



20 November 2020

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## Secretary-General's bulletin

### United Nations Flag Code

The Secretary-General, for the purpose of updating the provisions related to the protocol and use of the flag of the United Nations, hereby promulgates the following:

1. By resolution [167 \(II\)](#), the General Assembly resolved that the flag of the United Nations shall be the official emblem as adopted in its resolution [92 \(I\)](#), centred on a light blue background. By the same resolution, the General Assembly directed the Secretary-General to draw up regulations concerning the dimensions and proportions of the flag and authorized the Secretary-General to adopt a flag code, having in mind the desirability of the regulated use of the flag and the protection of its dignity.
2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Flag Code was first issued by the Secretary-General on 19 December 1947 and the Flag Consolidated Regulations on 23 July 1949.
3. The Code and Regulations were amended on 11 November 1952. The Regulations were further revised on 1 January 1967 and the Code and Regulations were promulgated as Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/132](#).
4. The revised Flag Code, which consolidates the previously separate Flag Code and Flag Regulations into a single document, regulates the use of the flag and is annexed to the present bulletin.
5. The present bulletin shall take effect on the date of its issuance.
6. The Secretary-General's bulletin of 1 January 1967 entitled "The United Nations Flag Code and Regulations" ([ST/SGB/132](#)) is hereby abolished.

(Signed) António Guterres  
Secretary-General



## Annex

### United Nations Flag Code

#### Article 1

##### Design, dimensions and specifications of the flag

1. The United Nations flag shall display the official emblem of the United Nations in white on a light blue background (colour code: Pantone Matching System 2925). The United Nations emblem shall in all cases be one half of the hoist (width) of the flag and entirely centred.
2. The flag shall always be identical on the front and back sides.
3. The flag shall have proportions of:
  - (a) 2:3, whereby the hoist (width) of the flag shall be 2 units to 3 units for the fly (length) of the flag; or
  - (b) 3:5, whereby the hoist (width) of the flag shall be 3 units to 5 units for the fly (length) of the flag; or
  - (c) The same proportions as those of the national flag of any country in which the United Nations flag is flown, subject to the United Nations emblem appearing in its original proportions.
4. Depending on whether the flag is used for outdoor or indoor display, the size may vary and can be, for example and subject to the provisions of paragraph 3 above being maintained, any of the following standard sizes: 4 ft x 6 ft (122 cm x 183 cm) for outdoor display and 3 ft x 5 ft (91 cm x 152 cm) for indoor display. Table flags may measure 4 in x 6 in (10 cm x 15 cm) and vehicle flags may measure 8 in x 12 in (20 cm x 30 cm).
5. The flag shall be made of nylon or another quality non-absorbent material.

#### Article 2

##### Dignity of the flag

The United Nations flag shall be treated with respect and shall not be subjected to any indignity. The manner and circumstances of display shall take into account, insofar as appropriate, the laws and customs applicable to the display of the national flag of the country in which the display is made. When the flag becomes frayed from ordinary wear and tear to the extent that it no longer upholds the dignity bestowed upon it, it shall not be displayed and should be retired in a dignified manner to avoid any misuse or desecration thereof.

#### Article 3

##### Use of the flag by the United Nations

1. The United Nations flag shall be flown:
  - (a) From all buildings, offices and other premises and property occupied by the United Nations; and
  - (b) From any official residence when such residence has been duly designated.
2. The flag may also be flown from vessels and vehicles employed in the official service of the United Nations. When vehicles are operating as part of a motorcade during an official or State visit of the Secretary-General, the flag may be flown only on the vehicle in which the Secretary-General travels, subject to security and safety considerations.
3. The flag may be used at any United Nations meeting or conference.

## Article 4 Flag protocol

### 1. Time and occasions for display

(a) The United Nations flag should normally only be displayed on buildings and on a stationary flagstaff from sunrise to sunset. The flag may also be displayed at night on special occasions and, if properly illuminated, during hours of darkness;

(b) The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, unless it is an all-weather flag; and

