We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind…

(Charter of the United Nations)
Vienna is the only European Union city to host one of four UN headquarters, along with New York, Geneva and Nairobi. The Vienna International Centre, VIC, in Vienna known as “UNO City”, was officially opened on 23 August 1979. It is home to several international organisations and has been the venue of numerous international meetings, which are either held at the Centre as such or the Austria Center next door.

The Vienna International Centre on the river Danube has long assumed landmark qualities. It also reflects the way Vienna perceives itself as a platform for international meetings in the heart of a united Europe, as much of the world’s history has been shaped here.

Danube Island, the recreational paradise of Vienna, is within walking distance of the VIC. It offers 42km of sand, gravel and grassy beaches as well as a lot of leisure time facilities. The Old Danube, a former side arm of the Danube, peacefully stretches just behind the VIC surrounded by gardens, sunbathing meadows and restaurants with waterside terraces, promenades and cycle paths.

The Vienna International Centre can be reached by a short ride from the city centre on the U1 underground line. There are only five underground stops between the VIC and St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna’s historic city centre, Vienna’s 1st district, enclosed by the Ringstrasse boulevard.
Vienna and the Vienna International Centre

As an imperial residence Vienna played a vital role in world history for many centuries. The first Congress of Vienna in 1515 was a summit meeting between Emperor Maximilian I and the king of Hungary and Bohemia as well as the king of Poland.

The more famous Congress of Vienna of 1814/15 was convened after the Napoleonic wars to redraw the boundaries of Europe, which were to last until the First World War.

The Congress of Vienna was strewn with a myriad of social events and proved a costly undertaking for Austria. While the city gained enormously on the political stage and soon flourished both culturally and economically, it also paid dearly as prices for food and housing soared.

The collapse of the Habsburg empire left Austria with barely an impact on world politics. From the 1950s onwards, it strove to make up for this by hosting international conferences and congresses, as well as summit meetings.

Soviet Party First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and US President John F. Kennedy met in Vienna in June 1961, as did the Soviet Party General Secretary and head of state Leonid Brezhnev and President Jimmy Carter in June 1979, to mention but a few.

Numerous international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also located in Vienna, among them the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Austria's federal capital has always been a venue for dispute settlement talks, such as:

- the Middle East and Cyprus conflicts,
- conferences on security policies, such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction Talks and others,
- the third follow-up meeting of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) (November 1986 – January 1989) – a Europe-wide security conference acting with the participation of the United States and Canada,
- international stakeholders, business groups, scientific and religious organisations have also come to enjoy this city as a venue for their conferences.

In fact, in 2006 Vienna was the leading conference city worldwide.
Austria’s Role within the United Nations

Stamp issue showing the UNO City
Following a series of preliminary talks and declarations from 1941 onwards, the Allied Forces finally agreed to establish a new world order once the Second World War was over.

In spring 1945, 50 nations convened for the founding conference in San Francisco which culminated in the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter came into force on 24 October 1945. The day has been celebrated as the “United Nations Day” since then.

The UN’s main organs are:

**The General Assembly**
- meets in regular annual sessions
- recommendations made to Member States by the General Assembly are not binding

**The Security Council**
- the only UN organ entitled to take binding decisions on matters of peace and security
- composed of 15 Member States, with China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States as permanent members.

**The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**
- was established to co-ordinate the activities of special organs and specialised agencies engaged in the promotion of economic and social development worldwide

**The International Court of Justice (ICJ)**
- established in The Hague
- to settle international legal disputes and to draft legal opinions

**The United Nations Secretariat**
- headed by the Secretary-General who is the chief administrative officer of the UN
- the Secretary-General may emphasise features of political relevance and engage in acts of diplomacy

The UN now has 192 member states.

Ban Ki-Moon, the current Secretary-General from the Republic of Korea, has headed the UN Secretariat since 1 January 2007.

Along with offices, commissions and departments there are a number of subsidiary organs inside the UN.

