WHY A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF SGs of IOs?
The IO BIO Project aims at setting up, editing, and publishing a Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations (IO BIO). Secretaries-General (SGs) – or other executive heads with different titles – of International Organizations (IOs) are the chief executives and representatives of international bureaucracies that vary in size and shape. This position has standing within International Relations theory and a wider public knows many IO personalities for their roles in international politics. However, there is still a gap in our understanding of the people in these posts, both individually and collectively, in terms of who they are and how they affect the performance of IOs, as organizations and in international relations. The biographical literature on SGs is limited, giving an incomplete picture of the variety of people who have held these positions and the interactions between them. To overcome this shortcoming, a biographical dictionary of SGs of IOs is needed to provide short, but informative biographies of individual SGs and descriptions and analyses of the social and professional connections of these individuals (group analyses or prosopographies).

A Biographical Dictionary, Rather Than a ‘Who is Who’
A biographical dictionary is a book, or a series of volumes, published in print and/or online, that attempts to cover the major personalities who share certain characteristics, such as representing an IO, by collecting short biographies of these individuals. Articles are ordered alphabetically by entry name, beginning with the personal name under which the individual is entered.

The IO BIO Project is not set up as a ‘Who is Who in IOs’, but as a biographical dictionary with ‘short biographies’ or ‘mini-sized portraits’. A biographical dictionary, such as IO BIO, and a ‘Who is Who’ both provide personal and professional data about the people making and carrying out decisions in certain arenas, in this case, IOs. While the information provided by a ‘Who is Who’ remains restricted in various cases, at other times ‘Who is Who’s’ offer large enumerations of functions and responsibilities. There are two main differences between IO BIO as a biographical dictionary and a ‘Who is Who’:

a) Rather than including all persons holding a significant position in an IO, the IO BIO includes a selection of principal actors among the SGs or other executive heads in a similar position but with different titles, who are the chief executives and representatives of international bureaucracies.

b) Rather than providing a catalogue of mere biographical details, all entries about the individuals are descriptions written according to scientific standards, with entries providing biographical data, a balanced account of life and work, as well as references. These entries highlight the SGs’ contributions to their profession, their IO, and international relations as a whole.

Most ‘Who is Who’s’ only include living persons, while most biographical dictionaries only include deceased persons, following the general rule that a life must be complete before it can be described.

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1 This document is an updated version of the previous ‘Invitation to Join the IO BIO Project’; the text also reflects the background paper ‘Improving Knowledge of International Organization Leadership: Secretaries-General as Individuals and Groups in IO BIO’ discussed by a roundtable at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Diego, 2 April 2012 (available at the IO BIO Documents page).
and assessed in a biographical dictionary. Although IO BIO’s original point of departure was to only include deceased SGs, the Editors have approved the inclusion of non-deceased SGs who have been out of office for five years or more and most probably will not return in office as SG. The two main reasons for this deviation from the general rule of biographical dictionaries are the large availability of expertise on SGs who are still alive and the fact that our understanding of the group of SGs will remain restricted when quite a few of them are left out for the moment.

Short Biographies of Individuals
Short biographies between one and eight book pages in length aim to present an accurate and coherent description of the lives that are selected in a biographical dictionary, despite the restricted number of words in a dictionary. The genre of the biographical dictionary, with short biographies of individuals whose performance contributed to the public sphere, dates back to the 19th century, although older examples exist. While the appeal of ‘great persons’ has remained a crucial component of biography as an art, scholarly explanation has become more important, with ‘modern biography’ producing more or less coherent lives representing complex personalities as part of, and contributing to, their time. The descriptions are based on a combination of both primary and secondary sources, including private information.

The combination of descriptions of individual lives in the IO BIO also produces a group dimension. This prosopographical dimension results from the fact that the biographical dictionary combines the lives of people, who live in roughly the same time periods and meet each other, often coalesce together, and quarrel or clash in actions and/or on policies. Thus, the IO BIO Project encourages authors to pay attention to the social and professional connections of SGs, their interactions, and other ‘group’ aspects.

Making Sense from Two Perspectives
The IO BIO Project hence makes sense from two perspectives. First, it makes sense from the perspective of individuals. We learn more about people leading an IO and playing roles in international politics as representatives of their IO. By getting to know these functionaries better, we also learn more about the working of their institutions. Taken together, the entries provide a useful reference with regard to international civil servants and the leadership of international bureaucracies.

Secondly, IO BIO makes sense from the group perspective, as we learn more about the group of SGs, in particular about their origin and background (diplomats, politicians, military, civil society, other); their training and previous careers; their ideas and visions on international relations, conflict and cooperation; their career development (during and after a SGship); their contacts with other SGs and with others (such as heads of state and government, national bureaucrats, and civil society representatives); and their behaviour as SGs in international politics. Taken together, the entries allow analyses of the entire group of SGs, and of subgroups of them.

