

# International Public Interest Law



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND ADVICE

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### A. The Guide

With the increasing interconnectedness of our world, the breadth and range of international institutions and jobs continues to grow. Attorneys are involved in diplomacy, policy-making, administration, and internationally-oriented advocacy and activism. The goal of the guide is to facilitate the process of career exploration for law students and recent graduates interested in public international work.

This guide takes an expansive definition of international public interest. Opportunities are available in varied fields such as documenting human rights abuses, humanitarian work, international courts and tribunals, regional organizations such as the Asia Pacific Forum or the African Development Bank, inter-governmental agencies including the United Nations, and the diverse types of non-profit organizations operating either domestically in the United States or abroad.

This guide provides career advice, practice areas and ideas to prepare students interested in international public interest work. It also includes extensive online resources, YLS resources, and contains numerous narratives of YLS students and alumni who have worked in international human rights, explaining the rewards and demands of the work, and providing suggestions and encouragement for finding your path.

In addition, our [Opportunities with International Tribunals and Foreign Courts](#) provides information on court-based international public interest positions.

The good news is that it is possible to have a lifelong career as a lawyer in international public service. The bad news is that there is no clear and guaranteed path leading to a career in this broad field. This is, in part, because of the great diversity of public international work done by lawyers. Moreover, as in the domestic sphere, international public and nonprofit organizations have fewer resources than private corporations and law firms. Because of this, they have fewer openings, may not offer formal training for young attorneys, and usually prefer to hire attorneys with at least three to five years of experience. However, opportunities for entry-level work do exist and are discussed in the chapters that follow. Breaking into a career in public international law may require taking short-term positions, seeking work as a consultant, or applying for fellowships or grants to fund your work. Most important is your determination to stick with it and your willingness to be inventive in attaining your goals.

### B. Practice Types

Finding the right job means assessing your needs and expectations. In researching practice areas, think about clients (many or just one?); the advocacy type (mostly litigation, community-based

legal education, legislative work, or a combination?); and the location (are they permitted to work openly, without reprisal?). Some types of employers include:

The Federal Government. There are agencies within the federal government that have robust international components such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of State, some agencies within the U.S. Department of Justice, the Central Intelligence Agency, and Department of Defense to name a few.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). There are thousands of NGOs worldwide which are organized on a local, national or international level. In the United States, they are often recognized as 501c (3) tax-exempt organizations by the IRS. They use a variety of advocacy methods and are best known for taking action in bringing human rights and other concerns to public attention and developing legal principles that need assent of states. International NGOs based in the U.S. include Human Rights Watch, the International Rescue Committee and the International Center for Transitional Justice.

Inter-Governmental Agencies (IGO). This refers to an entity created by treaty involving two or more nations. IGOs address a variety of human rights and other issues of common interest to members and provide a forum for development of international law. They can be organized worldwide (United Nations (U.N.), International Monetary Fund (IMF)), regionally (the African Union (AU), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Organization of American States (OAS)), or around a specific issue such as finance or trade (World Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, World Trade Organization).

International Tribunals and Courts. The last decade has seen a proliferation of international tribunals and courts providing multiple forums for adjudicating a multitude of cases. Consult the CDO guide Opportunities with International Tribunals and Foreign Courts for additional information.

Each of these broad areas will require different skill sets and competencies. It may mean a field posting versus one at headquarters. At some point in your career, you may be an activist or an academic. You could seek change within a government structure or with diplomacy. All are valid practice types. Are you interested in being in the “middle” of things and having contact with individuals in the field or would you like to think of the bigger picture and work on policies which will affect the greatest number of people? The immediacy of field work can be overshadowed by the incremental changes that you are able to make. Conversely, the politics of working at headquarters may be frustrating to some. You need to find the type or types that you find most fulfilling and consider the fact that these considerations may shift as you progress in your career.

## **C. Personal Profile**

Although there is no “typical” path for those who wish to do international public interest law, they often have the following in common:

**Knowledge of International Law**—In order to be the most effective, a good knowledge of international law and local law is strongly encouraged. You should take advantage of courses and clinics to give you a solid foundation in international legal laws and rules.

**Demonstrated Commitment and Interest**—You will be expected to show that you are truly interested in the work that the organization does, the geography, the subject area or the advocacy type. Few organizations will expect you to have the exact experience they are looking for, but you need to make a good faith argument that you are someone who will work hard to further their mandate.