Part of the UN system are 15 legally, structurally and financially independent international organisations known as specialised agencies. These include, amongst others, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), based in Vienna.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), also located at the Vienna International Centre, is considered an autonomous organisation within the UN system.
Austria first applied for UN membership in July 1947, but had to wait until after the signing of the State Treaty before it was finally admitted by the General Assembly on 14 December 1955. Before that it had already played an active role in some of the specialised agencies, such as the FAO, the World Bank, and UNESCO since 1947/48.

On 14 December 2005 a ceremony to commemorate Austria’s accession to the United Nations 50 years ago, co-organised by the City of Vienna, was conducted at the Imperial Palace (Hofburg) in Vienna. The celebration was enlivened by international music groups from Vienna.

As a member of the United Nations, Austria

• has a long tradition of promoting respect for international law, peaceful settlement of disputes and the establishment of efficient international institutions, such as the International Criminal Court.

• has actively participated in the UN human rights bodies and hosted the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

• supports international efforts in the fields of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

• was elected non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1973/74 and again in 1991/92, both times with an overwhelming majority. These two terms were certainly among the highlights of Austria’s longstanding involvement in the United Nations.
Austria has been providing troops for UN peacekeeping operations for decades. Never before have so many Austrians been actively involved in peacekeeping operations as today.

Austria has a long tradition of active participation in peacekeeping operations. Since 1960, some 60,000 soldiers and police officers have been deployed in over 50 peace missions, including those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Golan Heights, Cyprus, the Balkans, East Timor and Afghanistan.

Austrians have been entrusted with heading UN missions on several occasions. Austria has also increased its contributions to UN-mandated operations of international organisations.

Currently, 1,300 Austrians (more than ever before) are involved in protecting and maintaining peace and security around the world.

In 2008, Austria chairs the Steering Committee of the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations (SHIRBRIG).

Austria as a Member of the European Union and the EU’s Role in UN Peacekeeping Activities:

- Austria is committed to the closest possible cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations in the field of crisis management.

- Austria is actively involved in developing the EU’s civilian and military capabilities, which will enable Europe to support the United Nations’ peacekeeping activities more effectively.

- Austria participates actively in civilian and military crisis-management operations in close cooperation with the United Nations, particularly in Africa and the Balkans.
Origins and Location of the Vienna International Centre

Aerial photo taken before the VIC was built

UNITED NATIONS VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
The ground the Centre is built on was incorporated into the city’s second district in 1850 and used to be part of a fine-meshed network of tributaries to the river Danube. The latter received a new bed in 1870-1875 and the land retrieved in the course was settled by workers in the late 19th century. This illegal housing estate was better known as “Bretteldorf” (board village) for the early wooden shacks built there. It was up to eight metres lower than the surrounding ground and consequently was repeatedly flooded.

After the First World War (1914-1918) the monastery of Klosterneuburg as the land owner divided the area into lots and leased them out. Every rain would turn the area into a quagmire; epidemics were a constant threat. In 1935 the city administration bought the estate and soon the lots were cleared despite heavy resistance from occupants. The cleared area was used as a dump for Vienna’s rapidly increasing waste.

In 1961 the Vienna City Senate decided to have the area revitalised and turned into a recreation park approximately 100 hectares in size. The project and future park was named “Donaupark”. The Vienna International Horticultural Exhibition (WIG 64) was held here from April to October 1964. The Danube Tower with a height of 252 meters was erected in 1964. The restaurant situated on top of the tower slowly turns around the tower’s axis and offers views of Vienna as well as of the nearby Vienna International Centre.
Back in 1957 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) first settled in Vienna. Its headquarters at the time was located in the former Grand Hotel on the Kärntner Ring. In 1966 Vienna successfully applied as host to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The federal government, upon the request of the then Foreign Minister Kurt Waldheim, proposed to the UN to have a joint official seat built for the two organisations with the option of further organisations settling there in the future. The City of Vienna saw its chance and made available a 180,000m² lot near the Donaupark free of charge.