Online Project and Editors
For the time being the IO BIO Project will move ahead as an online project, but it includes a planned book proposal, which probably will require a series of volumes. A Project like this needs a prominent international publisher and initial contacts have taken place.

At the moment the IO BIO Editorial Team has two members: Bob Reinalda of the Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, who initiated the Project, and Kent Kille of The College of Wooster, OH, USA. It is their intention to enlarge the Editorial Team.

THE IO BIO DATABASE
The IO BIO Database and the list of IGOs included in the Database are available at the Project’s website.

IOs to Be Included: IGOs, no INGOs
The phrase ‘SGs of IOs’ refers to a rather large group of people. The word ‘IOs’ usually includes both intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).
Although INGOs have played a large role in international organization, and their executives may have parts of their career in both IGOs and INGOs, the IO BIO Project excludes INGOs for practical size reasons. In addition, while this group is as interesting as IGOs, it is larger and less coherent and would be a different undertaking. Therefore, the IO BIO is restricted to IGOs, which in itself represents a large number of organizations.

The term ‘IGO’ covers all forms of IGOs, i.e. universal, intercontinental, continental and other regional organizations, and is based on the generally accepted three criterion of three or more member states, an agreement between governments, and a permanent secretariat. In 2009 the Yearbook of International Organizations (2010/11:25) counted 241 ‘conventional IGOs’, i.e. 36 universal, 35 intercontinental and 170 regional. The total number is even higher if the number of dissolved or apparently inactive IGOs (765) is added. In principle the IO BIO Project will cover all existing and many, if not all, of the dissolved conventional IGOs, but it remains to be determined whether or not each IGO is relevant enough to be included. In the beginning the IO BIO Project will restrict itself to launching a viable list of IGOs that in the long run could be extended. When selecting regional organizations it covers all continents. It will also try to select interesting dissolved organizations. If certain organizations are not (yet) included for the practical reason given here, potential contributors may convince the Editors to add specific IGOs to the Database of the IO BIO Project, preferably with a list of SGs. In the long run the Project will attempt to include all relevant IGOs.

One way of covering the field more precisely would be to also include ‘non-conventional’ IGOs, hence further enlarging the number of IGOs. If ‘organizations with a special forum’ and so-called emanations are added, the total number of IGOs would be enlarged with another 709 and 817 IGOs. Emanations are IGOs not established by states, but emanating from places, persons and bodies, such as IGOs. However, given the huge number of emanations and special forums, and the relatively complicated position of these kinds of IGO, the Editors prefer to be careful and to exclude them for the moment. The Editors may discuss the inclusion of those who belong to the ‘first category’ of SGs of non-conventional IGOs by setting up a sub-list. For the time being this does not seem a first priority. Adding these to the Project could be an option by the time the IO BIO Project has published a large number of names from its original list.

The Present Database and the List of Included IOs
The Editors have created an IO BIO Database of IGOs and their SGs which also serves as a List of Entries to be published in the IO BIO. The Database covers some 130 IGOs, which encompasses around 800 SGs, of whom approximately 250 are deceased SGs. This listing is based on the excellent work done by http://rulers.org/ (Benjamin Schemmel) and www.worldstatesmen.org (Ben Cahoon and others), who have also included inventories of Secretaries-General of quite a number of IGOs. The Editors have added organizations to the Database and will continue to do so. They will also add information provided by others if they believe that this information is adequate and reliable.

The IO BIO Database and the list of IGOs included in the Database are available at the Project’s website as, respectively, IO BIO Database 1: Persons and Entries and IO BIO Database 2: IGOs Included and Their SGs.

The IO BIO Database 1 has names and additional information in two columns. The first column is an alphabetical list of SGs starting with the person’s last name, followed by their first name(s), sex, nationality, and years of birth and, if deceased, of death. This column also informs whether a person is an acting or interim functionary. The second column provides the IO’s full name and acronym, the official title of the functionary, and the time period in office.

When available, URLs have been added from the IGO’s website, rulers.org, Nobel Prizes, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, American National Biography Online and Wikipedia with the mere objective of having some initial information about the person available in this list. In some cases another URL was added because of its available initial information. Some URLs refer to stubs, but the idea is that each URL provides at least a starting point. The analysis of the group of SGs of nine humanitarian IGOs (Reinalda 2011, available at the IO BIO site) shows that these sources actually reveal extremely little information about the careers of 58 SGs.

