



## 14 HOW TO Find Treaties

### Introduction

This guide will help you locate the texts of treaties. The Law Society Library holds treaties to which the UK is a party. For an explanation of treaty terms refer to *Bowman & Harris on Multilateral Treaties* (Bay G6) or the website of the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \[archived content\]](#)

### Library holdings

UK treaties are normally published as Command Papers, which the Law Society holds on microfiche from 1801 onwards. Use the indexes (listed below) in order to find out the Command Paper number. Some treaties may appear as appendices in textbooks or in collections of treaties. The Law Society Library holds

- *Brownlie, Basic documents on human rights*. 5th ed. (2006) (library stores – ask staff)
- *Shawcross & Beaumont on Air law*. 4th ed. (looseleaf) (Bay 23)
- *Simons Taxes*, 5th ed. (looseleaf) (for double taxation treaties involving the UK) (Bay 23)
- *Tweeddale, Arbitration of commercial disputes* (2005) (Bay 4)

### Indexes

***Parry's Index to British Treaties*** (Bi-lateral and Multi-lateral treaties 4 volumes) (Bay G6)

You can use this to find UK bilateral or multi-lateral treaties. It covers 1101-1988. It is arranged by date of signature and includes a list of sources. There are also subject and country indexes.

**Index to Treaty Series 1968-2012** (UK Bi-lateral and Multi-lateral treaties) (Bay G6)

***Bowman & Harris, Multi-lateral treaties*** (plus supplement) (Bay G6)

This can be used to trace multi-lateral treaties, whether or not the UK has ratified them. It contains most treaties likely to be encountered in practice from 1856 to 1994. It is arranged by date of signature and includes a list of sources. There is a subject index and an index based on key words in the treaty title.

**Index to House of Commons Parliamentary Papers CD-ROM (1801 – 2006/07)**

Library staff can use this to look up treaties by subject when the year or exact title is not known. It is also needed to find the Command Paper number, microfiche number and volume and page number of Command Papers dated before 1979.

### Internet

#### Public Information Online

The library has a subscription to this database, which contains Command Papers from 1919 onwards. It can be accessed in the library, or library staff can use it to find a Command paper.

#### UK Treaties Online

The [UKTO](#) service enables you to access details of over 14,000 treaties involving the UK. You can research the existence of treaties, find important information about them (such as the place and date of signature and entry into force date) and see which states or organisations participate in them.

#### Treaty Series 2013 to present and selected non-treaty Command Papers

The [Treaty Series](#) gives access to all Command Papers published in the UK Treaty Series from 2013 to the present.

### Checking the status and parties to a treaty



## For Multilateral Treaties

If the treaty was concluded before 1983, check *Bowman & Harris* 1984 volume (Bay G6) using the subject index or the chronological list. Update your treaty using *Bowman & Harris* 1995 volume Part B. If your treaty was concluded after June 1983 check *Bowman & Harris*, Part A of the 1995 volume.

## For UK Bilateral and Multilateral

You can also use *Parry's Index to British Treaties 1101-1988* (4 volumes) (Bay G6) for UK treaties: Volume 1 to find a bilateral treaty by country or subject, or multilateral treaty by subject for 1101-1968. Volume 2 (1101-1925) and Volume 3 (1926-1968) contains a Chronological List of Treaties, giving details of the place, date of signature, entry into force, parties and termination (where applicable). Volume 4 (Part I) use to update (to 1988) any entry found in Volume 2 or 3. Volume 4 (Part II) use the index at the back to trace a treaty from 1968-1988.

## Recent Status Information

The sources listed above are increasingly limited by date of publication. The status of treaties is constantly changing, it is advisable to update any information found in *Bowman & Harris* and *Parry's Index*. For recent UK status information you will need to contact the Treaty Enquiry Section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: 020 7008 1109 Email: [treatypublicenquiries@fco.gov.uk](mailto:treatypublicenquiries@fco.gov.uk)

For recent status information for other countries contact the relevant depositary government or organisation. This information is usually indicated in the final provisions of the treaty. *Bowman & Harris* also lists depositaries. Some depositaries publish treaty texts and status information on the internet. If using the internet for treaty research ensure that the site is authoritative and the status information is current.

## Preparatory materials

For every treaty preparatory documents exist. Only a limited number are published, usually by the depositary concerned. Obtaining material from a depositary is unlikely to be a quick process.

## Useful websites

FCO Treaty Section  
UN Treaty Collection

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-treaties>  
<https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Home.aspx?clang=en>