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UNBIS THESAURUS

UNITED NATIONS



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UNITED NATIONS BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (UNBIS)

UNBIS THESAURUS

**List of terms used in indexing and cataloguing
of documents and other materials
relevant to United Nations programmes and activities**



UNITED NATIONS
New York, 1981

Preface

The construction of the UNBIS Thesaurus completes a major phase in the development of the United Nations Bibliographic Information System, UNBIS. As the principal information search and retrieval tool, the Thesaurus aims at:

- a. Providing a consolidated list of terms and modifiers suitable for subject analysis in bibliographic activities throughout the United Nations;
- b. Ensuring clarity and simplicity in subject headings based on contemporary usage while allowing for expansion in a consistent manner;
- c. Establishing compatibility and alignment with thesauri used within the United Nations system of organizations in order to facilitate the creation of an indexing vocabulary suitable for international documentation.

In the development of the Thesaurus, the primary thrust was toward co-ordination and compatibility. A second, but not less important goal was the unification of indexing and cataloguing concepts within UNBIS and its sub-systems. To this end, the Library used the classification scheme developed by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), which reflects the programmes and activities of all United Nations organizations, for the arrangement of the Thesaurus. However, the ACC programme classification was modified in order to accommodate the needs of UNBIS. In addition, the Library participated fully in the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems' (IOB) efforts in compiling the list of *Broad Terms for United Nations Programmes and Activities*. While subject headings from the *Broad Terms* were incorporated into the Thesaurus, the preponderance of terms was drawn from subject headings found in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's public catalogue, its document catalogue and in the UNDEX and UNDOC published subject indexes.

The Thesaurus links the UNBIS data bases generated from input of a.) United Nations documents and publications, b.) external (non-UN) materials received from governmental or commercial sources, and c.) sub-systems which are either operational or under development at Headquarters in New York, at the Geneva Library and at the libraries of the regional commissions.

In the process, the UNBIS Thesaurus has become more than an essential tool for harmonization and maintenance of terminological control for input and retrieval of information from the system. It also provides in both printed form and in an on-line mode, a frame of reference for the researcher exploring United Nations documentation. It reveals the scope, breadth and language of United Nations activities. The Thesaurus structure, via the categorization scheme, term relationships, hierarchies and scope notes, serves as a vehicle for structuring reference requests dealing, on the one hand, with the parliamentary literature of the United Nations and reports of special committees, agencies and programme oriented conferences, and, on the other hand, with commercially published literature in serial and monographic form.

It is essential to view a thesaurus as a work "in process". This is particularly true of a first edition. The Library is aware of the need for testing and critical examination of the work and calls for review and response to any omissions, redundancies or errors that may exist. The initial publication will be in English only. However, a revised edition containing French and Spanish equivalents to the main terms will follow and will incorporate suggestions made in response to the initial printing. Subsequently, separate French and Spanish editions will be issued. Translation into Arabic, Chinese and Russian is dependent upon computer capability to handle entries in these languages.

While the efforts of the UNBIS Thesaurus Group are worthy of mention, a special note of appreciation should be directed to the consultant, Mrs. Rochelle Field and to Ms. Phyllis Dickstein, leader of the Group, for their excellent work. Thanks are also due to the systems staff of the Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Division for their generous co-operation and advice in preparing the Thesaurus programmes.

List of Abbreviations

I - General

ACC	Administrative Committee on Co-ordination
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOB	Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems
KWOC	Keyword out of context
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SPINES	Science and Technology Policies Information Exchange System (UNESCO)
UNBIS	United Nations Bibliographic Information System
UNDEX	United Nations Documents Index
UNDOC	United Nations Documents Index
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

II - Thesaurus entry abbreviations

BT:	Broader term(s)
NT:	Narrower term(s)
RT:	Related term(s)
SN:	Scope note
UF:	Used for
TT:	Top term

Introduction

Organization

The Thesaurus is multidisciplinary in scope, reflecting the complex nature of the programmes and activities of the United Nations. Among the subjects covered are: political affairs and international relations, disarmament, international trade, economic and social development, agriculture, education, employment, health, housing, industry, science, social issues and technology.