The Editors have not checked all information in the Database, such as personal data, although in a few cases they were able to correct some data. The currently listed birth and death years, as well as the years in office as SG, are potentially questionable, due to the fact that various sources may give
different dates. Hence, all information about persons and organizations must always be scrutinized and used in a critical sense.

The IO BIO Database also provides the List of Entries to be included in the IO BIO, with an indication of the three categories that the persons belong to (1, 2 and 3; see further down). The assessment of categories is a matter for the Editors to determine; however they can be further helped by experts for assessing the initial categorization level. In the Database deceased SGs are highlighted in yellow. SGs who have not been out of office for five years or more are highlighted in grey.

The List of IGOs included in the IO BIO Database 2 has two columns as well. The first column shows the name of the IO, the acronym, and the SG’s time in office. The second column provides the names of the successive SG (or other function title) that have belonged to the IO during those time periods. When the name of an IO changed, this is indicated. The other SGs can be found under the new (or previous) organization name. This table thus allows an overview of all SGs, including the acting ones, of any IGO included in the Database.

Wide but Practical Definition of SG: The Executive Head of an IGO
The IO BIO Project uses a wide, but practical definition of a SG of an IO. When the IO BIO refers to SGs of IOs, it points to those who are the chief executives and representatives of international bureaucracies. This includes executive heads in a similar position, but with different titles. Similar function names mentioned in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (2010/11, p. xiii) are: Administrator, Chief Executive Officer, Director, Director General, Executive Director, Executive Secretary, General Secretary, Honorary Secretary, President, Secretary, Secretary-Treasurer, and Vice-President. All of these may be found among IOs, however, with some referring to positions other than the SGs on which the IO BIO focuses.

SGs to Be Included: Three Categories
Once an IGO is selected, all SGs (from the establishment of the IGO to the present day, including acting ones) should be assessed with regard to being eligible for a short biography in the IO BIO. Not all SGs will be included because the IO BIO publishes only a selection. The Project discerns a variety of levels of importance among the SGs by defining three (or rather four) categories, with the most important SGs being allowed the largest number of words for the description of their lives.

Among the first category of SGs of IOs are the main leaders, original figures and initiators of important processes in international relations. The SGs in the second category are institutionally-important leaders of their IGO, who are not among the initial and principal actors of the first category but nonetheless deserve a relatively wide description of their activities and results. The third category includes those SGs who left a smaller, but specific mark on their profession, organization or international relations. They are given fewer words than the previous category.

Finally, there is a large group of SGs who are not eligible for a short biography in the IO BIO at all, because in spite of their qualities, they have not left a mark for any reason, whether good, bad, or unusual, as the criterion for inclusion in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* says (see [www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/quickguide/who](http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/quickguide/who)).

The first category is allowed 2,400 to 3,600 words, the second category 1,200 to 2,400 words and the third category 800 to 1,200 words. The maximum numbers include everything and cannot be exceeded.

The Project’s Database provides an overview of all SGs per IGO and the Editors will assess the lives of all SGs with regard to eligibility and the specific category in the Project. Given the difficulty of assessment, the Editors will ask experts and relevant organizations to help in this process. A general rule could be to allow SGs of universal and intercontinental IGOs a first (or second, and exceptionally a third) category status, while SGs of continental and regional organizations are given a second (or third, and exceptionally a first) category status. Long-term positions and offices held during hard times could potentially have a higher qualification.

Enlarging the Number of Entries?
The Editors will discuss further whether the Project misses important figures with regard to the chief executives and representatives of international bureaucracies that they try to cover. One way of
enlarging the number of lives to be included is to go ‘deeper’ into the organization, particularly in huge and complex organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union. If the Project restricts itself to SGs, it may ‘lose’ persons under the level of SG who are well known and played very important roles, in particular those people with whom the SG worked intensively and/or was supported by within his or her office. Should the Project, in the case of the UN, also include under SGs (for instance, Lakhdar Brahimi), deputy SGs (for instance, Louise Fréchette) or the executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America, Raúl Prebisch, the advisor to several UN SGs, Brian Urquhart, or the mediator Ralph Bunche? Another group to include may be the executive directors of the regional commissions of the UN. These are UN bodies and the directors are most relevant brokers between the UN and the continents they cover. And, in the case of the EU, should it also include the presidents of the European Parliament or the European Central Bank?

The more parts of bureaucracies that are included, the larger the number of entries in the biographical dictionary. Creating such a sub-list for a small number of complex IGOs could be considered, but it should also be taken into account that this enlargement may complicate the Project, because it will be difficult to define the criteria of who to include and who to exclude.

