A4346)

Other interesting variants are illustrated by the following :

Bahai International Community (A0180)
Boys Brigade (A0195)
Salvation Army (A3172)
Apostleship of the Sea (B0066)
Church of Christ Scientist (A0275)
World Citizen Party (B0365)
Mondcvitan Republic (A3668)
International Rehabilitation—Special Education Network
European Parliament (A0667)

1. Treaty-related

Intergovernmental organizations are, by definition, centred on an international treaty or agreement. In some cases the name of the treaty may be embodied into the name of the organization.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (A0985)
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (A3005)

Another group intimately linked to international legal questions is that of courts and tribunals (I.B.)

International Court of Justice (A3379)
European Court of Human Rights (A0438)
Permanent Court of Arbitration (A3107)
Nuclear Energy Tribunal (B4644)

A final group, specially governed by treaty provisions, is that of military and control authorities (I.C.) :

Allied Control Authority for Germany (B0042)
Security Council (B3376)
International Supervisory and Control Commission for Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam
International Authority for the Ruhr (B1385)
East Caribbean Caribbean Currency Authority (A0477)

2. Conference (2.1)

There are many bodies which take their names from the principal (statutory) meeting in which their members participate.

conference assembly *congress forum*

A fully representative and sovereign body may thus meet periodically and take decisions defining the policy of the organization which binds its subsidiary organs. The procedure and composition of such a meeting may be defined by the constitution of the body or the original treaty.

Standing Conference of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities (A3288)

European Conference of Ministers of Transport (A069S)
Conference for the Regions of North West Europe (A039)
World Assembly of Youth (A3456)
European Atomic Forum (A0590)

Conference Commissions (2.1.1)

Such general conferences when they occur may give rise to commissions of the conference which meet in the intervening months or years between sessions of the conference and possibly during it. In practice such commissions are either given or acquire a fair degree of autonomy. It may therefore happen that although the (periodic) conference does not constitute an organization in its own right, the commission may take on a more or less permanent organizational form. The number of members is generally limited and their selection is made according to rules established by the conference (or body) by which it was created and to which it reports. In some cases the commission may be created by a conference which is not held again.

International Commission for Bee Botany (A1522)
International Commission for Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (A1537)
Standing Commission for International Congresses on the History of Religion (B 3787)
Permanent Commission of International Congresses of Home Hygiene (B3094).

Conference Committees (2.1.1)

A general conference may establish working bodies charged with examination of certain points on the agenda during sessions. Such ad hoc bodies, by definition, would not constitute permanent organizations. The confusion of terminology may be such that « committee » may replace « commission » in the previous case.

Joint Bodies (2.1.1)

A general conference may establish a joint body with some external body.

Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission,

Regional and Specialized Bodies

Each of the above types of body may also be created regionally, or in terms of some special concern, by the general conference or as a specialized regional body by a regional conference.

3. Council (3.1)

A general conference may elect or appoint a

council *governing council*
governing body

This is a body which tends to be large (relative to the executive body) because it is fairly representative of the general conference and is able to exercise certain of its powers. Again the conference itself may or may not be held periodically or constitute a permanent organization.

World Council of Churches (A35Q1)
Council of Europe (A0435)
Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (A0432)
Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations (A0413)
International Social Science Council (A2466)
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (B3377)

In complex organizations, the council may create its own commissions, committees and joint bodies with external organizations. This may also occur regionally, or in terms of some special concern of the council (see Diagram for breakdown). There is confusion between use of « council » and « commission » or « committee » as defined in the previous and following sections.

4. Executive Committee (4.1)

A conference may elect an executive body of comparatively restricted membership (or it may be appointed by the council) with such names as

executive committee *administrative board*
steering committee *standing committee*
administrative council *permanent committee*

Even though the conference may not constitute an organization in its own right, such bodies may take on permanent organizational form.

Executive Committee of Nongovernmental Organizations associated with the United Nations Office of Public Information (B4757)
Standing Committee of the International Embryological Conference (A3278)
Executive Committee for the Common Market of the European Brushware Federation (B0915)

Again, as the last example indicates, regional, specialized and joint bodies may be created at this level.

5. Secretariat (5.1)

The permanent body may take on a name derived from an operational rather than a policy-making or decision-making unit.