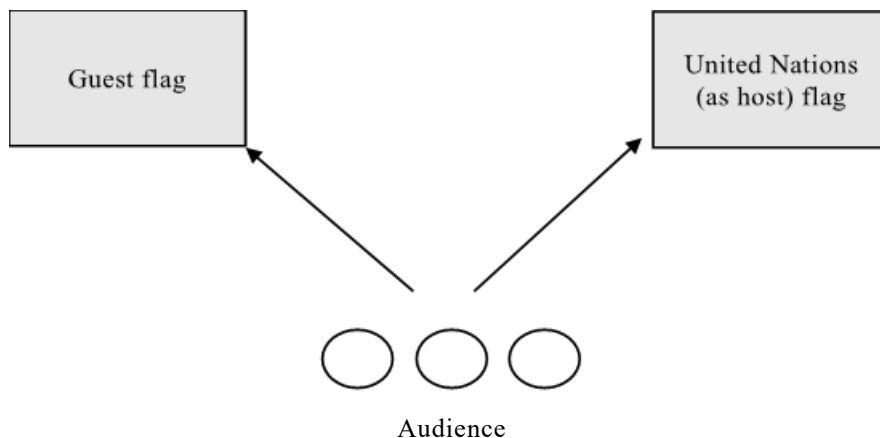
(c) When used in connection with United Nations conferences taking place outside established headquarters and United Nations offices, the flag shall be raised on the premises provided by the host Government for use by the United Nations for the holding of the United Nations conference, to indicate the handover of responsibility over the premises by the host country to the United Nations, and should remain raised until such time as the responsibility over the premises has reverted back to the host country.

### 2. Display of the flag in bilateral meetings between United Nations officials and representatives of a State or another international organization

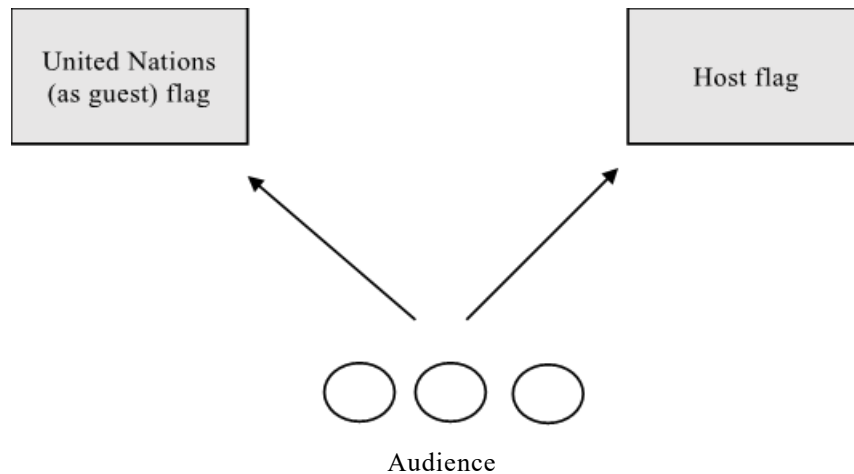
(a) When the United Nations flag is displayed with the flag of a State or another international organization, all flags should be displayed on the same level and should be of approximately equal size; and

(b) The position of honour for a flag is to the right of the host when the host is facing the viewer or audience. Therefore, from the vantage point of the viewer or audience, the position of honour is the one to the left;

(c) In an official bilateral meeting between United Nations officials and representatives of a State or another international organization hosted by the United Nations, the position of honour shall be given to the guest's flag (the position is illustrated in the diagram below); and



(d) In an official bilateral meeting between United Nations officials and representatives of a State or another international organization hosted by that State or international organization, the position of honour should be given to the United Nations flag (the position is illustrated in the diagram below).



### 3. Display of the United Nations flag with other flags, including in multilateral meetings

(a) The United Nations flag may be displayed with other flags in the following manner, provided that all other flags are displayed at the same level and are of equal size or smaller:

(i) In a circle of flags: the United Nations flag shall not be made a part of a circle of flags, but may be displayed on a flagpole in the centre of such a circle, or otherwise in an appropriate area adjoining such a circle. The flags in the circle should be displayed using the English alphabetical order of the countries represented, reading clockwise;

(ii) In a line, cluster or semi-circle of flags: all flags other than the United Nations flag shall be displayed using the English alphabetical order of the countries represented, including that of the State where such a display takes place, from left to right from the vantage point of the viewer or audience, with the United Nations flag displayed either separately in an appropriate area, preferably to the left of the line from the vantage point of the viewer or audience, or in the centre of the line, cluster or semi-circle, or if two flags are available, at both ends of the line, cluster or semi-circle; and

(b) When a State in which the United Nations flag is displayed wishes to make a special display of its national flag, such a special display can be made only where the arrangement of the flags takes the form of a line, cluster or semi-circle grouping, in which case the national flag of the State in which the display is taking place should be displayed at each end of the line of flags separated from the grouping by an interval of not less than one fifth of the total length of the line.