**Language Skills**—You must be able to communicate in the language(s) in which the work is being done. One of the most important things you can do to prepare for an international law career is to make sure to keep up any language skill you may have or spend some time in developing the skills you will need. You should take advantage of any opportunities to enhance your language skills. For instance, after the first term, YLS students may take a limited number of courses in the graduate and professional schools or undergraduate college of Yale University for Law School credit and these could include language classes. You could use part of your summer to advance your language skills. You can find another student to practice with by creating language tables. You can go online and read newspapers and magazines in the language you are learning. You can also find a good compilation of international news from Lexis’ News tab.

**International Experience**—International organizations will value your ability to work in their environment. Your résumé and cover letter can highlight your travel experiences, including study abroad and leisure travel.

**Relevant Work Experience**—Last but not least, you will need to demonstrate that you have the appropriate skill set for the work you would like to be hired to do. You do not have to have worked in that specific context to demonstrate that you are capable of doing their work. Domestic litigation experience can translate well internationally. Focus on the skills that you believe would be useful for the organization.

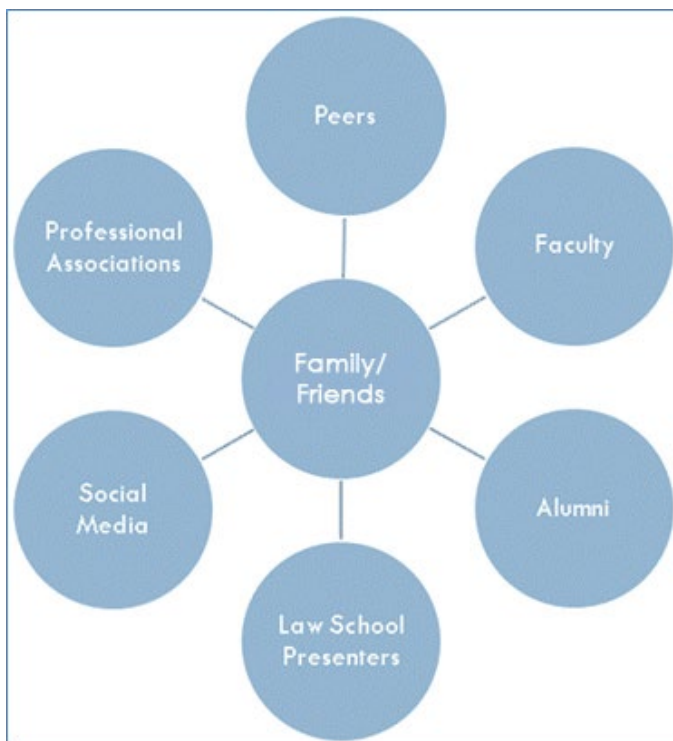
## **D. Self-Assessment**

As you search for an international law practice career that is right for you, it is important for you to do a self-assessment and evaluation. Individuals who do international public interest work share a few characteristics. There are some things to keep in mind:

Do you have the personality which allows you to work on some of the most difficult issues, sometimes away from family and friends?

Is this really what you'd like to do, even when the next job seems unclear?  
Are you endowed with a healthy dose of realism and pragmatism to deal with situations where sometimes there isn't an absolute right or wrong?  
Are you able to deal with concepts of fairness and justice that may be different from yours?  
Are you comfortable with knowing that there may be periods when your employment situation might be uncertain?  
Are you all right knowing that you may live and work in areas of conflict, political and social repression, or intense poverty? Have you thought about living and working in places where there may be little infrastructure, including running water and electricity?  
Do you know when to step away from work and recharge?  
Are you preparing yourself for your "dream" job? Are you taking the classes you might need?  
Are you networking with individuals who are of interest? Are you getting as much advice as you can?

## E. Networking



A great number of international positions are obtained through networking. In this field more so than other public interest fields, a personal introduction can net you not only insights and advice but also opportunities. There are opportunities to network not only in the Law School but throughout the University. Look broadly for individuals to connect with in a variety of ways. Once you have made initial contact, keep in touch with these individuals. Letting your contacts know of changes and updates in your situation or acknowledging their changes and updates is crucial in keeping the connection relevant.

Take the time to introduce yourself to presenters and panelists when you attend their programs. Informal conversations may lead to discovering that they are looking for a research assistant or that your ideas on a particular issue may be useful for a project they are working on.