Commonwealth Secretariat (A0376)
European Space Agency (A0868)
International Bureau for Declarations of Death (B1412)
Secretariat for Tourism Integration in Central America (B0061)
International Labour Office (A2183)

Again, regional, specialized and joint bodies may be created.

6. Department (6.1)

Departments of an organization do not, by definition, constitute autonomous organizations in the sense of interest here, although some bodies of this type may acquire special significance as international actors.

Specialized Section on Fruit and Vegetables of the Committee of Agricultural Organizations of the EEC (B3267)
A section of a large organization may, however, participate in interdepartmental bodies involving several agencies.

United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Indexing and Documentation

Such bodies are however difficult to distinguish from those of the following section.

7. Activities

A (periodic) conference, or even a conventional organization, may establish one or more activities which themselves take on permanent autonomous organizational form, whatever the continuing status of the body by which they were established. The emphasis given to a particular mode of action may even be reflected in the actual name of the organization, thus distinguishing it from conventional organizations (possibly to the point of raising the question as to whether it really should be considered as an organization). Three groups may be usefully distinguished : meeting-type events, programmes /projects, and organizations.

Meeting-type events (7.1.7)

A single meeting held under the auspices of an international body, tends (if it is especially large) to take on the form of an organization. Since the duration of such « organizations » is never more than 1 to 5 years, depending on the preparatory and follow-up period required, it is not usual to consider such bodies as organizations in their own right, although from a social, political, budgetary and legal point of view this could well be argued. Even a meeting of (rather than « under the auspices of ») an organization can be considered an independent organization.

« Certain people do not agree that a Congress is an independent entity existing only for the duration of the Congress. They consider that a Congress is more often an organ or an activity of a permanent international organization. Nevertheless, it is necessary to bear in mind the legal question — the problem of the responsibility of the promoters of the congress in case of accident, fire and liability for damages. In order to clearly define the limits of responsibility as regards the meeting-place, the time and those in charge, both locally and internationally, it seems, necessary to consider a congress as an independent legal entity which exists for a determined length of time », (G.P. Speeckaert. The Various Types of International Meetings... Brussels, U.I.A., 1967, p. 8).

Events of this type include :

meetings	exhibitions	shows
events	games	trade fairs

Examples worth considering are :

World Youth Forum (organized as an activity of the United Nations)
Olympic Games
International trade fairs

and their relation, in some cases, to such bodies as

Commonwealth Games Federation (A0198)
International Olympic Committee (A2303)
World Ploughing Organization (A3573) and contests
Federation of International Music Competitions (A0948)
European Association of Music Festivals (A0572)
International Exhibition Bureau (A1819)
Union of International Fairs (A3354)

Programmes/projects (7.1.8)

There are many examples of organizations which can be considered as programme bound in some way possibly because of special political or funding problems. These can be grouped as follows :

Programme : *World Food Programme (33543)*
United Nations Development Programme (B3382);
United Nations Environment Programme (B4161)

Special Committee for the International Biological Programme (B3262)

Colombo Plan Council for Cooperative Economic Development in S and SE
Asie (A0281)

Campaign : *Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FAQ)*
Campaign for A World Constituent Assembly (40205)

International Committee of Crusade of the Blind (B0271)

Project : *OECD High Temperature (Dragon) Reactor Project*

OECD (Halden) Reactor Project
Project Concern (B0567)

Survey : *World Fertility Survey (B3067)*

Association of African Geological Surveys

(A0116)

Fund : *International Monetary Fund (A2266)*
United Nations Childrens Fund (B3380)
International Defence. Aid Fund for Southern Africa (A4333)
World Wildlife Fund (A3603)

Emblem : *Association for International Cotton Emblem (B0101)*

Register : *International Registry of World Citizens (A2409)*
International Association for the Rhine Ships Register (A1231)

Prize : *International Lenin Peace Prize Committee (B2819)*
Standing Committee for Nobel Peace Prize Winners' Congresses (B3275)
International Commission for the Eriksson Prize Fund (B1531)

System : *Suez Canal Users Association (B3302)*
Taurus Express Conference (B3308)
Honeywell Large Systems Users Association Europe (B4420)
World Science Information System (B4668)
Southern European Pipeline Company (B4619)

