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Scientific report

## Psychological Science at the United Nations: Historical Trends

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**Abstract.** Since the United Nations was formed by 51 nations on June 26, 1945, psychology organizations were slow to register with the UN as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the past 75 years. This essay briefly describes the four-stage history of psychology NGOs at the United Nations, which have grown far more active and coordinated since 2004.

**Key words:** international psychology, United Nations, NGOs, Psychology Coalition (PCUN)

Since the United Nations formed in 1945, it has reached out to “civil society” for experts to help in its global work. How have psychological scientists become involved in the work of the United Nations over 75 years? This historical analysis identifies a 4-stage evolution: moving from individual scientists like Otto Klineberg in UNESCO in the 1950s, to the new Psychology Coalition (PCUN) in 2010.

1. **Prehistory.** Starting in 1945, distinguished individuals were involved with agencies – such as Otto Klineberg (Figure 1) with UNESCO (Hollander, 2005). But unlike other fields such as economics and social work, psychology organizations were slow to affiliate with the UN for almost half a century.

2. **NGOs.** In 1976, the Association of Women in Psychology (AWP) became the first of a few psychology NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) to affiliate with the U.N. DPI (Department of Public Information) or EcoSoc (Economic and Social Council) (Takooshian, & Shahinian, 2008). This was closely followed by the International Council of Psychologists in 1981 (Sapir, Sandis, & Gell, 2000). Over half of the 19 current psychology NGOs affiliated with the UN after 1997 (see Table).

3. **Coordination.** Starting on 1 April 2004 at Pace University, some of these psychology NGOs began to coordinate their activities, involving about 60 psychologists in 8 groups at the U.N. (Figure 2).

With a generous mini-grant from Merry Bullock, the incoming Director of the APA Office of International Affairs (OIA), the New York group of the APA



Division of International Psychology published a roster of UN psychologists (Takooshian, 2005). From 2004 till 2010, Fordham hosted 7 gatherings each September with the annual UN – NGO conference. Since 2007, the UN building also hosted an annual “Psychology Day at the UN.”



**Figure 1.** Prehistory, 1945–1976: Individual psychologists at the UN: first line (from left to right): Otto Klineberg, MD, PhD; Harry Stack Sullivan, MD; Charles E. Osgood, PhD; second line (from left to right): Edwin P. Hollander, PhD; Roger W. Russell, PhD; Herbert C. Kelman, PhD; third line (from left to right): Irving L. Janis, PhD; Morton Deutsch, PhD; Raymond D. Fowler, PhD

Table

Organization	Formed	NGO	Website
* <b>APA:</b> American Psychological Association	1892	1999	www.apa.org
<b>IPA:</b> International Psychoanalytic Association Trust	1910	1998	www.ipa.org.uk
* <b>IAAP:</b> International Association of Applied Psychology	1920	2003	www.iaapsy.org
<b>IAQ:</b> International Orthopsychiatric Association	1924	1999	www.amerortho.org
* <b>SPSSI:</b> Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues	1936	1991	www.spssi.org
* <b>ICP:</b> International Council of Psychologists	1941	1981	www.icpweb.org
* <b>SIOP:</b> Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology	1945	2011	www.siop.org
<b>WAWI:</b> William Alanson White Institute	1946		www.wawhite.org
<b>WFMH:</b> World Federation for Mental Health	1948	1963	www.wfmh.org

Table, ending

Organization	Formed	NGO	Website
*IUPsyS: International Union of Psychological Sciences	1951	1998	www.iupsys.org
AWP: Association for Women in Psychology	1969	1976	www.awpsych.org
IOA: International Ontopsychology Association	1978	1999	www.ontopsicologia.org
ISPA: International School Psychology Association	1982	2004	www.ispaweb.org
ISTSS: International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies	1985	1993	www.istss.org
*EHPS: European Health Psychology Society	1986	2015	www.ehps.net
IFTA: International Family Therapy Association	1987	1999	www.ifta-familytherapy.org
*IMCES: Institute for Multicultural Counseling & Education Services	1989	2010	www.imces.org
*ATOP: Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention	1990	2009	www.meaningfulworld.com
WCP: World Council for Psychotherapy	1995	2003	www.worldpsyche.org

Note. \* – 9 of 19 UN Psychology NGOs in PCUN in 2019.



Figure 2. On 1 April 2004, the first gathering of psychology NGOs at Pace University



Figure 3. In 2018, a monthly meeting of PCUN, the Psychology Coalition of NGOs Accredited at the United Nations

4. **Coalition.** Starting in 2010, the Psychology Coalition at the UN (PCUN) formed as an umbrella group with formal bylaws and membership, which now numbers over 100 psychologists and student interns representing nine of 19 psychology NGOs (Figure 3). The mission of psychology is commonly divided into five parts: science, practice, education, consultation, and advocacy. Clearly, psychological *science* must be basic to the other four parts. Though all five parts are now represented at the United Nations, the trend has shifted from advocacy to more a diverse range of activities, including evidence-based research addressing the United Nations' 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015, and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

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### Notes

**EcoSoc:** <http://csonet.org/content/documents/e2013inf6.pdf>

**DPI:** <http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/login.do>

**PCUN:** <https://psychologycoalitionun.org/>

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## Психологическая наука в Организации Объединенных Наций: четыре исторических этапа

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**Аннотация.** С тех пор как 75 лет назад, 26 июня 1945 года, представители 51 страны образовали Организацию Объединенных Наций, психологические организации не спешили регистрироваться в ООН в качестве неправительственных организаций (НПО). В этом репортаже кратко описывается четырехэтапная история возникновения и развития психологических неправительственных организаций в ООН, которые стали более активными и скоординированными с 2004 года.

**Ключевые слова:** международная психология, Организация Объединенных Наций, неправительственные организации, психологическая коалиция в ООН

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