## **F. Law School and Training**

Law school can be a time to deepen your knowledge and broaden your experience within your chosen field and to learn about related fields, or to explore and better define your specific interests. Your own values and interests should be your primary guide for choice of classes, extracurricular activities, summer jobs, and other learning opportunities in this field. While it is not necessary to narrow your interests down to one “dream job” or even one particular practice area, you can take better advantage of opportunities that arise in law school if you have articulated to yourself what you want to get out of the experience. See CDO’s [Introduction to Career Development](#) for information on self-assessment and be sure to tap into the resources available through the Career Development Office and the Schell Center for International Human Rights.

Without going overboard, exhausting yourself, or losing perspective on what matters in life, you can gain valuable professional experience while in law school from clinical and other classes, scholarly research, extracurricular activities, pro bono projects, internships, journals, and other law student pursuits. Many professors are willing to offer informal career advice to students. Seek out professors whose area of specialization overlap with some of your own interests and who seem approachable.

Take advantage of the speakers and visitors not only to the Law School but to the University. They will not only provide first-hand information about their practice and advocacy, but they will offer you the opportunity to network with key players in the field. Creating and maintaining a robust network is a crucial component of your professional success. Be strategic as you are planning the training you’ll need. If you aim for a career in international criminal law, going abroad may not be the most important facet of your training. Make sure you get good criminal litigation under your belt—that is what international courts and tribunals will be looking for. Be creative and think outside the box as you consider various opportunities.

## **G. Summer Internships**

One of the best ways to get essential international public service experience is through a summer internship. Before applying for an internship, you should try to ensure that your interests, strengths and goals are a good match for the organization you have in mind. Talk to Jim Silk or Hope Metcalf of the Schell Center about your goals. Reach out to Mindy Roseman in the Gruber Program for Global Justice and Women’s Rights. They have years of experience with many international public interest placements. In addition to researching organizations through websites like [PSJD](#), it is also a good idea to search out past interns. The Schell Center has online student reports from [Kirby Simon Human Rights fellows](#) about where they have worked. In addition, CDO’s online summer job evaluations (found in [CMS](#)) provide seven years of searchable summer employment reports.

Communicate with people at the organizations in which you are most interested and people knowledgeable about those organizations, and get clear answers to your important questions. Is this organization willing and able to provide you with the degree of supervision you seek? Will

you be able to work on legal projects? International projects? Will there be other interns? Will you have access to computer, telephone, and other resources necessary for doing your work? What is it like to live in that area? Make sure that you and your potential sponsoring organization agree on your goals for the summer and how they will be met.

Do your research about the organization since in some instances they may not have well developed websites. Have they participated in recent international/regional conferences? Have they been the subject of recent newspaper articles? Do they have connections with other U.S. law schools? International internships may carry different expectations than U.S.-based ones. The pace or scope of work may be defined differently than what you are used to seeing in the United States. Legal work may encompass more community based advocacy or policy work than you may expect. Clarify expectations by asking specific questions about your internship and work product. And once you get “on the ground,” be flexible and proactive in seeking work that interests and challenges you.

Be aware of significant events at the organization and in the region that might affect your summer internship. For example, it would be important to find out if the project you intend to work on will not go forward if the organization does not receive critical funding, or if the region is politically unstable. You may want to confirm that your supervisor will be there when you are. Keep in mind that some questions are more appropriate to address to someone outside of the organization who is familiar with its work.

Generally, international placements decide on interns later than U.S. ones. Organizations abroad will typically make decisions about a summer internship in the middle or late Spring Semester. You may wish to be gently persistent in following up on your application. In addition, infrastructural glitches such as lack of internet service or unreliable phone lines may delay decisions.

## **H. Post-Graduate Experience**

Once you decide to further your professional experience in the international field, finding post-graduate employment can be a challenge. With perseverance and ingenuity, you can work in a field that you truly are passionate about. You can look to fellowships; take on contract work with organizations like the United States Agency for International Development or the United Nations; or, if you are able, get your backpack and get in the field to volunteer and network your way to in-country opportunities. See the section below on funding. It cannot be said enough that the majority of opportunities in international public interest are found through personal and professional connections. Make sure to network vigorously. Keep up your membership with affiliated organizations such as relevant sections of the American Bar Association and the American Society of International Law.



## I. Salaries

Salaries for international work can vary a great deal. Salaries for international public interest work for organizations based in the United States are typical of salaries for other public interest salaries in this country. Do note that local salaries in developing countries may be much lower which can be offset by the lower cost of living.