Another group of persons to potentially include are so-called outsiders who nonetheless left their mark on IGOs, such as Woodrow Wilson (for the League of Nations), Jan Smuts (both League and UN) or Eleanor Roosevelt (the chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights). Not belonging to the staff of an IO is a serious argument to leave out this group. However, a selection of outsiders would enrich the biographical dictionary, but enriching the dictionary is a different criterion. It does not depart from the effort to define and cover the group of SGs from whom to select, but rather from what readers or users of the dictionary would expect. If it is decided to include a number of outsiders, a separate sub-list should be created.

**ENTRIES IN IO BIO**

This section discusses how the IO BIO Project can support its authors and ensure that the entries are properly informed and well written.

*What Do We Know about SGs and How Can We Ensure that Entries Are Well-Informed?*

The IO BIO set up assumes that authors of entries are experts with regard to the IO and its executives, that they have sufficient documentation available, and that they have an open mind with regard to discovering the various elements of the entire career and life of the SG they are profiling. Most information will be available through original documents, literature, archives, interviews, and expert knowledge. IO BIO entries should provide more than superficial data, because it is important to understand what the people described in the entries have done as SGs of IOs: their attempts, their successes and also their failures.

The information about SGs made available by IOs themselves is rather restricted, as an analysis of nine humanitarian IGOs shows. The same goes for information from most Internet sources, including Wikipedia. In particular missing in these sources are the political dimension of international relations as well as information about the policies and successes or failures of SGs. Conflicts are barely mentioned in official descriptions, although sometimes (but not always) Internet sources may inform about the existence of conflicts.

One conclusion is that IO BIO authors need inside information to understand the career developments of SGs, while at the same time it is crucial to avoid that authors who are ‘insiders’ who will stick solely to the ‘official’ IO versions of the lives of their SGs. Both the Instructions for Authors and the Model Biography are instruments to help IO BIO authors in this respect. The Instructions tell authors what they are expected to discuss and contains both warnings, such as against copying myths and incorrect stories, and encouragements, for instance, to discuss the SG not only as a ‘politician’, but also as a leader of a bureaucracy. The Model Biography demonstrates what an entry should look like.
Instructions for Authors: The Three Sections of an Entry

Entries are to be written according to academic standards and should follow the format of the IO BIO Project as expressed in the Instructions. The Instructions provide style requirements and provides information about the elements that should be included in the various sections of the entry.

Each IO BIO entry has three sections. The first section contains personal details, the second section consists of an account of life and work, and the third section has details about archives, publications, literature, and websites. Further details can be found in Appendix 2.

To summarize, entries are conceived as a complete and balanced account of the entire life and work of the selected SGs. They should be written with an open and critical mind and should be accurate and informative, even if the number of words that the short biography allows is relatively small. Entries should follow the stages of the life and public career of the SG by discerning time periods and phases, divided by watersheds, and focusing on the contribution of the SG to her or his profession, the organization, and international relations. Assessing the contributions of a SG may help to define watersheds and key events and play a role in the assessment of the subject at the end of the entry. Although the IO BIO focuses on the time in office as an IGO’s SG, the entry should cover the entire life and career as is expressed in the Instructions. The use of primary sources is strongly recommended in order to discuss existing myths or incorrect stories.

All entries will be published in English. Authors hand in drafts in English and are responsible for the correction of their English in the final version. Editors have a responsibility for all entries in the IO BIO and, therefore, have the right to edit the texts provided by the authors, but they will do this in close contact with the authors. Given the objective to allow prosopographical analyses, authors are encouraged to pay attention to the social and professional connections of SGs, their interactions, and ‘group’ aspects. The use of characteristic anecdotes is allowed. Each entry should have a picture, preferably taken during the time of being SG, or a characteristic illustration. References to film fragments are welcome as well.

The Instructions also provide some practical advice.

Model Biography
The Biography of Joseph Avenol, the second SG of the League of Nations, is published at the IO BIO website. This entry on Avenol serves as the IO BIO’s Model Biography, providing a concrete example of what an IO BIO entry should look like. As the Avenol entry demonstrates, authors should be willing to discuss failures, relations with questionable persons, and disputed periods in the subject’s life or work. They should be careful to avoid seeing too much coherence in a life, as this may be far more uncertain and indefinite than it looks like.

Tools to Find More Data About My Secretary-General
The IO BIO website also provides an inventory of some other internationally oriented biographical dictionaries and ‘Who is Who’s’. These will help authors to find personal and professional data. This IO BIO tool also refers to various relevant Oral History Projects, the LONSEA Database on the League of Nations, and the UN Career Records Project. Authors should see whether these references help them to find relevant information for their entry. Once again, authors should be careful. Many oral histories, for instance, present information from very specific perspectives. The information from such oral histories should be assessed carefully and at least be combined with other sources.