Intelstat (A2627), Intersputnik (B0760)

Eurovision (A0590), Intervision (B0755)

Periodical : *International Ursigrom World Days Service (B4061)*

International Union for the Publication of Customs Tariffs (A2674)

Exchange : *European Commodities Exchange (B3612)*
European Association for the Exchange of Technical Literature in the Field of Ferrous Metallurgy (A0558)

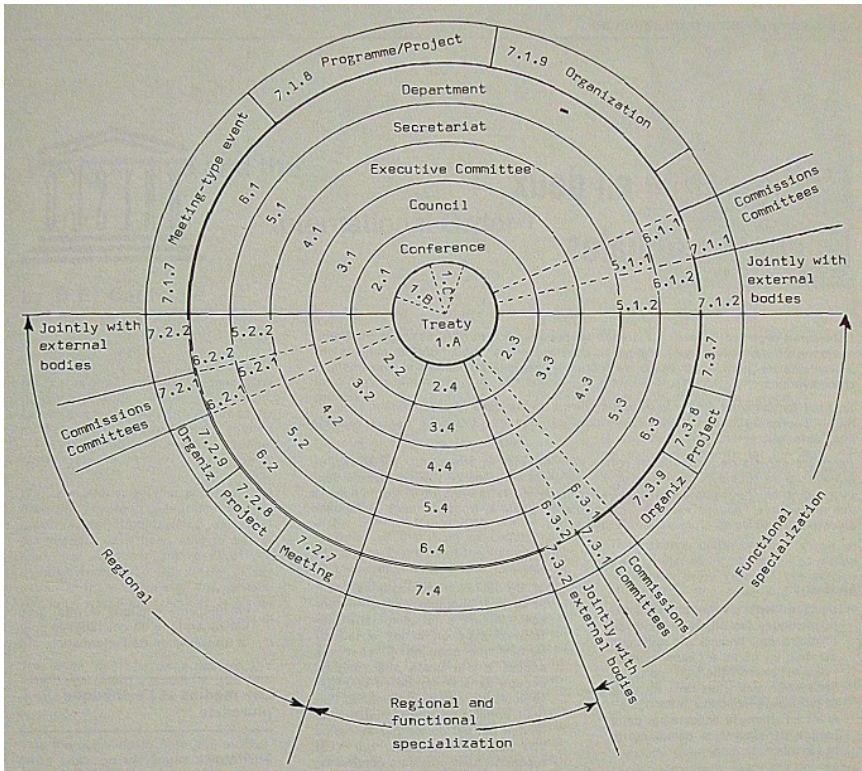
Stocks : *Commonwealth Collection of Micro-organisms (B3022)*
International Eye Bank
International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (B3150).

Organizations (7.1.9)

A large organization may create bodies to undertake specific activities. The political, legal, and financial circumstances under which such bodies are established may render them relatively autonomous even though links to the parent body are maintained. Typical activities include :

<i>information centre</i>	<i>training college</i>
<i>library</i>	<i>laboratory</i>
<i>advisory service</i>	<i>research institute</i>
<i>museum</i>	<i>educational academy</i>

Other bodies, with the same level of preoccupation, may be created under a variety of circumstances such that the relation to the creating body or bodies becomes tenuous or of limited significance. Such organizations, particularly when active at one physical location only, differ somewhat (especially in terms of the status of membership) from conventional international bodies.



Use of a generalized meeting/organization framework to classify organization types (and to map their structural components)

(Portions of several such diagrams could be shaded as appropriate to facilitate comparison of complex structures.)

Information : *International Tsunami Information Centre (A2646)*
International Time Bureau (B4062)
International Food Information Service (B2731)
Commonwealth Legal Advisory Service (B0097)
Afro-Asian Employment Service
International Scientific Film Library (A2437)
 Research : *International Rice Research Institute (A2417)*

European Southern Observatory (B3947)
Asian Conservation Laboratory (B1663)
International Centre for Theoretical Physics (B2724)
International Computation Centre (A1645)
 Education : *Asian Trade Union College*
International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training (A2186)
International Diplomatic Academy (A1793)
European University Institute (B3293)
College of Europe

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