## J. Some Practical Considerations

Yale University provides UHC Global Travel Assistance at no cost to all students and current University employees while traveling on University business or for pleasure. The program provides international and domestic emergency medical, security, and travel assistance services anywhere in the world.

If you are going overseas, you will need passports, valid through the date of return, and, for many of the countries to which you will be going, visas. Ascertain whether a visa is necessary by calling the consulate of the country. Most consulates process visa applications during specific hours. The U.S. Department of State has information about entry and visa requirements.

Please be advised on the university's covid-19 travel guidance.

For general passport information, consult the U.S. Department of State Passport Services website.

For general contact information for consulates in the United States, consult the U.S. Department of State "Foreign Consular Offices in the United States" website. Make sure to work with your host organization to get the right kind of visa.

There are many things to think about when traveling. Have you thought about the following?

- What is the best and safest place for me to exchange my money?
- What will be the easiest and safest way for me to do my banking?
- Have I made copies of my passport, immunization card, student identification card, credit cards, travelers' check serial numbers and other important documents and left them in a secure place? If I don't have the documents with me, can they be sent to me quickly in case of emergency?
- What will the weather be like?
- If I am planning on driving, do I have a valid license and the proper insurance? Did I make copies of my driver's license and insurance papers and leave them in a safe place?
- Did I renew my prescriptions and take enough with me?

## K. Funding a Public Interest Career

### Summer:

Yale Law School provides funding for those wanting to pursue public interest work over the summer. YLS SPIF (Summer Public Interest Fellowships) can fund your public interest work while the Kirby Simon travel grants will cover your travel expenses for international public interest work. Yale also offers opportunities to work closely with professionals on international projects through the Lowenstein Clinic and Lowenstein Project, and access to alumni mentors who have pursued public international careers through YLS Career Connections. You can find additional funding resources at PSJD.

The Summer Public Interest Fellowship Program (SPIF) provides up to at least \$8000 of funding for the summer (\$666.66 per week for up to 8 weeks). For the summer of 2020, we provided \$1.2 million in fellowships for over 185 students through the Summer Public Interest Fellowship (SPIF) program.

Students who plan to undertake human rights work during the summer are eligible to apply for summer funding through the Schell Center's Kirby Simon Summer Fellowship program, which supplements a weekly stipend in the same amount as SPIF for basic living allowance with funds to cover costs associated with international travel. The Schell Center administers the program and distributes application information to all students in the fall semester. Contact the Center at schell.law@yale.edu for information about the program and potential placements, and to obtain approval of your placement.

### Post-graduate:

In addition, Yale has a number of post-graduate fellowships in international public interest law. The Bernstein and Robina Fellowships support human rights work, while the Gruber Fellowships will fund post-graduate work in global justice or women's rights. The Heyman Fellowships can include work with the U.S. government that deals with international issues and the YLS Public Interest Fellowships can also be used to fund international public interest work.

## L. Yale Fellowships

Below is a discussion of Yale Law School's fellowships

The Robert L. Bernstein Fellowship in International Human Rights, administered by the Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights, offers financial support for two to three recent graduates of YLS to pursue human rights work for a year.

The Gruber Fellowships in Global Justice and Women's Rights are post-graduate fellowships that allow recent graduates of Yale graduate and professional schools to spend a year working on issues of relevance to the fields of global justice and/or women's rights.

The Heyman Federal Public Service Fellowship supports two or three recent Yale Law graduates who wish to work closely with high-level leaders in the federal government for one year. The fellowship can be used for federal government work that is involved in international issues, such as with the U.S. State Department.

The Yale Center for International and Professional Experience (CIPE) located at 55 Whitney Avenue on the third floor, provides information about Yale-specific and other international fellowship and study abroad programs, for which graduate and professional students are eligible.

The Robina Foundation Human Rights Fellowship is a Law School fund that supports work anywhere in the world. The Fellowships enable experiences of six months to a year in a number of categories: judicial clerkships in international and foreign courts and tribunals with substantial responsibility for human rights issues; international criminal tribunal internships; internships with international organizations concerned with human rights; and independent research on human rights topics.

The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale offers a number of grants and fellowships for graduate and professional school students interested in researching international relations or studying foreign languages.

Yale Law School Fellowship at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague – allows students and recent alumni who are interested in international law and arbitration to spend one

Yale Law School Public Interest Fellowship supports recent Yale graduates interested in public interest work in the United States and abroad. It is open ONLY to YLS Graduates’.

