



International Law at the United Nations: In Brief

April – July 2025

Issue 2

The Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore is pleased to launch the second issue in its series of newsletters highlighting updates at the United Nations. This edition explores key thematic areas such as peace and security, human rights and humanitarian law, climate change, global health, the vital work of the International Law Commission, international courts and tribunals, and the much-awaited International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change. It also highlights the consequences arising from the growing financial crisis at the UN.

Special thanks to Dr. Huw Llewellyn for his insight and support in the preparation of this newsletter.

Table of Contents

Highlights.....	3
Week of 1 April 2025.....	5
Week of 14 April 2025	5
Week of 21 April 2025	6
Week of 28 April 2025	6
Week of 5 May 2025.....	7
Week of 12 May 2025.....	8
Week of 19 May 2025.....	8
Week of 26 May 2025.....	9
Week of 2 June 2025.....	10
Week of 9 June 2025.....	10
Week of 16 June 2025.....	11
Week of 23 June 2025.....	12
Week of 30 June 2025.....	12
Week of 7 July 2025.....	13
Week of 14 July 2025	14
Week of 21 July 2025	14

Highlights

Between April and July 2025, the United Nations addressed a series of pressing issues of international law across humanitarian, human rights, environmental, health, maritime, and treaty domains.

1. Escalating tensions across the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Asia brought the UN's **peace and security** mandate into focus. While the General Assembly urged a Gaza ceasefire, the U.S. veto blocked similar Security Council action. UN agencies raised alarms over violence in Myanmar, Ukraine, India and Pakistan, Libya, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, calling for respect for international law. Other issues included women's protection in armed conflict, targeted sanctions, arms embargoes, and investigative mechanisms.
2. Conflicts also created dire **humanitarian and human rights crises**. The Security Council warned of threats to civilians, while investigative bodies examined attacks on Gaza schools as possible war crimes. UN experts urged States to end impunity for crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, citing self-determination and non-complicity. In Libya, the UN mission condemned torture and disappearances. The Hunger Hotspots Report highlighted rising food insecurity in conflict areas. The Human Rights Council adopted resolutions affirming the right to a healthy environment, freedom from coercive measures, and digital and cultural rights.
3. There were notable developments before **international courts and tribunals**. The International Court of Justice rejected Sudan's request for Provisional Measures against the United Arab Emirates, granted Guyana's request for modified provisional measures in *Guyana v. Venezuela*, and delivered its judgment on the merits of the case in *Land and Maritime Delimitation and Sovereignty* (Gabon v. Equatorial Guinea). France instituted proceedings against Iran under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations; Lithuania filed a case against Belarus under the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. Equatorial Guinea requested the ICJ to indicate provisional measures against France in the *Request relating to the Return of Property, Confiscated in Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea V. France)*. The ICJ also delivered its long-awaited Advisory Opinion on *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*.
4. There were also notable initiatives regarding **climate change and global health**. These include the adoption of the Pandemic Agreement by the World Health Assembly, sessions of the Preparatory Commission of the entry into force of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), and the adoption of the UN Ocean Summit Declaration titled "Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action."

5. The **International Law Commission** adopted the Final Report on Sea-Level Rise in relation to International Law and added two new topics to its programme of work: Due Diligence in International Law and Compensation for Damage Caused by Internationally Wrongful Acts.
6. Ultimately, the **deep financial crisis facing the UN** impeded the works of several bodies. The International Law Commission concluded its seventy-sixth session in five weeks instead of the twelve weeks that had been scheduled and approved by the General Assembly, the High Commissioner for Refugees announced plans to make significant cuts worldwide, and the World Food Programme suspended the provision of lifesaving aid to Ethiopia.

Week of 1 April 2025

Humanitarian Assistance

The Security Council releases a press statement following the earthquake in Myanmar on March 28, 2025. It reaffirms the need for a safe environment for timely humanitarian assistance without disruption or discrimination and welcomes ceasefire announcements.

Find more [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

The Human Rights Council adopts a resolution affirming the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in which it references the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and urges States to ratify the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

Find more [here](#).

The Human Rights Council also adopted a number of other resolutions concerning unilateral coercive measures, cultural rights, food rights, debt obligations, landmines, and emerging technologies.

Find more [here](#).

A group of 17 UN human rights experts call for States to pursue accountability in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, uphold measures of the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court concerning Israel, and implement self-determination and non-complicity obligations.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 14 April 2025

Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

The Fourth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent discusses a number of issues relating to the African continent and people of African descent, including reparatory justice, human rights of women and girls, systemic racism, and artificial intelligence and digital justice.

Find more [here](#).