While all of the major thesauri of the United Nations system were examined thoroughly, a wide array of other thesauri, encyclopedias and dictionaries were also consulted. (A bibliography of reference sources is appended). In selecting a preferred term among synonyms and quasi-synonyms, preference was usually given to the thesaurus that represented the greatest expertise in the specific subject area. Thus, the OECD Macrothesaurus served as the guide in economics and related fields, the UNESCO Thesaurus was used for education and culture, the SPINES Thesaurus was of invaluable assistance for science and technology and the ILO Thesaurus yielded terms in labour and employment; the *Medical Subject Headings* of the U.S. National Library of Medicine served as the major reference source in the area of health. It is hoped that other organizations in the United Nations system will undertake a similar alignment for terms in their thesauri and in this way contribute to the establishment of an interorganization indexing vocabulary.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library's sizeable collection of legal materials is reflected in the Thesaurus subcategories devoted to national and international law, international trade law and law of the sea. Library of Congress subject headings and United Nations legal texts provided guidelines for these subcategories, which were also reviewed by the Library's legal reference experts. Proper names as such have been excluded from the Thesaurus. However, selected intergovernmental organizations have been included in order to assist the reader in his queries. For each intergovernmental organization listed in the Thesaurus, component member States are identified.

The Thesaurus has been arranged in five sections: 1) an alphabetic list, 2) a list of modifiers, 3) a categorized list of terms, 4) a hierarchical list of terms, and 5) a KWOC (Keyword out of context) index.

The alphabetic section displays each term in its complete configuration which includes scope notes, "use" or "used for" references, as well as broader, narrower and related terms. The descriptor configuration includes, in addition to the immediately broader term, the top of the hierarchy to which a term belongs. This feature serves as a key to the hierarchical list of terms.

e.g. Physics
BT: Physical sciences
TT: Science and technology

All cross references, with the exception of the top term, are reciprocal:

1. For each broader term there is a narrower term
2. For each related term there is a reciprocally related term
3. For each "use" reference there is a "used for" reference.

The list of modifiers incorporates most of the IOB “general and administrative terms” and the Library of Congress subdivisions needed in cataloguing as well as the modifiers essential to indexing of United Nations documents.

The categorized display identifies the subcategories by title and displays all terms contained in that subcategory in alphabetical order. Most term relationships are not shown; however, scope notes and “use” references are included.

The hierarchical list indicates, in descending sequence, the array of terms considered conceptually narrower than the top term of each hierarchy. Not all terms in the Thesaurus appear in the hierarchies since broader terms were not automatically assigned to each term.

The KWOC display provides an index to the alphabetic and categorized sections of the Thesaurus. In this list, each descriptor phrase or term is listed alphabetically according to each word in the phrase so that “environmental impact assessment”, for example, will appear in the KWOC list three times, once under each word in the phrase. The number of the category in which the term appears is also displayed.

Geographic descriptors, organizational names and modifiers did not receive the same type of source coding as the topical descriptors. United Nations sources were the primary authority for these terms.

Style

The descriptors consist of single word or multiword terms in the plural noun form. Abbreviations and acronyms were not used as preferred terms unless a particular abbreviation or acronym had gained general acceptance through usage.

e.g. LSD
UF: Lysergic acid diethylamide

Natural word order was preferred to inverted word order and parenthetical qualifiers were used sparingly. The use of punctuation was minimal, and United Nations spelling conventions were followed.

In most cases, near and quasi-synonyms were posted to preferred terms in order to prevent ambiguities in indexing and retrieval. In addition, specific terms were occasionally posted to more inclusive concepts when the needs of UNBIS did not warrant differentiation between the concepts in question:

e.g. Agricultural pests
USE: Pests
Greenbelts
USE: Open spaces

Other systems using the UNBIS Thesaurus may wish to expand certain categories by giving full term status to nonpreferred terms of this type as well as by including as many additional specialized terms as may be needed.