On 28 January 1967 Wolfgang Schmitz, Minister of Finance, and Felix Slavik, City Councillor of Finance, signed an agreement to that end. In 1968 an international architectural competition was advertised for the project. 656 architects from 36 countries submitted a total of 283 drafts to an international jury. A team of experts performed the final examination.

After considering functional and economic aspects, the committee of ministers headed by Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky chose Johann Staber's project.

The construction costs of 8.8 billion ATS were raised by the Federal Republic of Austria (65%) and the City of Vienna (35%). Construction of the International Centre commenced in the spring of 1973.

The United Nations pay a symbolic rent of 7 Euro-Cent (1 ATS) per year for a period of 99 years plus maintenance and operating costs for the building. Like foreign embassies the Vienna International Centre enjoys extraterritorial status.
The compound consists of six Y-shaped office buildings between 48m and 120m height with a core of joint elevators, sanitary facilities, technical installations and side rooms each. All 4,500 offices are located along the buildings’ three main exterior walls and offer work space for up to 4,700 people.

The VIC has flexible partitioning for many rooms and all buildings are fully air-conditioned.

The three Y-shaped twin buildings are connected in the centre by a circular 56 metre high conference building consisting of 9 conference halls, interpreting booths, central facilities and a two-storey entrance hall (Rotunda) underneath.

0.3 % of the total construction costs were set aside for the Centre’s interior design. Contemporary Austrian artists were commissioned to fit out the lobbies and entrance halls with their works and create a “showcase” for the host country. An international jury chose works by 36 different artists, among them Christian Attersee, Adolf Frohner, Rudolf Hausner, Alfred Hrdlicka, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Hermann Nitsch and Arnulf Rainer.

Many objects have since been added to the original collection.
Also included in the architects’ original competition was a conference centre which was completed in 1987. It is equipped with flexible partitioning walls allowing it to host UN conferences as well as balls, presentations and a full range of other congresses.

Today the Austria Center Vienna (ACV) presents itself in a new design on the occasion of its 20th anniversary in 2007. Following an interior design makeover that transformed the atmosphere in the building, the ACV has undergone structural changes:

The Aristide de Sousa Mendes promenade offers a better orientation and optimal access to the users of the Austria Center when coming from the underground stop VIC/DC.

On the outside an eye-catching wooden construction of a spectacular canopy, complete with an innovative high-tech membrane, marks the entrance area to the ACV.

In the most striking change so far brought about by the ongoing alterations, the entrance to the ACV has been completely remodelled and creates a sense of exceptional lightness. The sideways extension of the foyer has created a spacious entrance area.

Anticipating future trends in the event business, a new hall with a total exhibition space of 22,200m² has been created by converting and uniting former restaurant and foyer spaces within the existing conference centre – to guarantee the ACV’s leading position as the top European venue for large conferences and exhibitions. Today the ACV has a total capacity of more than 10,000 people.
The Republic of Austria and the City of Vienna answered the strongly increasing demand of conference space by the Vienna-based international organisations of the United Nations with the construction of a new conference building. The building was designed by architect Albert Wimmer and is handed over to the Vienna-based international organisations of the United Nations for their sole use.

The new conference building offers space for conferences and congresses with up to 3,000 participants and will contribute to the international importance of Vienna as conference venue and as one of four UN headquarters.

On occasion of the inauguration ceremony of conference building M in April 2008 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his appreciation: “This new building marks the enhanced commitment of Vienna to multilateralism and its willingness to contribute to constructive dialogue on the most pressing issues facing the international community.”

The conference building M at the Vienna International Centre is a new landmark of the Danube City quarter in Vienna. The new building stands out from among its strictly geometrically designed neighbours for its sensitive architecture and, at the same time, blends into the complex of attractive looking buildings and the surroundings. The new low-rise building forms a dynamic contrast to the many high-rise buildings in the neighbourhood.

