

The logo for the New York City Bar, featuring the text "NEW YORK CITY BAR" in a bold, serif font, centered between two horizontal blue bars.

# NEW YORK CITY BAR

## COMMITTEE ON UNITED NATIONS

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### **UN Committee Mission Statement**<sup>1</sup>

The New York City Bar Association's (City Bar) United Nations Committee (UN Committee) was formed to be the committee within the City Bar that addressed matters related to the United Nations. The UN Committee is situated within the City Bar's international cluster of committees, it serves several functions, and has numerous objectives that it aims to achieve through its work. This work takes various forms including written work product, hosting events, and disseminating information on United Nations-related matters to the New York City legal community and beyond. This mission statement will delineate the focus of the UN Committee's work and outline the objectives of the UN Committee, which will help shape the current and future work of the UN Committee.

As general guiding principles for our work, the UN Committee monitors developments at the United Nations and related agencies, advocates for the promotion of the rule of law and advancement of human, economic, and social rights within the United Nations system, and aids City Bar committees in addressing United Nations-related issues. The broad nature of the United Nations system means that much of the work of United Nations bodies and agencies addresses issues that are of relevance to not just the UN Committee, but also many other City Bar committees. As a result, the UN Committee serves as a liaison to keep the City Bar membership, and its respective committees, apprised of significant developments at the United Nations and their consequences. This is accomplished through different means, but one important vehicle for informing the City Bar membership and the broader New York City legal community of developments at the United Nations is through the UN Committee's bi-weekly newsletter, the UN Update. The UN Update is disseminated to over 3,000 recipients, which includes City Bar members and non-City Bar members.

The UN Committee's primary objective from an advocacy perspective is to advocate for the promotion of the rule of law and the advancement of human, economic, and social rights within the United Nations system. This means there are United Nations initiatives, entities, and institutions that are of particular relevance to our Committee. While supportive of and interested in the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 16, which promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions, is a natural fit for the UN Committee and is a central focus

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<sup>1</sup> The UN Committee mission statement is meant to be a continually evolving document that reflects the interests, passions, and objectives of the UN Committee membership.

of our work. The Committee, and the City Bar as a whole, aims to increase its efforts to promote SDG 16 as a means to achieve the objectives of the United Nations and to facilitate the realization of the 2030 agenda and other SDGs. The UN Committee closely follows the work of the United Nations' Sixth Committee, which addresses legal matters and international law, as well as the work of the International Law Commission. These institutions are essential to developing the foundations of international law in a variety of fields, from international humanitarian law to international commercial dispute resolution. Furthermore, the City Bar follows the work of the United Nations' primary judicial organ, the International Court of Justice. This body, which resolves disputes of a legal nature between United Nations Member States and issues advisory opinions on legal questions at the request of certain United Nations bodies, serves as an authoritative body in establishing international law; yet, its work often receives less coverage than it deserves. Finally, the City Bar and the UN Committee have consistently supported the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for the most serious of international crimes. This support is unwavering and the UN Committee will speak out against any manner of political interference to impede the work of the ICC.

The UN Committee established the position of a Primary Representative of the City Bar to the United Nations, which is filled by a non-chair member of the UN Committee. The position serves several functions, including enhancing the City Bar's presence at the United Nations, developing strategic networks within the United Nations system, and improving the ability of the City Bar to conduct advocacy and hold events on United Nations-related issues. The Primary Representative role will enhance the presence of the City Bar at the United Nations through attending meetings and events at the United Nations and, when appropriate, delivering oral statements on behalf of the City Bar. The Primary Representative aims to develop important strategic relationships with United Nations staff, agencies and bodies, and representatives of Member States. The ability of the UN Committee and the City Bar to conduct advocacy at the United Nations and host United Nations-related events is enhanced through developing a strategic network of United Nations contacts both utilizing its membership and linking to other civil society organizations, which furthers the partnering called-for in SDG 17.

While the City Bar, and its UN Committee, is comprised of lawyers, making legal matters the area of our expertise, the UN Committee does not constrain itself to addressing purely legal matters at the United Nations. The distinction between matters of law, politics, social and economic challenges, environmental concerns, development, and good governance at the United Nations are not generally clear-cut and, as a result, the UN Committee engages on issues that go beyond purely legal matters. The UN Committee seeks to conduct advocacy on a wide range of United Nations affairs, which will at times, require the Committee to take positions, informed by our legal backgrounds, on the policies of the United Nations and its Member States.

Ultimately, the specific issues addressed by the UN Committee are determined by the interests of the UN Committee membership and the most pressing current events on the international stage being addressed by the United Nations. The wide range of matters the United Nations engages on provides ample opportunity for the UN Committee to partner with other City Bar committees and collaborate with outside organizations, including other legal and non-legal civil society organizations. We hope that our efforts improve the respect for the rule of law within the international community, protect and advance human, economic, and social rights, and contribute to the well-being of communities around the world.