Global Health

The World Health Organisation's Member States finalise a draft Pandemic Treaty. It will be submitted to the World Health Assembly in May for adoption.

Find more [here](#).

The Preparatory Commission for the entry into force of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) opens its first session.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 21 April 2025

Peace and Security

The Security Council issues a press statement condemning the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

Find more [here](#).

Humanitarian Assistance

The UN World Food Programme suspends the provision of lifesaving treatment, food, and nutrition in Ethiopia due a lack of funding and dwindling supplies.

Find more [here](#).

International Law Commission

The Seventy-Sixth session of the International Law Commission opens in Geneva, Switzerland.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 28 April 2025

Courts and Tribunals

Sudan requests the ICJ for provisional measures in the case concerning *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Sudan (Sudan v. United Arab Emirates)*.

Find more [here](#).

The ICJ grants Guyana's request for modified provisional measures in the *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)*.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The Security Council extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) until 9 May 2025.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 5 May 2025

Courts and Tribunals

The ICJ rejects Sudan's request for provisional measures in the *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Sudan (Sudan v. United Arab Emirates)*.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The Security Council further extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) until 30 April 2026.

Find more [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel, publishes its latest report. It concludes that the physical destruction in Gaza, dismantling of educational systems, attacks on religious and cultural sites, and continuing expansions of settlements violate the right to self-determination of the Palestinian population.

Find more [here](#).

The UN Support Mission in Libya condemns widespread and systematic human rights abuses by law enforcement and security forces in Libyan detention facilities and urges the authorities to investigate abductions, torture and disappearances.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 12 May 2025

Courts and Tribunals

France files an application instituting proceeding against Iran before the ICJ, alleging serious and repeated breaches of Iran's obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations through the arrest, detention, and trial of French nationals in Iran.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The Security Council issues a press statement concerning the escalating violence in Tripoli, calling on all parties to protect civilians and ensure that those responsible for attacks against civilians are held accountable.

Find more [here](#).

Financial Crisis at the UN

The Secretary-General briefs Member States on wide-ranging efforts by the UN system to cut costs, streamline operations, and modernise its approach to peace and security, development, and human rights. Revised budget estimates will be presented in September. Among the 'meaningful reductions' could be a 20% reduction in staff and relocating posts away from expensive duty stations.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 19 May 2025

Peace and Security | International Humanitarian Law

The Security Council holds its annual open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It is held in connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1265 (1999), which first established the protection of civilians as a crucial issue of international peace and security, and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Find more [here](#).

Courts and Tribunals

Lithuania files an application before the ICJ instituting proceedings against Belarus, alleging violations by Belarus of its obligations under the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, "in relation to the large-scale smuggling of irregular migrants from Belarus into Lithuania."

Find more [here](#).

The ICJ delivers its judgment on the merits in *Land and Maritime Delimitation and Sovereignty (Gabon v. Equatorial Guinea)*.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security | Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

The Secretary-General sets-out a five-stage plan to deliver aid to the population of Gaza and reiterates that the UN will not participate in any scheme that fails to respect international law and fundamental humanitarian principles.

Find more [here](#).

Global Health

The World Health Assembly adopts the WHO Pandemic Agreement after three years of negotiations. It is not yet open for signature, however, as Member States continue to discuss an annex concerning pathogen access and benefit sharing.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 26 May 2025

International Law Commission

The International Law Commission concludes its Seventy-Sixth session. It adopts the final report of the Study Group on Sea-Level Rise in Relation to International Law.

Find more [here](#).

The International Law Commission also made progress on the two topics that were expected to be completed at second reading at this session – General Principles of Law and Immunity of State Officials from Foreign Criminal Jurisdiction. A lack of time prevented them from being so completed. The same is the case for the two topics expected to be completed at first reading at this session – Subsidiary Means for the Determination of Rules of International Law and Settlement of Disputes to which International Organizations are Parties.

Find more [here](#).

The International Law Commission adds two new topics to its programme of work: Due Diligence in International Law and Compensation for the Damage caused by Internationally Wrongful Acts. Ms. Penelope Ridings and Mr. Martin Paparinskis are appointed as Special Rapporteurs for these topics, respectively.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The Security Council extends the arms embargo on Libya until November 2025.

Find more [here](#).

The Security Council extends the arms embargo and targeted sanctions on South Sudan until 31 May 2026. Additionally, it extends the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 1 July 2026.

Find more [here](#).

Courts and Tribunals

Judge Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud is elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council as a Member of the ICJ, succeeding Judge Nawaf Salam, who resigned on 14 January 2025.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 2 June 2025

Use of Force | Human Rights and Humanitarian law

The United States vetoes a Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and the lifting of all restrictions of humanitarian aid to its population.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 9 June 2025

Climate Change

The UN Ocean Summit concludes with the adoption of a declaration titled “Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action”.