## **M. Some Additional Post-Graduate Fellowship Opportunities**

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government. The program provides scholars with the opportunity to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to finding solutions to shared international concerns.

Human Rights Watch is one of the world’s leading independent organizations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. Using objective investigations and strategic, targeted advocacy, the researchers build intense pressure for action and raise the cost of human rights abuse. Fellows work at the sponsoring organization on issues and projects determined by the organization.

Open Society Foundations seeks to shape public policies to assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. The Foundations fund a variety of fellowships some of which are only available for domestic projects while others, like the Open Society Fellowship, support innovative approaches to global challenges that stand in the way of

fair and open communities.

The American Society of International Law offers micro grants through their [Arthur C. Helton Fellowship](#) for law students and young professionals to pursue field work and research on significant issues involving international law, human rights, humanitarian affairs, and related areas.

[Ashoka](#) is a social entrepreneurship organization. They provide a living stipend for an average of three years, allowing fellows to focus full-time on building their institutions and spreading their ideas. The organization also provides fellows with a global support network of peers and partnerships with professional consultants.

[Echoing Green](#) provides seed-stage funding and strategic foundational support to emerging leaders working to bring about positive social change.

[Foundation Center](#) is a leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. The Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grantmakers and their grants—a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. People are served in its five regional library/learning centers and its network of more than 500 funding information centers located in public libraries, community foundations, and educational institutions nationwide and around the world. A section of the website focuses on individual grantseekers. CDO has an online subscription to Foundation Grants for Individuals; please contact the office for login information.

## **N. The International Public Interest Résumé**

A résumé used to obtain employment in the field of international public interest is very similar to the standard legal résumé. Sample student résumés can be found on CDO's [Resume Advise & Samples](#) page. The differences are dictated by the fact that your intended reader may not be familiar with U.S. education institutions, awards, employment, abbreviations, or conventions. With this in mind:

Don't abbreviate dates (use April 2021, rather than 4/6/21), degrees (Masters of Arts rather than MA), locations (Connecticut rather than CT) or employers (U.S. Department of Justice, not DOJ). Avoid using seasons, such as Fall 2021—they don't always translate well.

Emphasize your connection to the relevant geographical area and your familiarity with languages and cultures other than your own. Do not overstate your language abilities.

Explain your credentials, such as law school honors or responsibilities of a job, whenever in doubt.

Emphasize all of your knowledge and background of that region or topic area, including conferences, projects, or papers.

You may want to translate your résumé into the working language of the organization to demonstrate your language ability.

Include publications, even if they are not legal, if relevant.

It is possible that this increased detail and explanation may cause your résumé to exceed one page. As long as you are focused on the position at issue, this is not a problem.

## **O. Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What classes should I take?**

Since international public interest law is very broad, there is no way to answer this question across the board. Your specific interests and career goals should guide you. Take classes that help you develop knowledge and clinics that help you develop skills—whether litigation, writing, oral argument, research, or something else—that relate to your career interest. YLS has many others may enrich your understanding and skills in international law.

### **What skills are most important to landing a job in this area?**

Many attorneys involved in hiring law graduates for public international jobs believe that the basics are most important: good writing, strong research skills, the ability to analyze at a sophisticated level, and being able to advocate for your ideas clearly and forcefully. For many legal jobs, proficiency in a foreign language or comfort with a foreign country or culture is also important. Otherwise, specific skills will depend on the particular job that interests you.

### **How important is it that I be on a competitive law journal?**

This may be very useful in helping you to stand out as an applicant for an “honors program” and other positions within the U.S. government, post-graduate fellowships, and other similarly competitive U.S.-based employment opportunities. In general, however, being on a competitive journal is not likely to make or break your chances for a career in international public interest. Many employers do look favorably upon applicants who have published on subjects relevant to the job in question. For many jobs, however, what is most important is having relevant work experience.

### **Is it important to work abroad?**

For most public international jobs, experience living and working abroad is extremely helpful personally as well as a good professional credential. In some cases, experience working abroad is essential, as with many positions related to human rights, international health, development, or humanitarian assistance.