### 4. Display of the flag on a vehicle

(a) When the flag is displayed on a vehicle, it shall be flown freely from a flagstaff in a conspicuous manner above the vehicle. The flag should be attached to the chassis or clamped to the right fender or rear quarter of the vehicle;

(b) No flag other than the United Nations flag shall be flown on United Nations vehicles; and

(c) When the flag is displayed on a vehicle specifically for security reasons, it should be displayed in such a manner that creates maximum visibility under the circumstances and should be larger than the normal dimensions set out for vehicle flags in article 1, paragraph 4.

5. Display of the flag on a vessel

(a) The United Nations flag may be flown on a vessel only if that vessel is employed in the official service of the United Nations and if the United Nations flag is flown together with the flag of the flag State under whose laws the vessel is registered or licensed;

(b) The United Nations flag should not be flown by a vessel in such a manner that creates confusion as to the nationality of that vessel and must identify itself by flying the flag of the flag State or by displaying marks of registry;

(c) At a maximum, only the United Nations flag, the flag of the flag State and the courtesy flag of a country in whose territorial seas a vessel is sailing may be flown. No other flags, such as the flags of troop- or police-contributing countries or those of nationals who are aboard a vessel employed in the official service of the United Nations, shall be flown; and

(d) The United Nations flag should be the same size as the flag of the flag State and should fly from the top of the mainmast or the top of the foremast of the vessel. The flag of the flag State should fly from the stern of the vessel or aside the halyard on the mainmast unless the vessel displays marks of registry. If the vessel is required to fly the flag of the State whose territorial seas it is entering as a “courtesy flag” from the top of its mainmast, then the United Nations flag should be flown from the top of its foremast. The courtesy flag should be smaller in size than the United Nations flag.

**Article 5**

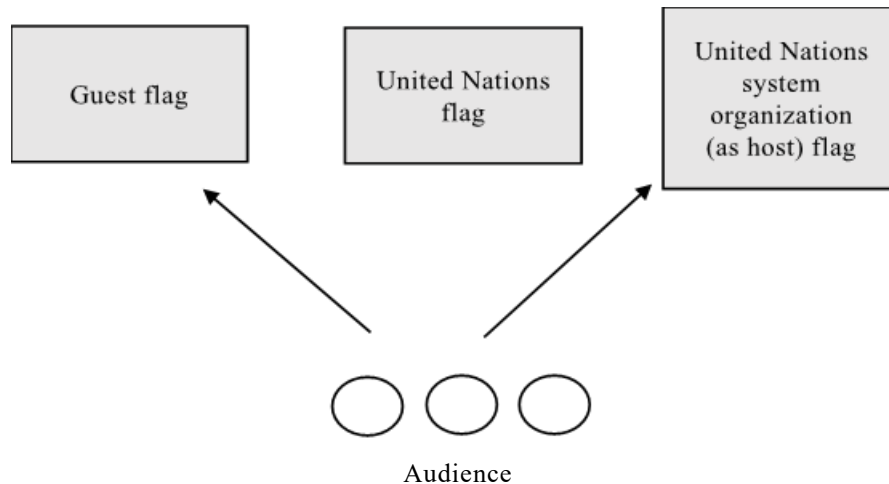
**Use of the flag by separately administered funds, organs and programmes of the United Nations and organizations of the United Nations system**

1. The United Nations flag may be flown by separately administered funds, organs and programmes of the United Nations from their offices and other premises occupied by them, provided that they fly the flag in accordance with the present Flag Code.

2. Use by the organizations of the United Nations system

(a) The flag may also be flown by organizations of the United Nations system from their offices and other premises occupied by them, provided that they fly the flag in accordance with the present Flag Code; and

(b) When the flag is to be displayed in a bilateral meeting between officials of an organization of the United Nations system and representatives of a State or another international organization and hosted by the organization of the United Nations system, the position of honour shall be given to the guest’s flag. The United Nations flag shall be positioned in the centre of such a display of the flags (the position is illustrated in the diagram below).