While the building is open towards the VIC the office wing situated south of the new conference hall forms a boundary to the surroundings. The real eye catchers of the building are the compact core and the flowing transparent building envelope boasting a high-security transparent aluminium glass façade.
After the plans for the EXPO 1995 on the north bank of the river Danube were rejected, an internationally renowned urban centre has evolved in the past few years on the previously undeveloped area, with innovative office buildings and homes, places of research, leisure facilities and venues for events: Vienna Danube City.

The development project covers a total area of about 18,500 m². Nearly two thirds of the project have already been completed and are in use. Today around 8,500 people already live and work in this new “city within the city”. After completion of the development, scheduled for the year 2012, there will be up to 15,000 people.

With its architecturally sophisticated skyline and the unique traffic-free pedestrian area, with numerous social meeting places between the towers of the offices, Vienna Danube City offers an all-inclusive social infrastructure, markets, restaurants, cafés, a health centre, school and church.

Thanks to its special location by the water and the neighbouring recreational areas international experts rate Vienna Danube City, which lies only eight minutes away by underground from the historic city centre, as one of the most interesting city development areas in Europe.

Due to the rapid development of the quarter, the French architect Dominique Perrault created a revised master plan for the remaining building area near the New Danube where two DC Towers are to be erected. DC Tower 1 with a height of over 220m will be the highest office building in Austria.
The UNOV, established on 1 January 1980, serves as the representative office of the Secretary-General in Vienna and performs representation functions with governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. UNOV provides financial, personnel and administrative services for a number of UN organisations and institutions resident in Vienna.

The UNOV Division for Management consists of:
- the Conference Management Service (CMS),
- the General Support Section (GSS),
- the Security and Safety Section (SSS).

The main function of the Conference Management Service (CMS) is to provide Member States and intergovernmental bodies with all the services that meetings require for their smooth functioning:
- planning and organising meetings in Vienna and throughout the world
- organising meeting room facilities in the Vienna International Centre and other locations
- editing, translating, formatting, designing, printing and distributing official documents

UNOV’s functions are to liaise and negotiate at the inter-agency level on all aspects of administrative arrangements at the VIC with:
- the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA),
- the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO),
- the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBT PrepCom)

Since 1982, the UNOV is headed by a Director-General who acts as personal representative of the Secretary-General and also serves as Under-Secretary-General.

Additional tasks include safety and security services for persons and equipment, engineering and communications technology.

Michael Häupl, Mayor of Vienna, presents the drinking fountain “AQA – Water with a Human Face” to Director-General Antonio Maria Costa, 2003

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan with security staff members

Antonio Maria Costa from Italy has been head of UNOV since May 2002.
New forms of cross-border crime and the increasing spread of drugs worldwide are clearly among the negative consequences of globalisation. The Office on Drugs and Crime was established in Vienna on 1 November 1997. UNOV Director-General Antonio Maria Costa was appointed Executive Director of the UNODC.

UNODC’s mandates are:

- to foster international co-operation in the fight against illicit production and abuse of drugs,
- to pursue international prevention programmes and
- to define and spread internationally recognised guidelines on the judiciary’s independence, alternatives to imprisonment, treatment of prisoners, protection of victims, etc.

The UNODC aims to co-ordinate international action against illegal drug trafficking and abuse of drugs. The programme’s work includes drafting reports on the current drug situation, consulting governments on issues of crop monitoring, drug legislation, prevention of drug consumption and treatment of drug addicts.

It is also responsible for all matters of crime prevention and criminal law with special emphasis on organised transnational crime, human trafficking, money laundering, corruption and terrorism.
From its inception, the United Nations recognised that equitable economic development throughout the world was the keystone to lasting peace and prosperity. During the 1950s and 1960s, industrialised countries grew prosperous while the developing world slipped into greater poverty. Therefore the United Nations began to pay closer attention to industrial development as integral to economic and social development.