### **Are judicial clerkships useful?**

Like being on the board of a very competitive law journal, holding a judicial clerkship can give you a leg up on the competition for U.S.-based jobs, especially with the government, by indicating that you are intelligent and have good research and writing skills. It is doubtful whether a clerkship in a U.S. court would give you a competitive edge with non-U.S. employers. If you are interested in working in a specific country or region, you may be able to arrange a clerkship abroad. U.S. law students and graduates have worked at the Israeli Supreme Court, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the Land Claims Court in South Africa, among other places. See CDO's [Opportunities with International Tribunals and Foreign Courts](#) for guidance in this area.

### **Is it possible to find a paid job right out of law school?**

Yes, but you should be willing to explore short-term opportunities such as fellowships, consultancies, "honors programs," "junior officer programs," and other similar positions. Be creative and patient.

### **What about becoming a career diplomat?**

The [U.S. Department of State Foreign Service](#) career track provides the means for U.S. citizens to pursue a career as a diplomat. Information can be found on their website. A required Foreign Service Officer exam is offered several times each year. Entering officers begin in the Management, Consular, Economic, Political, or Public Diplomacy tracks.

### **How can I get a job with the United Nations (U.N.)?**

The [Young Professionals Programme \(YPP\)](#) examination is held on a yearly basis in countries that are selected on the basis of their representation in the Secretariat through the Young Professionals Program (YPP). The purpose of the YPP examination is to recruit people for career positions at the Secretariat. Recruits will initially be given a two-year fixed-term appointment followed by conversion to a career contract, provided their performance is satisfactory. The U.N. also sponsors lawyers through the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) program to work in peacekeeping missions or developing countries. Contrary to what the name implies, UNVs receive a stipend and per diem which can be more than adequate. Additionally, positions are listed on the main U.N. [career sites](#) or [here](#). The State Department publishes a bi-weekly list of [international vacancy announcements](#). If you are interested in working for other United Nations agencies, funds, or programs guide, please visit their websites directly. Enthusiastic networking should accompany the formal process of applying to the United Nations. Please contact the CDO office with any questions about this process.

### **When should I apply for summer internships and post graduate opportunities?**

Because there is no general structure to hiring for international public interest jobs, it pays to start your research early, develop an action plan, and follow through. For summer internships, 2Ls should begin contacting organizations that interest them in the fall, and 1Ls should begin as soon after December 1st as

they are ready. Many of these organizations (often the foreign NGOs) will not be willing to engage in the process for several months, but some (for example, the U.S. government) will follow a very structured and early timeline so it is best to learn the specific employers' timelines before they expire.

The same advice applies for post-graduate opportunities. There are benefits to making contact early, even though many of these organizations will not know their needs until a vacancy arises or funding develops. Once again, the exception tends to be government hiring, which commonly has very early and strict application deadlines for entry-level jobs.

### **Can I transition from international to domestic work or vice-versa?**

Generally, yes. You can make strategic decisions which will allow you to make the transition a bit more smoothly. Think about developing transferable skills which will make you more marketable. In addition, keep ties to the market you'd like to return to. For example, if you would like to return to the United States after spending some time abroad, think about doing a domestic internship for one of your summers.

### **Can I survive on a public interest salary?**

Only you know that. Can people survive on a public interest salary and lead happy lives? Sure. They do it all the time. Not only is this question enormously dependent on what you consider the essentials of life, whether you have a working partner, where you live, and whether you plan on raising some kids, but it is also dependent on the type of public interest work you pursue. Some international organizations employ an amazing group of committed attorneys and offer relatively low starting salaries; however, people working for the federal government will probably start in the fifties and can work up to well over \$100,000. In addition, Yale's loan repayment program (COAP) lightens the debt burden significantly and enables graduates to pursue public interest work.

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## CHAPTER 2

### THE UNITED NATIONS

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The United Nations is one of the most popular and attractive places to work for those considering international public interest law. However, securing employment with the U.N. is not often a straightforward process. This chapter will present some of the paths available for employment within this very large organization.

Founded in the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations (U.N.) is the single largest intergovernmental organization in the world with 193 member states. The six organs which make up the United Nations are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. There are also 15 agencies and several programs affiliated with the U.N. called the U.N. Family of Organizations.

The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ of the U.N. and is composed of representatives of all U.N. member states. The Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Economic and Social Council is the principal body coordinating the economic and social work of the U.N. and its family of organizations. Seventy percent of the U.N. human and financial resources are under the purview of the Economic and Social Council. The Trusteeship Council was established to supervise the transition of former colonies to self-government and is now largely inactive. The International Court of Justice settles legal disputes submitted to it by States and gives advisory opinions on legal questions to the United Nations and its agencies.

