

An Introduction to International Organizations Law

Fourth Edition

The fourth edition of this market-leading textbook offers students a clear framework for understanding the practice and logic of International Organizations Law. It is structured around the three defining relationships IOs engage in – namely, with their member states, with their organs and staff, and with the outside world. These different dynamics give rise to different concerns, which each help to explain the logic behind international institutional law. The text also discusses the essential topics of the law of IOs, including powers and finances, privileges and immunities, institutional structures, and accountability. By demonstrating how the theory works in practice, with recent examples, students will observe the impact and significance of International Organizations Law. Updated with the latest case law and literature, this new edition also contains discussions of the withdrawal of Israel and the US from UNESCO, Brexit, and the Covid-19 pandemic, and how these affect the law of international organizations.

Jan Klabbers has been teaching international law and the law of international organizations for more than two decades, and is currently Professor of International Law at the University of Helsinki. He has held visiting positions at, amongst others, New York University Law School; the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva; and the University of Paris. He has received several teaching awards, and the first three editions of this book have met with general acclaim.



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Fourth Edition

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Preface to the Fourth Edition

The international legal landscape between 2015 (when the previous edition of this book appeared) and 2021 (when this new edition was finalized) has been dominated by two large-scale events, both of them having to do with international organizations, and yet neither of them somehow being very consequential for international organizations law: Brexit and Covid-19.

Brexit marks the withdrawal of one member state from the European Union (EU) (Brexit is, admittedly, a strongly Eurocentric preoccupation, but then again, I am a European), and yet, its considerable legal complications have little to do with international organizations law. Instead, they owe much to UK constitutional law concerns, for example, when asking who can invoke the relevant withdrawal provision in the United Kingdom, and whether Parliament has something to say and, if so, what it has to say.

Brexit's questions relate even more to the law of the EU (that is, the law applicable within that organization) than they do to the law relating to international organizations generally. At stake is not just some symbolic political move: although Brexit is that too. Instead, at stake are very real issues as to whether there are additional customs forms to fill out for small businesses; whether EU citizens can continue to live in the United Kingdom; whether UK citizens living in Portugal or Spain can take their pensions with them; or whether military intelligence (a contradiction in terms, someone once quipped) should be shared between the EU and the United Kingdom.

Covid-19, in turn, suggests that international law operates through international organizations (in this case mostly the World Health Organization – WHO) but also that international organizations tend to leave a lot of leeway and decision-making power to their member states. The WHO declared the existence of a 'public health emergency of international concern' in early 2020, and has monitored the situation intensely, collected information from its member states and provided information to those same member states, started vaccination initiatives and stimulated research, but other measures have remained the province of individual states. Decisions on the closing of borders, cancelling public gatherings and events, which vaccines to prioritize, and what time people should be at home, have been left to national authorities. Perhaps that is a good thing; or perhaps a globally concerted effort would have been



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better. The point is, though, that when the chips are down, national governments reign supreme – and that is typical for the law of international organizations. The politician claiming that to join an international organization is an abdication of sovereignty, and that to withdraw from an organization is reclaiming sovereignty, is usually making a false claim, typically born out of a mixture of ignorance and wilful deceit (and that is perhaps another lesson to draw from Brexit).

My colleague Pierre d'Argent helped me to retrieve a Belgian court decision that was otherwise difficult to trace, and the authors contributing to the forthcoming Cambridge Companion to International Organizations Law provided much inspiration and food for thought.1 The Companion is not a suitable introduction to the law as such but will prove a highly suitable introduction to the work of international organizations, and could thus profitably be read alongside the current text - as a veritable companion. I owe a debt of gratitude to dozens of people who talk to me about international organizations law, who listen to me speak on the topic, who engage in written conversation, and who point me to practical examples: they are too numerous to mention individually, but I wish to acknowledge them collectively. Some of them are academics (who might be expected to engage with me, since that is part of their job), but some of them work for international organizations, as legal counsel or as legal officer. These are, in an important sense, the people who keep the machinery up and running; it is to them that this edition is dedicated.

