



United Kingdom Mission
to the United Nations

One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
(885 Second Avenue)
New York, NY 10017

Email: uk@un.int
http://twitter.com/UKUN_NewYork

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
UNGA75, AGENDA ITEM 90

STRENGTHENING TREATY FRAMEWORK

15 October 2020

Delivered by Chanaka Wickremasinghe

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Thank you, Mr. Chair for giving us the floor

The United Kingdom joins others in welcoming the opportunity to speak in support of this agenda item on strengthening and promoting the international treaty framework, which is of particular interest to the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom is at present engaged in a burst of treaty making, particularly in the field of trade, mostly as a result of its withdrawal from the European Union. The need for processes which facilitate proper treaty making has never been so important.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations Conference on the Law of Treaties of the Vienna Convention. As a party to over 14,000 international agreements, the United Kingdom continues to benefit from the stability afforded by the Vienna Convention, as well as the wider international treaty framework.

The expeditious processing, registration and publication of treaties and treaty related action is critical to the maintenance of this framework and, so, to the advancement of international law more generally. In this context, the United Kingdom reiterates its appreciation for the role played by the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations and, in particular, its implementation of Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations. It also welcomes the report of the Secretary General on the Review of the Regulations to give effect to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

As a general practice, the United Kingdom enters into both binding treaties and arrangements not binding under international law, such as understandings or non-binding charters. For binding treaties, these may enter into force upon signature (what we call definitive signature) or following ratification or completion of domestic procedures.

Before the United Kingdom ratifies an agreement, it must be laid before Parliament for twenty one sitting days, during which time both Houses of Parliament have an opportunity to scrutinise the agreement. Because of our dualist system, this is separate from any legislative process. If any domestic law needs to be introduced or amended, that will be done and approved through a separate procedure. Not all treaties will, however, require domestic legislation.

In the case of treaties subject to ratification, it is only when the treaty has completed parliamentary scrutiny, and any necessary legislation has been adopted, that the United Kingdom will be in a position to ratify or notify completion of domestic procedures.

Our practice is to register a treaty with the UN Secretariat after entry into force and after publication of the treaty in our own Treaty Series. We consider this to be an important step in the treaty process, to ensure transparency of treaty obligations.

Mr. Chair,

The United Kingdom reiterates its support to the UN Treaty Section and members of this Committee to strengthen the treaty framework by reviewing and reconsidering existing UN practices.

Having considered the ongoing deliberations and the SG's Report on this topic, the United Kingdom looks forward to discussions on how we can support efforts to ensure that the UN framework responds to modern challenges and makes efficient and effective use of technology to promote access and universal participation in the registration of treaties.

Thank you, Mr. Chair