The Secretariat, with a staff of approximately 44,000 and offices worldwide, takes care of a range of issues dealing with the management and day-to-day running of the United Nations. Within the Secretariat are the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and many others including Regional Commissions and International Tribunals. Visit their [website](#) for a full list.

U.N. headquarters are in New York, but the U.N. has offices all over the world. Significant operations are carried out at the regional economic commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva, Santiago, and Vienna. Official languages of the United Nations are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish; the Secretariat uses two working languages, English and French.

The U.N. family of organizations is comprised of the Secretariat, U.N. programs and funds such as UNEP (U.N. Environment Programme) and UNFIP (U.N. Fund for International Partnerships), and specialized agencies (such as UNICEF, UNDP) that have their own governing bodies and budgets, and set their own standards and guidelines.

Additionally, there are numerous subsidiary bodies dealing with legal or related issues within the U.N. system. Many of these meet as committees only several times a year and are staffed by individuals appointed by Member States—either as independent experts or state representatives.

## **A. Internships**

Internships for law students (and others currently engaged in graduate studies) are available with the U.N. Secretariat, programs, and specialized agencies. The vast majority of U.N.-affiliated organizations hire interns year-round. Summer internships are usually full-time, but it is usually possible to work part-time during the semester. Minimum qualifications include proficiency in one or more U.N. languages and background in the substantive area of the specific organization's work. Most internship positions (including all internships with the Secretariat) are unpaid, although a few organizations provide limited stipends. The minimum duration for U.N. internships ranges between one and three months, while the maximum duration is usually six months. Because of the U.N. bureaucracy, it is advisable to submit your application for an internship four to eight months before you wish to begin work.



Some affiliated organizations have established internship programs, usually with a centralized application process. Detailed information about such internship programs can usually be found online. Occasionally, application forms can be downloaded from an agency's website or application materials can be sent via email. Where there is a centralized application process, internship applicants have a varying degree of control over the division to which they are assigned. In most cases, applicants are asked to indicate their preferred assignment at the time of application, but are not guaranteed to receive their preference. Because most U.N. organizations are not primarily legal in focus, most internship programs are open to non-law graduate students and undergraduate as well as law students. We urge you to ask whether opportunities for legal work exist, and whether the application process differs from the general one, before submitting your application.

Internships also are possible to arrange with U.N. organizations that do not have established internship programs. You may be able to arrange an internship by directly contacting the department or individual for whom you wish to work.

The United Nations Headquarters Secretariat Internship Programme is for the United Nations Secretariat in New York only and is offered on a two-month basis three times a year: mid-January to mid-March; early June to early August; and mid-September to mid-November. The program is normally full-time, in the department or office of the Secretariat which has selected them.

## **B. Post-Graduate Employment**

The U.N. seeks candidates with extensive international backgrounds. Most of its employees have traveled widely, lived in several countries, and are fluent in at least two U.N. languages. Other factors taken into consideration are prior work experiences and relationships with the U.N. as an intern (paid or unpaid), as a consultant, or as an employee or volunteer with an organization that works in partnership with the U.N. Both the substance of your prior work and your established networks are important in obtaining positions in the U.N. system.

Within the United Nations, individuals with legal backgrounds work as specialists in a variety of substantive areas in addition to law. For the most part, legal staffs are small and staff turnover limited. Most legal positions demand specialized knowledge in areas such as public international law, human rights, refugee law, labor law, patent and copyright law, or international criminal law.

There are various paths to working in the U.N.: fixed contracts, competitive examinations, short-term consulting positions, and "young" or "junior professional programs." Because many U.N. organizations prefer to hire professionals with three to five years of experience, opportunities for entry level employment are limited. The hiring processes also take a long time. For example, the hiring process for fixed contracts may take as long as one year.

## **C. Recruitment of Young Professionals through Competitive Examinations**

In recruiting for professional posts, special attention is paid to the development and maintenance of a proper balance among Member States, some of which have few or none of their nationals on the Professional staff of the U.N. Secretariat. Entry-level posts for junior professionals (P-2) are filled through competitive recruitment examinations organized on a rotational basis for nationals of inadequately represented Member States. The examinations are offered in several occupational groups, economics, political, and social affairs. Candidates must be 32 years of age or younger with fluency in either English or French. Be prepared, however, for a long process. From application to selection, the Competitive Exam process can take up to two years. Additional information, such as country of nationality participation, application form, date of next exam, eligibility, etc., is available [here](#).

