GUIDELINES

ON DIPLOMATIC COURTESY
IN GENEVA

United Nations
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Opening of a new permanent mission
1. It is current practice for a Government to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in writing, through the intermediary of its permanent mission in New York, of its intention to establish a permanent mission in Geneva. The Secretary-General then informs the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Director-General informs the Chief of Protocol who brings this to the attention of the Head of the Permanent mission of the host country. The current practice is that a Government informs also the Swiss Government of its intention to establish a mission in Geneva.

Credentials
2. Credentials of permanent representatives are issued either by the head of State or Government, or by the minister for foreign affairs, and they are addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and handed to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva during the presentation of credentials ceremony. Through a press release issued by the Information Service, the United Nations Office at Geneva then notifies the directors and/or secretaries-general of the specialized agencies concerned.
Protocol upon assumption of office of permanent representatives

3. Upon assumption of office by a permanent representative, the permanent mission should ask the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service in Geneva to make arrangements for the presentation of credentials. For the brief ceremony of presentation, the Chief of Protocol will accompany the permanent representative.

4. It is customary for a new permanent representative to send individual letters to other permanent representatives informing them that he has presented his credentials.

5. It is the practice for a new permanent representative to call on the directors and/or secretaries-general of specialized agencies and other international organizations to which he is accredited.

6. Given the large number of permanent missions in Geneva, it is left to the discretion of the permanent representative as to which colleagues he might wish to call upon. It is advisable to pay a visit to the Chairman of the Geneva Diplomatic Committee and to the Head of the Permanent Mission of the host country.

7. The Authorities of the Republic and Canton, as well as of the City of Geneva, appreciate courtesy calls by newly-arrived permanent representatives. However, given the large number of diplomatic and consular missions in Geneva, such courtesy calls are left entirely to the discretion of the newly-arrived permanent representative.


**Precedence**

8. (a) **United Nations:** Precedence among the Organization of the United Nations is the following: Secretary-General of the United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, UNDP, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNHCR, UNRWA, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNDCP, OHCHR, under-secretaries-general, assistant-secretaries-general, directors.

   (b) **Between permanent representatives accredited to the Geneva Office:** Precedence among permanent representatives who hold the rank of ambassador is determined by the date of presentation of credentials. Under the next category fall permanent representatives who do not hold the rank of ambassador; acting permanent representatives take precedence after permanent representatives, irrespective of their title, in accordance with their last nomination as such.

   (c) **Between permanent representatives accredited to the Geneva Office and the Permanent Representative of the host country:** Precedence can, by courtesy, be given to the latter.

   (d) **Between other members of permanent missions:** Precedence is determined by rank, and within each group (ambassadors, ministers and ministers counsellors, counsellors, etc.) according to date of arrival.

   (e) **Between permanent representatives and heads of secretariats of international organizations:** The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva takes precedence over permanent representatives;
Directors-general or secretaries-general of the specialized agencies should be given precedence over permanent representatives when invited by a permanent representative;

Precedence between directors-general and secretaries-general of specialized agencies is determined according to the date of the agreement between the specialized agency in question and the United Nations. Among the specialized agencies and international organizations, the precedence is as follows: ILO, FAO, UNESCO, ICAO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, UPU, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, IFAD, UNIDO, IAEA, and WTO. In social gatherings hosted by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva or by the directors-general or secretaries-general of the specialized agencies, it is the practice that the permanent representatives take precedence;

As to other intergovernmental organizations, their heads should be given precedence over permanent representatives when this is in the nature of the social gathering in question.

(f) Between permanent representatives and high officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross: The President of the ICRC takes precedence over permanent representatives; the latter take precedence over other officials of the ICRC.

(g) Between other members of permanent missions and international secretariats: Ambassadors who are not permanent representatives will rank above deputy directors-general or deputy secretaries-general of the specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations. Ministers who are not permanent representatives will rank above directors of division.
(h) **Between permanent representatives and other delegates attending conferences:** In social gatherings related to a conference, precedence among heads of delegation is determined either according to the alphabetical order of the countries represented, or in conformity with the established practice of the conference in question. Presiding officers may take precedence over other heads of delegation. In gatherings which are not related to a conference, precedence is given to permanent representatives.

(i) **Between permanent representatives and members of permanent missions, on the one hand, and Geneva Authorities, on the other:** Attention is drawn to the precedence recommended in the "Règlement concernant le Protocole", by the Republic and Canton of Geneva.

(j) **Additional remarks:** In social gatherings in honour of a given personality, the latter takes precedence over all other guests; in such cases, the fact should be mentioned while issuing invitations. In social gatherings organized by, or in connexion with, special bodies, their established practice prevails.

**Presence of permanent representatives at ceremonies, etc. organized by international organizations**

9. When permanent representatives are collectively invited to ceremonies, etc., rather than as members of national delegations, they should be collectively seated in an exclusively reserved area in the right forefront of the room, immediately after cabinet ministers and the like. Should this not prove to be possible for practical reasons, a similar arrangement might be made in another prominent part of the room. The Chief of Protocol or another high official of the inviting
organization might greet the permanent representatives at the entrance and see that they are ushered to their seats.

10. In a ceremony to which permanent representatives are invited collectively rather than as members of national delegations, and during which representatives of international organizations, local authorities, and the like, are seated on a podium, the possibility should be considered of inviting the Chairman of the Geneva Diplomatic Committee or, in his absence, one of the vice-chairmen, to the podium.

11. It is desirable that permanent representatives be given access to all meetings at which their country is represented, irrespective of whether they have been formally notified as members of delegations to such meetings.

**End of tenure of office of permanent representatives and members of permanent missions**

12. When a permanent representative relinquishes his post, the current practice is that he pay a farewell visit to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and to the directors and/or secretaries-general of the specialized agencies and other international organizations to which he is accredited and that he inform other permanent representatives, in writing, of his departure. The United Nations Office at Geneva correspondingly informs the Permanent Mission of the host country. Attention is also, *mutatis mutandis*, drawn to paragraph 7 above.

13. There is no institutionalized practice of farewell gifts from permanent representatives to a departing permanent representative.
**Temporary absences of permanent representatives**

14. Permanent missions must advise, in writing, the United Nations Office at Geneva and other permanent missions about temporary absences of permanent representatives, naming the member of the permanent mission in question who will be in charge.

**Changes in the diplomatic personnel of the permanent missions**

15. Permanent missions must advise the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service in Geneva of changes in the diplomatic personnel (arrivals, departures, official titles, promotions, etc.).