UNIDO, founded in 1966, left New York the following year to set up the new organisation in the Austrian capital, Vienna. And in 1985, it became the sixteenth specialised agency of the United Nations, with its own member states and budget.

UNIDO has sharpened its technical cooperation activities by focusing on three themes, which directly respond to international development priorities:

- poverty reduction through productive activities
- trade capacity building
- energy and environment

The main focus of its activities is to promote productivity among small and medium-sized enterprises. To this end the organisation has developed “integrated programmes” operating at the political, institutional and company level to mobilise knowledge, information and technology for productive employment, competitiveness and a healthy environment. Regional emphasis of the programmes is placed on sub-Saharan Africa with 40% of funds allocated to that area.

UNIDO currently has 172 member states whose representatives meet at the General Conference, which takes place every two years. In 2006 UNIDO maintained a field network of 12 regional offices, 16 country offices, and thirteen “UNIDO Desks” based in UNDP offices. UNIDO maintains liaison offices in Brussels (European Union), Geneva (United Nations) and New York (United Nations).

In 2006 a festive ceremony at the Austria Centre Vienna marked UNIDO’s 40th anniversary “Reducing Poverty through Sustainable Industrial Growth”.

UNIDO’s current Director-General, Kandeh K. Yumkella from Sierra Leone, assumed office in December 2005.
In September 1996 the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which bans all nuclear test explosions on Earth, was signed by 71 states, among them the five official nuclear weapon states. The main task of the CTBTO, situated in Vienna, is to build a global alarm system to monitor the ground, the waters and the atmosphere for nuclear explosions. This unique verification regime includes a 337 facility International Monitoring System (IMS) consisting of seismic, infrasound, hydroacoustic and radionuclide stations as well as radionuclide laboratories.

By mid-2008, the CTBTO plans to have 90% of the IMS stations installed. The IMS stations send data to the International Data Centre (IDC) in Vienna where they are processed and forwarded to States for final judgement. The verification regime also includes on-site inspections in the event of a nuclear explosion, a consultation and clarification process as well as confidence-building measures.

The year 2006 marked the 10th anniversary of the Treaty’s adoption. As part of the events to commemorate this milestone, a scientific symposium titled “CTBT: Synergies with Science 1996-2006” was held at the Imperial Palace (Hofburg) in Vienna.

As of September 2007, 177 States had signed and 140 States had ratified the Treaty. The Treaty will come into force when it has been ratified by the 44 States that possessed nuclear power or research reactors at the time of the treaty negotiations in 1996. As of September 2007, 34 of those States had ratified the Treaty.

The Treaty and the Organisation enjoy strong support from the international community. The Organisation is led by Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth who took office in August 2005.
The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the world’s foremost forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Established as an independent organisation under the United Nations (UN) in 1957, the IAEA represents the realisation of US President Eisenhower’s visionary “Atoms for Peace” speech to the UN General Assembly in 1953. He proposed the creation of an international body to both control and promote the use of atomic energy. Today, the IAEA’s broad spectrum of services and activities is based on the needs of more than 140 Member States.

IAEA safeguards are designed to ensure that countries using nuclear technologies are not secretly developing nuclear weapons. Hundreds of nuclear facilities are safeguarded by the IAEA in over 70 countries. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) requires that all non-nuclear-weapon states conclude comprehensive IAEA safeguards agreements and submit all nuclear material to IAEA monitoring. Governments sign agreements with the IAEA pledging to disclose their nuclear materials and activities. The IAEA then applies analytical methods, environmental monitoring, satellite imagery and on-site inspections to verify that the declarations continue to be accurate and complete. There are safeguards agreements in force with more than 150 States.

The IAEA facilitates transfer of nuclear technology to Member States for use in medical, agricultural, industrial, water management and other applications. This contributes directly to the goals of sustainable development and protection of the environment.

Along with the Secretariat in Vienna there are regional and liaison offices in Geneva, New York, Tokyo and Toronto. The organisation has been running a research laboratory at Seibersdorf (Lower Austria) since 1962.