## **D. Short-Term Consultancies**

For those with limited professional experience, short-term consultancies and jobs with “field operations” are usually the best ways to break into the U.N. system. Interested candidates may consider going to the city where you plan to work and spending several weeks doing intensive networking. View the UN’s site on consultancies [here](#).

In some cases, it is also possible to find employment through an “Associate Expert/Junior Professional Officer Programme” or “Young Professional Programme” run by specialized agencies. Once again, the hiring process is often a slow one. A small number of these programs are open to applicants of all nations and are geared toward recruiting and grooming career staff for the agency in question. A larger number of training programs are more limited in scope, restricting participation to citizens of nations willing to fund their participation or from developing nations and typically offering “training” positions with a two-year duration. Specific information about these programs is provided in the organizational listings.

Relevant academic training, language skills, and international work experience are prerequisites for most U.N. professional positions. As previously stated, spoken and written command of at least two of the official U.N. languages is often required. Fluency or proficiency in other languages such as Arabic is often desired, depending on the location and nature of the agency or program. For lawyers, knowledge of French and/or Spanish (plus English) is especially valuable. In addition, work experience in the developing world is highly desirable and, in many cases, indispensable.

Most U.N. agencies post job vacancies on their websites; the subsequent organizational listings provide directions for accessing such information. Listed below are other useful resources for U.N. employment, including internships.

The homepage of the [Office of Human Resources Management](#) (OHRM), which is responsible for hiring within the U.N., has links to U.N. job listings and other useful information.

The International Civil Service Commission regulates and coordinates hiring and employment policies for U.N. affiliated organizations, posts vacancy announcements by agency, as well as information on personnel and related issues.

The Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, which is responsible for coordinating the federal government's participation in the U.N. and for managing an information and recruitment program, posts a list of vacancies at the U.N. and other international organizations on its website. Most federal employees are eligible by law to be “detailed or transferred” to an international organization for a period of up to five years—and in certain instances up to eight years—with reemployment rights to their respective federal agencies, continuity of service and protection of fringe benefits. This is subject to prior approval by the federal agency concerned.

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) recruits individuals for short-term assignments in developing nations related to humanitarian relief and rehabilitation, human rights, electoral and peace-building processes, and technical cooperation. Compensation and eligibility requirements vary, though some relevant experience is usually required.

Women Watch – Women Watch is the central gateway to information and resources on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the United Nations system, including the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Secretariat, regional commissions, funds, programs, specialized agencies, and academic and research institutions.

## **E. Organizational Listings**

In addition to the agencies described above, you should look to the many subsidiary committees, commissions, working groups, special rapporteurs, and other bodies that relate to law, such as the International Law Commission, the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly, and the U.N. Commission on International Trade Law. Enterprising law students and graduates may well be able to arrange internships and other employment opportunities with such bodies.

There are a number of organizations affiliated with the U.N., including the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Generally, small professional staffs, technical subject matter, or citizenship issues limit opportunities for U.S. law students and lawyers in these organizations.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RESOURCES WITHIN THE YALE COMMUNITY

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Yale Law School's Career Development Office offers a plethora useful resources for students interested in international public service careers.

#### **CDO Publications**

In addition to this guide, CDO produces a guide to [International Tribunals and Foreign Courts](#) – and a guide to [Public Interest Fellowships](#). We also produce the brochure [Public Interest Programs and Resources](#). All are updated yearly and available on the [CDO website](#).

#### **Summer Job Evaluations**

CDO has online summer job evaluations of YLS students (found in [CMS](#)), spanning the last seven years. These evaluations can be searched by location and type of employer, allowing internationally oriented students to quickly find relevant reports.

#### **Public Interest Career Fair**

CDO organizes an annual Public Interest Student Career Fair each fall, at which second- and third-year students who have worked in public interest jobs over the summer share their experiences with first-year and other interested students. International placements are well represented.

#### **Counseling**

[CDO is available to help](#) you pursue your public interest international career goals. Make an appointment by calling (203) 432-1676 or stopping by the office.

#### **Job Search Expenses**

CDO has also created [TRI PI](#) (Travel Reimbursement Interviews for Public Interest) which reimburses 2Ls, 3Ls and LLMs for travel expenses including accommodations, up to \$800 per academic year, for travel to public interest fellowship and job interviews.