New Terms

An UNBIS Thesaurus Committee is scheduled to meet regularly to evaluate proposed terms, determine if they are truly required and indicate the appropriate category assignment, relationships, etc. The computer programmes for the Thesaurus permit frequent updating and contain editing procedures as well as procedures for establishing reciprocal relationships.

Deletion of descriptors

Annual frequency counts will display a term's usage. The record format contains a field for a history note so that indication can be made in subsequent editions when a term is dropped or altered or an alternative term is added in its place.

Term Relationships

"Broader" and "narrower" relationships were established quite rigorously. However, in the case of "related terms", particularly outside the realm of the hard sciences, an attempt was made to suggest a wide variety of relationships.

Co-ordination of topical descriptors

1. Topical descriptor and corporate body or proper name

The corporate body appears first.

- e.g. North Atlantic Treaty Organization:
 organizational change
 Economic Commission for Europe: treaties

2. Country names and topical descriptors

Subject headings containing place names are entered in the system and stored with the topical descriptor first. The computer programmes have been designed to reverse the subject headings in the printed indexes so that they appear twice.

- e.g. Uganda: economic projections
 Economic projections: Uganda
 Africa: development planning
 Development planning: Africa

3. Subject headings of two or more topical descriptors

- a. When the subject headings represents a person, object, field of study, etc. and a related action or process, the process descriptor should be placed in the secondary position.

- e.g. Aging persons: social planning
 Commodities: price indexes
 Industrial development: mathematical models
 Transnational corporations: tax credits
 Vegetables: export promotion
 Exiles: political opposition

- b. If the descriptors are of equal weight, place the specific term before the more general descriptor.

- e.g. Mass communication: social development

Modifiers

In a subject heading, modifiers normally appear last, and may modify a topical descriptor, a place name, a corporate body or a proper name. If the modifier appears after a place name, the entry is not reversed.

- e.g. Puerto Rico: status

The list of modifiers can be characterized as containing one of six possible characteristics:

1. Modifiers that imply a process relevant to a topical descriptor

e.g. Remote sensing: agricultural applications
Space technology: industrial applications

2. Modifiers which amplify topical descriptors, place names and/or corporate bodies

e.g. Narcotic drugs: illicit traffic
United Nations: host country relations

3. Modifiers which must be preceded by a corporate body or country name as the main heading and followed by a country name or corporate name in the prepositional modifier phrase

e.g. admission to...
participation in...
representation of...
i.e. Zimbabwe: admission to UN
Palestine Liberation Organization: participation
in SC

4. Modifiers which clarify a corporate body entry and may or may not be followed by a comma and date (or, occasionally, ordinal number). These terms are followed by three dots to indicate that addition of variable information is permissible.

e.g. work programme...
report...
meetings...
i.e. Commission on Human Rights: work programme, 1981
Committee on Contributions: report, 35th

5. Modifiers which may be preceded by the name or acronym of a corporate body within the context of the modifier phrase will contain a scope note with this information.

e.g. activities...
SN: May be preceded by the name or acronym of an
intergovernmental organization when the main term is
a topical descriptor

6. Modifiers which must contain a date will be followed by three dots indicating variable information should follow. A scope note will indicate that a date is mandatory.

e.g. Treaty...
SN: Date mandatory
Convention...
SN: Date mandatory

The convention of utilizing three dots to create open ended modifiers was adopted for two reasons:

1. The parliamentary literature of the United Nations demands flexible modifiers which can indicate time, place and nature of activity.

2. UNBIS includes a subject heading authority file, which will permit editing of headings as the file is updated. The use of open ended modifiers will permit computer matching of the headings with the Thesaurus to the point of the variable information.