Find more [here](#).

Courts and Tribunals

Judge Abdulqawi Yusuf will resign as a Member of the ICJ with effect from 30 September 2025.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security | Nuclear Non-Proliferation

The International Atomic Energy Agency adopts a resolution warning that Iran is failing to respect its obligations of nuclear non-proliferation.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The General Assembly adopts a resolution demanding an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Find more [here](#).

The Security Council holds an emergency session to address the rapid escalation of tensions between Iran and Israel.

Find more [here](#).

The Secretary-General makes a statement to the Security Council regarding the bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 16 June 2025

Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

The World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation release Hunger Hotspots Report 2025, providing early warnings on acute food insecurity and noting that Palestine, Haiti and Mali are among the worst affected.

Find more [here](#).

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that human rights abuses committed by Congolese troops and Rwandan-backed rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo might amount to war crimes.

Find more [here](#).

Financial Crisis at the UN

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees announces a plan to make significant cuts worldwide by scaling-back on its operations, terminating staff positions, and downsizing or closing offices.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 23 June 2025

Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

The General Assembly holds a plenary meeting to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect.

Find more [here](#).

UN Charter

The General Assembly holds an informal plenary meeting on the 80th anniversary of the UN Charter.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The Security Council issues a press statement concerning the attack by suspected Sudanese armed elements on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the peacekeepers. It calls on the Government of the Central African Republic to investigate the attack and ensure accountability.

Find more [here](#).

The Security Council issues a press statement condemning the terrorist attack at the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus, Syria.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 30 June 2025

Peace and Security

The Security Council renews the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which monitors the Israel-Syria Disengagement of Forces Agreement, until 31 December 2025.

Find more [here](#).

The Security Council renews the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime until 1 July 2026 and extends the Group of Experts' mandate until 1 August 2026.

Find more [here](#).

Courts and Tribunals

Equatorial Guinea requests the ICJ to indicate provisional measures in the *Request relating to the Return of Property Confiscated in Criminal Proceedings (Equatorial Guinea v. France)*.

Find more [here](#) (French) and [here](#) (English).

The Security Council adopts a resolution setting 12 November 2025 as the date for the election to fill the seat on the ICJ bench vacated by Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf.

Find more [here](#).

Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law

The Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo presents the Final Report to the Security Council Sanctions Committee.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 7 July 2025

Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law

The General Assembly adopts a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, calling on its authorities to adhere to international law, including its obligations under humanitarian and human rights law, and to take the necessary measures against terrorist organisations.

Find more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The UN Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) 2021-2025 adopts its final report on peace and security in the ICT domain.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 14 July 2025

Peace and Security

The Security Council extends the mandate of UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) until 31 January 2026.

Find more [here](#).

The Security Council extends the mandate of UN Mission to Support Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) until 28 January 2026

Find more [here](#).

The Security Council requests that the Secretary-General continue to provide monthly reports on Houthi attacks against merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea until 15 January 2025.

Find more [here](#) and [here](#).

United Nations

The General Assembly adopts a resolution on the “UN80 Initiative”, welcoming the Secretary-General’s efforts to strengthen the UN.

Find more [here](#).

Week of 21 July 2025

Courts and Tribunals

Judge Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud is officially sworn in as a new Member of the ICJ.

Find more [here](#).

The ICJ delivers the Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (23 July 2025)

The historical opinion, to which 96 States and 12 organisations contributed through written and oral submissions, sets-out States' obligations to prevent, respond and adapt to climate change. It further highlights the legal consequences arising for States that cause significant harm to the environment, in breach of these obligations. Some key take-aways from the Opinion:

1. The obligations concerning the protection of the climate system under customary international law and treaty law are obligations *erga omnes* and *erga omnes partes*, respectively.
2. The application of the *lex specialis* doctrine is rejected. Climate obligations arise not only from environmental treaties but also international human rights law, law of the sea, customary international law, and other sources.
3. States are obligated to ensure that the global average temperature increase does not surpass 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
4. States that fail to address the harms caused by fossil fuel industries may be committing internationally wrongful acts.
5. Sea-level rise causing the partial or complete inundation of a State's territory does not affect its Statehood or maritime boundaries. This reflects the conclusions of the ILC Study Group on Sea Level Rise.
6. Violations of States' primary obligations in respect of climate change may give rise to secondary obligations, including cessation, guarantees of non-repetition, restitution and, where restitution is materially impossible, compensation.

Dispute Resolution

The Security Council adopts a resolution aiming to strengthen peaceful dispute settlement mechanisms and urging all Member States to use them effectively.

Find more [here](#).