The Agency is led by a Director-General, currently Mohamed ElBaradei from Egypt who has been in this position since December 1997.

In 2005, the Norwegian Nobel Committee honoured the IAEA and its Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei as “an unafraid advocate” of atoms for peace, not warheads.
UNIS Vienna is responsible for the public information and outreach work of the United Nations offices and for the visitors services at the Vienna International Centre. At the same time, it serves as the public voice of the UN in Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. In addition, it provides strategic guidance to the Czech Republic and Romania. Mr. Maher Nasser is director of UNIS.

The tasks of UNIS Vienna include:

- **media and public relations:** media liaison, press releases and briefings, media accreditation, information campaigns and presentations, library

- **visitors service:** Multilingual guides from different countries inform about the United Nations and the work of the Vienna-based organisations. Tours are available in German, English and ten other languages

- **NGOs:** The NGO liaison office of UNIS Vienna services approximately 400 local NGO representatives, research institutes, political think tanks and initiatives of civil society. Information on relevant issues is distributed to them on a regular basis and NGO representatives are invited to press/information briefings held by UNIS.

- **special workshops and events for journalists, students and teachers:** Examples of recent activities in this field are:
  - Journalist Forum on Human Rights, 2006
  - Teachers’ Forum on the occasion of the “Days of Action for Political Education”, 2007
  - Students Forum titled “Vienna as a Headquarters of International Organizations: A Hub against Uncivil Society” centred on the UNIS client country Slovenia.

The City of Vienna is proud to be in a position to act as a partner for UNIS to support the various workshops and events.

- **International Days and Years:** UNIS also cooperates with local NGOs and the City of Vienna in the organisation of special United Nations observances (i.e. International Peace Day, Human Rights Day, etc.)
UNOOSA United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
This unit, which is assigned to UNOV, is responsible for promoting international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space. UNOOSA assists developing countries in accessing space technology for their own benefit and covers a wide range of applications such as
- information management (satellite navigation and communications)
- environmental and species protection (satellite photography)
- agriculture (weather satellites, satellite photography)
- water and weather watch (weather satellites, satellite photography)
- issues pertaining to refugees (satellite navigation and communications)
- education.

UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services – Vienna Field Office
The UN General Assembly first established this office in the 1970s to prepare projects and programmes supported by UN organisations or Member States. UNOPS is governed by the Executive Board in New York and has several field offices worldwide including the one at the Vienna International Centre.

OIOS United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services – Vienna Office
Only in 2003 did the United Nations open its new Office of Internal Oversight Services in the International Centre. OIOS is a branch of the New York office. Vienna was chosen as its seat to increase the co-operation with UNODC, in particular in the fight against corruption and organised crime.

UNPA United Nations Postal Administration
In 1947 Argentina first proposed that the UN should have its own postal stamps. An agreement to this effect was signed with the US postal authorities in 1951, followed by similar agreements with Geneva and Vienna. On 24 August 1979 the first UN stamps in Austrian schillings were issued by the UNPA office in Vienna. Since 2001/02 UN stamps in Austria have been issued in Euro. Stamp issues are dedicated to a common theme with nominal values calculated in the relevant currency of each of the three postal administrations. Commemorative stamps are issued six times a year as a rule and are sold for twelve months only. Themes are selected with the objective to raise awareness (e.g. human rights, the environment, endangered species, peace, etc.).

In 2007, UNPA issued a stamp sheet to commemorate the Peaceful Visions stamp issue.
Other Organisations Located at the VIC

UN Organisations in Vienna

**UNSCERAR** United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

The commission was mandated to collect information on ionising radiation and radionuclides from all natural and artificial sources and to assess their potential threat to human beings and the environment. The secretariat, based in Vienna and headed by Malcolm Crick, provides organisational support.

