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by

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The Annual Review of United Nations (ARUNA) is one of the longest established annual publications on United Nations affairs. With the 2010/2011 edition, the presentation of ARUNA has been substantially upgraded: it now includes extensive Commentaries by experts on United Nations (UN) matters.

The new ARUNA thus offers the benefit of in-depth analysis, along with the long-tested and comprehensive documentation of the work of the United Nations for the “UN year”: the annual session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, beginning in September and lasting 12 months. This edition covers the 65th session of the General Assembly, 14 September 2010 to 12 September 2011.

The new ARUNA features a foreword by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, President of the National Council of Human Rights of Egypt and former Secretary-General of the United Nations. Reflecting on the year in review, Boutros-Ghali highlights the need for immediate responses and strategic thinking when commenting on the famine in the Horn of Africa, progress in preventive diplomacy, climate change, and the “Arab Spring” which holds the promises for democratization and a better future.

ARUNA offers complete coverage of the outcome of the work of the key organs of the UN: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice, and the United Nations Secretariat. In addition, selected reports of intergovernmental bodies and expert groups and other materials are included. Solely official United Nations documentation is used. ARUNA thus occupies a special place in the publications on the work of the United Nations—it provides readers with commentaries on the principal developments in its key organs during the time period covered, complemented by extensive documentation. This makes this work an important reference source for policy-makers and academic researchers.

During 2010/2011, the UN year under review, the United Nations was faced with new challenges while required to continue dealing with often long-standing protracted and fundamental global
problems. In accordance with its comprehensive mandate, the Organization is concerned with peace and security, development and human rights. The 2010/2011 edition of ARUNA comprises six chapters, each introduced by an extensive Commentary highlighting the principal developments during the year under review.

Chapter 1 covers the 65th session of the General Assembly. Professor John R. Mathiasan provides the Commentary. The documentation includes the opening statement of the President of the session, which outlines the main topics of the UN year under review. This is followed by the agenda of the annual session and the complete set of its resolutions. Professor Mathiasan notes that the General Assembly continued addressing global problems, typically in an incremental way, building on previous resolutions and adding new dimensions to reflect political and economic changes. While the time for the regular session continued to be fixed at three months, the number of issues on the agenda and the resolutions emerging from them continue to grow. The UN year saw an increase in the number of resumed sessions and special high-level meetings. The high-level meetings continue to be the major public focus of the session, including those dealing with the Millennium Development Goals, which, after ten years and with only five more remaining, still seem difficult to achieve. Climate change (and sustainable development) continued to be a focus. Late in the session, the General Assembly admitted its 193rd member, South Sudan, which was, in itself, an indicator of success in solving an important conflict in Africa. The General Assembly re-elected Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to an additional five-year term; this will add stability to the Secretariat.

Chapter 2 deals with the work of the Security Council. Ms. Hannelore Hoppe provides the Commentary. The documentation contains the report of the Security Council, which gives a detailed account of the various issues discussed, the documentation considered and the decisions taken by the Security Council during the year under review; this is followed by the resolutions of the Security Council. Ms. Hoppe observes that 2010/2011 was yet another year of considerable activity by the Security Council. Faced with crisis situations in a number of countries, it addressed those challenges expeditiously and showed decisive action as evidenced in particular in its approach to ensure the protection of the civilian populations in Côte d’Ivoire and Libya against violence, armed attacks and abuses. The Council’s main focus of work and engagement remained on maintaining and strengthening peacekeeping and peacebuilding and in effectively addressing post-conflict situations. In this context, the Council established new missions, such as the UN Mission in South Sudan, the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei and the UN Support Mission in Libya. Furthermore, it discussed a wide range of thematic areas, both in the context of specific country situations and in a broader generic context. The Council’s debate and further action on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security highlighted the need for more determined efforts to ensure the full participation of women in all conflict prevention and resolution processes.
Chapter 3 discusses the work of ECOSOC. Professor John R. Mathiason provides the Commentary. The documentation contains the Report of ECOSOC, comprising three segments. The chapter also reproduces the agenda of ECOSOC and reproduces the Council’s resolutions and decisions. Professor Mathiason points out that the ECOSOC continued its long efforts to establish international standards and policies. It was partially successful. The high-level segment, by permitting a detailed focus on the Millennium Development Goals related to education, helped connect the various goals to the need for coherent education policies. The discussion on operational activities set the scene for next year’s review of the way in which the United Nations system functions at the country level. At the same time, the routine work of reviewing the work of its subsidiary bodies continued to be pro forma, the coordination function broke little new ground and the humanitarian segment did not add significantly to the existing consensus. ECOSOC continues to be a work in progress.

Chapter 4 presents the work of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Professor Alexander K.A. Greenawalt provides the Commentary. The documentation contains the report of the International Court and gives details of its jurisdiction, its composition and the work undertaken. Professor Greenawalt underlines that 2010/2011 was a year of significant activity for international tribunals, one highlighting both the potential and limitations of these institutions. The ICJ exemplifies the hope that legal reasoning and adjudicative processes can resolve disputes belonging to the highly political realm of international relations. Its decision in Cambodia vs Thailand showed the Court playing a vital role in defusing a dangerous conflict, while its judgment in Guinea vs the Democratic Republic of Congo affirmed the centrality of individual human rights to states’ international obligations. The denial of jurisdiction in Georgia vs the Russian Federation highlighted, by contrast, the ICJ’s ability to avoid deciding highly charged disputes that judicial mechanisms may be ill suited to resolve. The work of international criminal tribunals presents a twist on similar themes. At one level, these courts deal with a traditional and routine form of legal process, the prosecution of individuals accused of criminal offenses. But the introduction of international law and international institutions to address what are often situations of mass government-sponsored atrocity transforms the character of this enterprise. Recent developments show international tribunals continuing to grapple with various foundational questions, including the appropriate reach of international criminal law and the proper balance between international and domestic authority. As with the ICJ, moreover, the future of international criminal prosecution will largely depend on the cooperation of states upon whose enforcement authority international tribunals necessarily rely.
Chapter 5 documents the work of the Secretariat. The commentary is by Dr. Khalil A. Hamdani. The documentation starts with the Annual Report of the Secretary-General for the 65th session of the General Assembly. This is followed by a number of annual reports of various entities of the United Nations. Dr. Hamdani notes that various United Nations entities in 2010/2011 had to face a series of urgent crises unprecedented in scale, without losing sight of the larger, longer-term objectives of peace building, development and tackling global challenges. The Secretary-General has championed the Millennium Development Goals and climate change in the face of increasing indifference among member states. United Nations entities have responded well to the multiple demands of new and ongoing humanitarian emergencies in the face of weakening budgetary commitments. Their continued success will hinge on determined and effective coordination in field operations, and on working closely with partners on global issues and resource mobilization. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will have ample opportunity to show leadership in these next five years.

Finally, Chapter 6 reviews progress reports for selected peacekeeping, peace-building and political missions. Ms. Hannelore Hoppe provides the Commentary. She argues that the UN year 2010/2011 was characterized by a period of consolidation of UN peacekeeping missions in terms of the number of deployed uniformed personnel. UN peacekeepers and personnel of political missions continue to play an important role not only in promoting political processes and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, but also in consolidating the peace in post-conflict environments. Their contribution to support governments in strengthening national institutions, facilitating government and security sector reform as well as political dialogue, consolidation, reconstruction, and economic recovery in countries emerging from conflict is critical. This is a new environment in which peacekeepers are confronted with new challenges and increasingly called upon to perform multi-dimensional and exceptionally sensitive tasks, very often also in remote and dangerous areas. The efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations therefore depends on clear, credible and achievable mandates as well as adequate resources, the provision of timely logistical support, a realistic assessment of the situation on the ground, and the cooperation of all stakeholders.

We trust that this publication is of use to all those interested in the work of the United Nations.
[1] The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

[2] Details on the experts are shown below under *Contributors and Co-editors*.

[3] Due to its inactive nature, the Trusteeship Council is not included.