Category outline

01. POLITICAL AFFAIRS

- 01.01.00 Political Conditions, Institutions, Movements
- 01.02.00 International Relations
- 01.03.00 Maintenance of Peace and Security
- 01.04.00 Disarmament and Military Questions
- 01.05.00 Decolonization, Trusteeship and Apartheid
- 01.06.01 Current Political Questions
- 01.06.02 Historical Questions
- 01.07.00 General and National Law
- 01.07.01 International Law
- 01.07.02 International Trade Law
- 01.07.03 Law of the Sea
- 01.07.04 Law of War

02. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

- 02.01.00 Economic Theory
- 02.02.00 Economic Conditions
- 02.03.00 Special Economic Areas
- 02.04.00 Development
- 02.05.00 Public Administration
- 02.06.01 Public Finance
- 02.06.02 Taxation
- 02.07.00 Statistics
- 02.08.00 Consumers and Co-operatives
- 02.09.00 Transnational Corporations
- 02.10.00 Development Finance
- 02.11.00 Banking and Investment
- 02.12.00 Monetary Issues

03. NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- 03.01.01 Geography
- 03.01.02 Cartography
- 03.01.03 Land Forms and Ecosystems
- 03.02.00 Resources (General)
- 03.03.00 Environment
- 03.04.00 Pollution
- 03.05.00 Water
- 03.06.00 Land, Plant and Soil Resources
- 03.07.00 Wildlife
- 03.08.00 Marine Resources
- 03.09.00 Mineral Resources
- 03.10.00 Energy Resources

04. AGRICULTURE

- 04.01.01 Agricultural Economics and Policy; Rural Sociology
- 04.01.02 Agricultural Sciences, Engineering and Education
- 04.02.01 Crop Management
- 04.02.02 Crops
- 04.03.00 Livestock
- 04.04.00 Fisheries
- 04.05.00 Forestry
- 04.06.00 Pest Management

05.	INDUSTRY
05.00.00	Industry and Commerce (General)
05.01.01	Industrial Development Support Services
05.01.02	Industrial Property
05.02.00	Management
05.03.00	Manufacturing and Mining Industries and Products
05.04.00	Chemical Industry and Pharmaceuticals
05.05.00	Construction Industry and Engineering
05.06.00	Electronics and Power Industries
05.07.00	Food Industry
05.08.00	Insurance
05.09.00	Tourism and Related Services
05.10.00	Waste Disposal
06.	TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
06.01.01	Transport Policy and Planning
06.01.02	Transport Operations
06.02.00	Air Transport
06.03.00	Land Transport
06.04.00	Water Transport and Shipping
06.05.00	Postal Services
06.06.00	Telecommunication
07.	INTERNATIONAL TRADE
07.00.00	Trade (General Materials)
07.01.00	General International Trade and Trade Policy
07.02.01	Trade in Commodities
07.02.02	Commodities
07.03.00	Trade in Manufactures; Barriers to Trade
07.04.00	Trade Promotion, Facilitation and Customs Administration
07.05.00	Trade Related Finance
08.	POPULATION
08.01.00	Population Dynamics
08.02.00	Family Planning
08.03.01	Special Groups
08.03.02	National Groups
09.	HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
09.01.00	Settlement Planning
09.02.00	Housing
10.	HEALTH
10.01.00	Food and Nutrition
10.02.00	Comprehensive Health Services
10.03.01	Disease Prevention and Control
10.03.02	Diseases and Carriers of Diseases
10.04.00	Environmental Health
10.05.00	The Disabled
10.06.01	Medical Practice
10.06.02	Medical Sciences
11.	EDUCATION
11.01.00	Educational Policy and Planning
11.02.00	Educational Facilities and Technology
11.03.00	Educational Systems
11.04.00	Nonformal Education
11.05.00	Educational Personnel and Population