**UNHCR** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – Vienna Office

The United Nations Refugee Organization took up work as a branch office of the General Assembly in 1951. It supports refugees returning home, integrating into host countries and transiting to third countries. UNHCR operates worldwide with 277 offices and a staff of more than 5,000 in total. Its head since June 2005 is the High Commissioner for Refugees Mr. António Guterres. The Vienna regional office was established in 1951.

**UNCITRAL** United Nations Commission for International Trade Law

When the General Assembly established the Commission in 1966 it did so in recognition of the fact that differences in national legislation are a hindrance to international trade. The Commission was tasked to actively further the harmonisation of international trade law. The Commission is presently composed of 60 members elected by the General Assembly so as to be representative of the world’s geographic regions, amongst them Austria.

Originally located at United Nations headquarters in New York, the Division was relocated to the United Nations Office at Vienna in September 1979, while formally remaining a part of the Office of Legal Affairs in New York. Professional staff members of the Division include a small number of qualified lawyers from different countries and legal traditions, with the Director of the Division, Jernej Sekolec, serving as the Secretary of UNCITRAL.

**ICPDR** International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

This body provides the institutional frame for the implementation of the River Danube Protection Convention, which entered into force in October 1998 and provides the basis for international co-operation in the Danube river basin. It is not part of the United Nations system but is also based in the Vienna International Centre. 12 of the 13 Danube river basin countries plus the European Union have joined the Convention. The office in Vienna is run by Executive Secretary Philip Weller.

On occasion of the 50th anniversary of UNSCEAR the Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science of Vienna, Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, welcomed Hans Blix, former IAEA Director-General, and Malcolm Crick at the Vienna City Hall.

"Danube Watch", the official magazine of ICPDR
Vienna and the Vienna International Centre

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his first official visit to Vienna meeting Michael Häupl, Mayor and Governor of Vienna, 2007
Since its opening in the summer of 1979 the Vienna International Centre has hosted a myriad of international UN conferences and events, such as:

- The United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD, August 1979)
- International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT, June 1987)
- Martin Luther King peace prize awarded to former Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (December 1989)
- 50 soldiers received medals on behalf of the Austrian UN contingent (December 1988) in recognition of their contribution to the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the UN peace forces
- World Conference on Human Rights (June 1993): one of the UN’s biggest conferences in Vienna with more than 5,000 participants; adoption of a declaration to raise respect for human rights
- Seventh Global Forum on Reinventing Government – Building Trust in Government (June 2007). The conference took place in the Austria Centre Vienna and was attended by more than 2,000 people.
- UN GIFT United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking - The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, which brought together representatives from 116 countries, took place from 13 to 15 February 2008.
Many leading personalities have visited the Vienna International Centre, among them the UN Secretaries-General Kurt Waldheim, Javier Perez de Cuellar, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon.

Other famous visitors to mention are:
- Pope John Paul II (1983)
- Daniel Arap Moi, President of Kenya (June 1985),
- Mother Teresa (March 1987),
- Palestinian President Arafat (1993)
- Queen Fabiola of Belgium (October 1994),
- Fidel Ramos, President of the Philippines (September 1997),
- King Hussein of Jordan (June 1998),
- Nobel Peace Prize laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu (June 1998)
- Former US President Jimmy Carter (1999)
- UN Goodwill Ambassador Julia Ormond (2006)
- King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden (2007)
- UN Goodwill Ambassador Emma Thompson (2008)

The Vienna International Centre always offers a warm welcome to artists from all over the world who add special value to conferences and meetings.
UN staff enjoy immunity at work but are otherwise subject to Austrian law. An agreement signed by Austria and the UN organisations in 1981 lays down the rules for duty and tax free sales of goods at the in-house supermarket.

As the vicinity offered little infrastructure in the early days and also because UN organisations have regular working hours on Austrian public holidays, the UN city was equipped with its own supermarket, medical centre, restaurants, hairdressers, a flower shop and other services.

