

**UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat and to the Funds and Programs and has the honor to refer to circular diplomatic note number HC-60-02 (attached) of November 13, 2002 concerning the definition of family members.

As indicated in the referenced note, it has long been an accepted principle of international law that the privileges and immunities to which members of the diplomatic community are entitled extend, to a certain degree, to the members of their families forming part of their households. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (Article 37(1)) specifies the privileges and immunities which shall be accorded such “members of the family of a diplomatic agent forming part of [the] household” but does not provide a definition of the term “members of the family” for the purposes of the Convention. The drafters of the Convention recognized that the concept of “family” differs among the societies of the world and left the matter to be resolved according to the standards of the respective receiving States.

The United Nations is informed that, in addition to the categories of individuals previously accepted as family members, the United States Department of State has determined that the definition of “family” forming part of the household of a member of

**DI PL O M A T I C   N O T E**

the diplomatic community may include same-sex domestic partners (“domestic partners”) for the purposes of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in the United States. In accordance with guidance from the White House, the Department of State is not in a position to accept the accreditation and registration of opposite-sex domestic partners as members of the family.

In order to be eligible for acceptance as a domestic partner of an official of the United Nations, a domestic partner must not be a member of some other household, must reside regularly in the household of the principal, and must be recognized by the United Nations as a family member forming part of the household of the principal, as demonstrated by eligibility for United Nations rights and benefits. Therefore, when notifying the United States Mission of domestic partners of its officials, the United Nations is requested to submit appropriate documentation that it recognizes the domestic partner relationship, which could include evidence that it provided the domestic partner with documentation to that effect, or with travel or other allowances. Domestic partners of officials of the United Nations accepted by the United States Mission or the Department of State should be eligible for G-4 visas.

In addition, the Department of State intends to pursue the legal measures necessary to enable the United States to offer dependent employment to domestic partners of United Nations officials in the context of the dependent employment arrangement currently in place. The United Nations Secretariat will be advised of any such developments as soon as it is possible to do so.

The attention of the United Nations Secretariat is also drawn to the applicable provisions of international law in respect of the termination of status. Whenever any person who has been accorded status as a member of the family in the United States (other than a student attending boarding school or college) ceases to reside with the principal, such person immediately ceases to be a member of the family. Accordingly, all privileges and immunities, if any, to which such person previously had been entitled in the United States would terminate thirty days thereafter unless in a particular case a shorter time has been specified by the United States Mission.

The United Nations Secretariat is advised that until the Department of State publications are revised to incorporate “domestic partners” as members of the family of a member of the United Nations diplomatic community forming part of the household, references to family members in the context of privileges and immunities and related matters should be understood to include domestic partners as described herein. It is emphasized that the standard set forth in this note is to define members of the family for officials of the United Nations and is without prejudice to other definitions of family for other purposes which have an independent basis in international agreements or United States domestic law.

The United States Mission to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the United Nations Secretariat and the Funds and Programs the assurances of its highest consideration.