## **Article 6**

### **Use of the flag in general**

1. The United Nations flag may be used by Governments in accordance with the present Flag Code.
2. The flag may be used in accordance with the present Flag Code by organizations and individuals in order to demonstrate support of the United Nations and to further its principles and purposes, provided that such a display of the flag:
  - (a) Does not suggest any affiliation between the United Nations and the organization or individual displaying the flag;
  - (b) Is not for the purpose of creating any commercial advantage or goodwill; and
  - (c) Is limited in duration and on a temporary basis.
3. Notwithstanding the criteria set out in paragraph 2 above:
  - (a) Organizations and individuals previously authorized to use the flag prior to the issuance of the present bulletin shall not be bound by the restrictions specified under paragraph 2 (c) above; and
  - (b) Under special circumstances, the United Nations may authorize certain organizations and individuals to fly the flag on a permanent basis.
4. Indiscriminate display of the flag is inconsistent with the spirit of the present Flag Code and is to be strongly discouraged.

## **Article 7**

### **Mourning**

1. The United Nations flag may be lowered to half mast to indicate a period of mourning.
2. The flag shall be flown at half mast, as authorized by the Secretary-General, in the following circumstances:
  - (a) Upon the death of a Head of State or Head of Government of a Member State, the flag shall be flown at half mast at United Nations Headquarters, at its offices away from Headquarters and at United Nations offices located in that Member State for one day immediately upon learning of the death;

(b) The United Nations offices other than the ones indicated in subparagraph (a) above may lower the flag where they wish to follow the official mourning of the State in which their office is located. On such occasions, they should take into account the local practice, in consultation with the protocol office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or dean of the locally accredited diplomatic corps;

(c) Upon the death of former Secretaries-General of the United Nations, the flag shall be flown at half mast at United Nations Headquarters and all other United Nations offices;

(d) Upon the death of former Presidents of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the flag shall be flown at half mast at United Nations Headquarters, at its offices away from Headquarters and at those United Nations offices located in the Member State from which the former President of the General Assembly hailed for one day immediately upon learning of the death; and

(e) The flag may also be flown at half mast in other special circumstances not specifically covered in subparagraphs (a) to (d) above, upon the authorization of the Secretary-General.

3. If the flag had already been flying on the day on which the Organization learns of a death in the circumstances listed under paragraph 2 above, it shall not be lowered but shall instead be flown at half mast on the following day. The Secretary-General shall determine the duration of the period of mourning.

4. Should the procedure described in paragraph 2 above not be practicable owing to weather conditions or other reasons, the flag may be flown at half mast on the day of the funeral or on the day of a special commemoration. Under exceptional circumstances, it may be flown at half mast on both the day of the death and the day of the funeral.

5. The flag, when displayed at half mast, should first be hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-mast position. The flag should again be raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day.

6. When the flag is flown at half mast, no other flag should be displayed.

7. Crepe streamers may be affixed to flagstaves flying the flag in a funeral procession only by order of the Secretary-General or a duly authorized representative.

8. When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground. The flag should be neatly folded and presented to the next of kin or an appropriate family member in honour of the deceased.

## **Article 8**

### **Prohibitions**

1. In no event shall the United Nations flag be used for commercial purposes or in direct association with an article of merchandise, unless otherwise expressly authorized by the Secretary-General.

2. The flag or any reproduction thereof shall not be stamped, printed, engraved or otherwise affixed on any stationery, books, magazines, periodicals or other publications of any nature whatsoever unless such items were published by or on behalf of the United Nations.

3. The flag should not be affixed in any manner on any article of any kind which is not strictly necessary to the display of the flag itself.

4. No mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture or drawing of any nature shall ever be placed upon or attached to the flag.

5. Without prejudice to article 7, paragraph 8, the flag should never be festooned, drawn back or up, in folds, or used as drapery of any sort, and should always be allowed to fall in such a way that the United Nations emblem is prominently visible.
6. Without prejudice to article 7, paragraph 8, the flag should not be used for draping of any sort.

**Article 9**

**Authority and responsibility**

1. The Secretary-General's authority for the administration of the present bulletin is delegated to:
    - (a) The Chef de Cabinet, to authorize the use of the United Nations flag and flying of the flag at half mast at United Nations Headquarters; and
    - (b) Subject to subparagraph (a) above, heads of offices away from Headquarters, heads of other United Nations offices, special representatives, heads of missions and resident coordinators, to authorize, in a coordinated manner, the flying of the flag at half mast at their offices and missions in accordance with article 7.
  2. The Protocol and Liaison Service of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management shall be responsible for providing guidance and instructions to Governments and United Nations offices and missions on the use of the flag and the implementation of the present Flag Code.
  3. United Nations officials, including the heads of United Nations offices, special representatives, heads of missions and resident coordinators are responsible for complying with the provisions of the present Flag Code.
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