The United Nations Women’s Guild (UNWG), one of the most active groups, is a welfare organisation founded in 1967 by women connected with the UN. Its purpose is to foster friendship and work for the welfare of children in need. The UNWG currently has 500 members from 89 countries. Its major activity is the annual UNWG International Bazaar held at the Austria Center. 25,000 visitors attended in 2006 and more than 198,000 euro were raised for social projects. The UNWG Kiosk at the VIC visitors centre is open to the public and sells handicrafts and gift items for charity. The Guild also runs a book stall and second-hand store in the IAEA section of the Vienna International Centre.

UN plaza with its unique round fountain presents itself as an entree and welcome area to the VIC. It is known for outdoor gatherings both for leisure and for official ceremonies.

Impressions from the UNWG Bazaar
The Vienna Service Office (VSO) is a field office of the City of Vienna at the Vienna International Centre. It offers prompt and individual assistance in matters of everyday life and free information for employees of UN organisations, their families and the staff of missions to the UN.

As a service centre for the staff it also organises:

- excursions to departments of the City of Vienna such as the Vienna fire brigade, the ambulance services, and Vienna Public Transport
- the free of charge language course “Learning Your Way in Vienna”
- experts’ days where an expert from a municipal department visits the VSO for personal appointments to answer questions, for example about Austrian citizenship
- hospitality afternoons to promote the VSO and bring it closer to the UN staff
- presentations by experts from the City of Vienna
- the Vienna City Welcome that includes a bus tour of Vienna and a visit to the City Hall.

The VSO was opened on 1 July 1987 and celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2007 with several special events, underlining its unique services and long existence.

The VSO organised an excursion for UN staff members to the Landgut Cobenzl, an organic livestock farm with a variety of traditional farm animals in Vienna. The participants had a tour of the farm and had the possibility to feed the animals, 2008.

Participants at the Vienna City Welcome on the festival staircase of the Vienna City Hall, 2006.

On 27 February 2007 the Vienna Service Office celebrated its 20th anniversary. More than 300 guests paid a visit and enjoyed a piece of cake and a glass of champagne.
The City of Vienna is proud that so many UN and international organisations have chosen the city as location for their headquarters. For many years co-operations and joint projects have given solid proof of the high appreciation:

**UNITED NATIONS VIENNA CIVIL SOCIETY AWARD**

The annual UN Vienna Civil Society Award pays tribute to the prominent and supportive role of the host country of Austria and the City of Vienna in promoting the work of the United Nations, especially in light of the UN’s emphasis on strengthening communication and partnerships with all parts of civil society.

The Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention reaffirms the city’s role as the United Nations centre for fighting uncivil elements of civil society. The award highlights outstanding contributions by civil society in fighting drug abuse, crime and terrorism and fostering justice and social progress. Since 1999, the Award has recognised an array of non-governmental organisations and individuals. From a volunteer working in the slums of Bangkok to a drug rehabilitation centre in Peru, the one thing all winners have in common is an unwavering commitment to their communities.

The Award consists of a medal, a certificate, and an annual prize money of 70,000 euros.

**UN HABITAT’S BEST PRACTICES HUB IN VIENNA**

The Best Practices Hub Vienna is the UN-HABITAT’s Best Practices Programme’s regional and specialised centre established by the City of Vienna in 1999. Its regional focus is on Central and Eastern Europe and thematically it focuses on urban environmental technologies worldwide. It is a joint initiative of the City of Vienna and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT).

The objective of the Best Practices Hub in Vienna is to give municipalities and project operators in the region access to the experiences made with the implementation of sustainable urban programmes, which are then made available as Good or Best Practices in the UN HABITAT database. Every two years, a prize is awarded to the 10 Best Practices internationally.

Various programmes implemented in Vienna have been recognised as best practices by the UN, an exhibition on these was shown at the VIC some time ago.

Beyond that there is a variety of other international activities set by the City of Vienna, such as activities on UN Peace Day every year.

**UNITED NATIONS VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE**