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April 2007

What is the meaning of the UN emblem and flag? Are there any restrictions on their use?

The story of the United Nations Flag begins with the emblem which was prepared by the Presentation Branch of the United States Office of Strategic Services in April 1945. It was prepared in response to a request for a button design for the San Francisco Conference at which the United Nations Charter was drafted and approved.

The San Francisco design was a circular representation of a map of the world, extending to the 40th parallel south, and with the 100th meridian west of Greenwich in the lower vertical position.

The Secretary-General urged that it was desirable for the Assembly to adopt a design to be the official seal and emblem of the United Nations, and on 7 December 1946, the Assembly approved the modified San Francisco design. The revised emblem consisted of a map of the world on polar azimuthal equidistant projection surrounded by two olive branches. These two symbols speak for themselves. The olive branch can be traced back to ancient Greece as a symbol of peace. The world map is a symbol of the area with which this organization is concerned in achieving its main purpose: peace.

At the second regular session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted a memorandum stating that the need for a United Nations Flag had already been felt, and would undoubtedly be increasingly felt in the future for use by United Nations Committees or Commissions in different parts of the world, as well as at Headquarters and at United Nations Information Centres.

On 20 October 1947, the Assembly adopted without objection a resolution declaring: "That the Flag of the United Nations shall be the official emblem adopted by the General Assembly centered on a light blue ground." So far as is known, the colours have no special significance.

Although the UN flag may be freely displayed to demonstrate support for the UN and its work, use of the UN emblem, name or initials for commercial purposes is restricted by General Assembly resolution 92(1), adopted in 1946. In this resolution, the Assembly decided that, to prevent the misuse of the UN seal and emblem, it could not be used without the authorization of the Secretary-General.



**This fact-sheet has been issued by the Public Inquiries Unit,
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