- 12. EMPLOYMENT**
 - 12.01.00 Employment Promotion and Planning
 - 12.02.00 Skills Development
 - 12.03.00 Conditions of Employment
 - 12.04.00 Labour Relations
 - 12.05.00 Occupations and Special Categories of Workers
- 13. HUMANITARIAN AID AND RELIEF**
 - 13.01.00 Protection of and Assistance to Refugees and Displaced Persons
 - 13.02.00 Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Relief
 - 13.03.00 Special Humanitarian Operations
- 14. SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND EQUITY**
 - 14.01.00 Advancement of Women
 - 14.02.01 Discrimination
 - 14.02.02 Human Rights
 - 14.03.00 Disadvantaged Groups
 - 14.04.01 Narcotic Drugs
 - 14.04.02 Crime and Criminal Justice
 - 14.05.01 Social Science Disciplines and Methodologies
 - 14.05.02 Psychology
 - 14.05.03 Social Development
 - 14.05.04 Welfare and Social Services
 - 14.06.00 Genealogy
- 15. CULTURE**
 - 15.01.01 Language
 - 15.01.02 Art, Literature and Music
 - 15.02.00 Protection of Intellectual and Cultural Property
 - 15.03.00 Philosophy and Religion
 - 15.04.00 Communication and Mass Media
 - 15.05.00 Documentation, Library and Information Sciences and Reference Works
 - 15.06.00 Leisure, Recreation and Sports
- 16. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**
 - 16.01.00 Development and Transfer of Technology and Promotion of Science
 - 16.02.00 Computer Science and Technology
 - 16.03.00 Earth Sciences
 - 16.04.00 Hydrology and Oceanography
 - 16.05.00 Life Sciences
 - 16.06.00 Mathematics
 - 16.07.00 Meteorology
 - 16.08.00 Nuclear Science
 - 16.09.00 Astronomy, Chemistry and Physics
 - 16.10.00 Space Sciences
- 17. GEOGRAPHICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTORS**
 - 17.01.00 Africa
 - 17.02.00 The Americas
 - 17.03.01 Asia
 - 17.03.02 Oceania
 - 17.04.00 Europe
 - 17.05.00 Western Asia and the Middle East
 - 17.06.00 Polar Regions
 - 17.07.01 Special Economic and Political Groups
 - 17.07.02 Organizations of the United Nations System
 - 17.08.01 Oceans and Seas
 - 17.08.02 Major International Lakes and Rivers
 - 17.08.03 International Mountain Ranges
- 18. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE TERMS AND MODIFIERS**

Table of source codes

B - IOB List of Broad Terms

D - UNBIS System

1.Dag Hammarskjold Library Catalogue

2.Documents Collection

3.UNDOC

4.UNDEX

F - FAO Index Terms

I - UNIDO Thesaurus

L - ILO Thesaurus

M - Macrothesaurus

P - Population Multilingual Thesaurus

Population/Family Planning Thesaurus

S - Spines Thesaurus

U - UNESCO Thesaurus

Examples from Thesaurus

Alphabetical List

Example 1

	MANPOWER	<i>Descriptor</i>
Category	12.01.00 BDILMU	<i>Sources</i>
Used For	UF: LABOUR FORCE	<i>Forbidden term</i>
Broader Term	BT: HUMAN RESOURCES	
Narrower Term	NT: HEALTH MANPOWER	
Related Term	RT: LABOUR MANPOWER NEEDS POPULATION PRODUCTIVE LIFE SPAN	
Top Term	TT: HUMAN RESOURCES	

Example 2

	LABOUR FORCE	<i>Forbidden term</i>
Category	12.01.00 D	<i>Source</i>
Reference to:	USE: MANPOWER	<i>Descriptor</i>

Example 3

	PATTERNS OF TRADE	<i>Descriptor</i>
Category	07.01.00 D	<i>Source</i>
Scope Note	SN: Generally used with respect to specific countries, types of countries or regions	

Example 4

Descriptor	INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL ARBITRATION 01.07.02 DB BT: COMMERCIAL ARBITRATION RT: ARBITRAL AWARDS INTERNATIONAL TRADE
Top Term	TT: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

Categorized List

Example 5

Category	01.02.00 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	<i>Title</i>
	BALANCE OF POWER	<i>Descriptors in this category</i>
	
	
	
	ZONES OF PEACE	

Hierarchical list

Example 6

(see also example 4)

2nd and 3rd level

descriptors

DISPUTE SETTLEMENT *Top Term*

. ARBITRATION

. . COMMERCIAL ARBITRATION

. . . INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL
ARBITRATION

KWOC Index

Example 7

Category

TECHNOLOGY *Keyword*

18.00.00 SPACE TECHNOLOGY
APPLICATIONS

16.01.00 TECHNOLOGY

16.01.00 TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

05.06.00 VACUUM TECHNOLOGY

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