¹ Jan Klabbers (ed.), Cambridge Companion to International Organizations Law (Cambridge, forthcoming).



A Note on Documentation

In writing this book, two compilations of source materials have proved immensely helpful. Many constitutional documents are brought together in Louis B. Sohn (ed.), *International Organization and Integration: Student Edition* (Dordrecht, 1986). Additional documents can be found in the tremendously useful eight-volume collection compiled by a number of Dutch scholars: P. J. G. Kapteyn et al. (eds.), *International Organization and Integration: Annotated Basic Documents and Descriptive Directory of International Organizations and Arrangements* (2nd revised ed., The Hague, 1981–4).

More recent documents have sometimes been drawn from publications stemming from the relevant organization itself. Thus, the UN Charter has, since time immemorial, been published by the UN Department of Public Information in a small blue vest-pocket version. In a more updated version, many organizations have websites which invariably reproduce the organization's constituent document. The names of those sites generally follow the same pattern: the abbreviated name of the organization plus a dot and either the letters 'org' or 'int'. Thus, the Asian Development Bank can be found at www.adb.org, the OECD at www.oecd.org, the Council of Europe at www.coe.int, and Interpol at www.interpol.int.

My approach has been that constituent documents have not been repeatedly cited in footnotes, in light of their widespread and relatively easy availability. They can be found with the help of the few guidelines set out above. Other treaties have generally been listed with a place where they can be found.



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Abbreviations

AD Annual Digest of Public International Law Cases
AFDI Annuaire Français de Droit International

AIIB Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AJIL American Journal of International Law

AMF Arab Monetary Fund

AOI Arab Organization for Industrialization
APEC Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum

ARIEL Austrian Review of International and European Law
ARIO Articles on the Responsibility of International Organizations

ASEAN Association of South East Asian Nations

ASR Articles on State Responsibility

AU African Union BGBl Bundesgesetzblatt

BIS Bank for International Settlements
BYIL British Yearbook of International Law

CAR Central African Republic

CARIFTA Caribbean Free Trade Association
CDE Cahiers de Droit Européen

CFI Court of First Instance (of the EU)

CJEU Court of Justice of the European Union CMLRev Common Market Law Review

COREPER Comite des Représentants Permanents

CSCE Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

CWC Chemical Weapons Convention

EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EC European Community

ECHR European Convention on Human Rights

ECJ European Court of Justice

ECOCAS Economic Community of Central African States

ECOSOC Economic and Social Council

ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States

ECR European Court Reports

ECSC European Coal and Steel Community



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ECtHR European Court of Human Rights EEC European Economic Community **EFI** European Forest Institute EIB European Investment Bank European Journal of International Law EJIL European Law Review FIR **EPO** European Patent Office EU European Union Food and Agriculture Organization **FAO** Federal Communications Commission **FCC** Federal Republic of Germany FRG **GATT** General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade **GAVI** Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization Alliance **GDR** German Democratic Republic **GEF** Global Environment Facility **GYIL** German Yearbook of International Law International Atomic Energy Agency IAF.A **IATA** International Air Transport Association **IBRD** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development **ICAO** International Civil Aviation Organization **ICES** International Council for the Exploration of the Sea **ICJ** International Court of Justice International & Comparative Law Quarterly **ICLQ ICSID** International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes **ICTR** International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia **ICTY** International Development Association IDA International Development Corporation IDC **IDEA** Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance International Fund for Agricultural Development **IFAD IFC** International Finance Corporation International Institute of Agriculture IIA ILA International Law Association IICInternational Law Commission **ILDC** International Law in Domestic Courts ILJ International Law Journal ILM International Legal Materials ILO International Labour Organization

ILO Administrative Tribunal

International Monetary Fund

Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization

International Law Reports

ILOAT

IMCO

ILR

IMF