

SUBCHAPTER S—INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

PART 181—COORDINATION, REPORTING AND PUBLICATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Sec.

181.1 Purpose and application.

181.2 Criteria.

181.3 Determinations.

181.4 Consultations with the Secretary of State.

181.5 Twenty-day rule for concluded agreements.

181.6 Documentation and certification.

181.7 Transmittal to the Congress.

181.8 Publication.

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§ 181.1 Purpose and application.

(a) The purpose of this part is to implement the provisions of 1 U.S.C. 112a and 112b, popularly known as the Case-Zablocki Act (hereinafter “the Act”), on the reporting to Congress, coordination with the Secretary of State and publication of international agreements. This part applies to all agencies of the U.S. Government whose responsibilities include the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements. This part does not, however, constitute a delegation by the Secretary of State of the authority to engage in such activities. Further, it does not affect any additional requirements of law governing the relationship between particular agencies and the Secretary of State in connection with international negotiations and agreements, or any other requirements of law concerning the relationship between particular agencies and the Congress. The term *agency* as used in this part means each authority of the United States Government, whether or not it is within or subject to review by another agency.

(b) Pursuant to the key legal requirements of the Act—full and timely disclosure to the Congress of all concluded agreements and consultation by agencies with the Secretary of State with respect to proposed agreements—every agency of the Government is required

to comply with each of the provisions set out in this part in implementation of the Act. Nevertheless, this part is intended as a framework of measures and procedures which, it is recognized, cannot anticipate all circumstances or situations that may arise. Deviation or derogation from the provisions of this part will not affect the legal validity, under United States law or under international law, of agreements concluded, will not give rise to a cause of action, and will not affect any public or private rights established by such agreements.

[46 FR 35918, July 13, 1981, as amended at 61 FR 7071, Feb. 26, 1996]

§ 181.2 Criteria.

(a) *General.* The following criteria are to be applied in deciding whether any undertaking, oral agreement, document, or set of documents, including an exchange of notes or of correspondence, constitutes an international agreement within the meaning of the Act, as well as within the meaning of 1 U.S.C. 112a, requiring the publication of international agreements. Each of the criteria except those in paragraph (a)(5) of this section must be met in order for any given undertaking of the United States to constitute an international agreement.

(1) *Identity and intention of the parties.* A party to an international agreement must be a state, a state agency, or an intergovernmental organization. The parties must intend their undertaking to be legally binding, and not merely of political or personal effect. Documents intended to have political or moral weight, but not intended to be legally binding, are not international agreements. An example of the latter is the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe. In addition, the parties must intend their undertaking to be governed by international law, although this intent need not be manifested by a third-party dispute settlement mechanism or any express reference to international law. In the absence of any provision in

the arrangement with respect to governing law, it will be presumed to be governed by international law. This presumption may be overcome by clear evidence, in the negotiating history of the agreement or otherwise, that the parties intended the arrangement to be governed by another legal system. Arrangements governed solely by the law of the United States, or one of the states or jurisdictions thereof, or by the law of any foreign state, are not international agreements for these purposes. For example, a foreign military sales loan agreement governed in its entirety by U.S. law is not an international agreement.

(2) *Significance of the arrangement.* Minor or trivial undertakings, even if couched in legal language and form, are not considered international agreements within the meaning of the Act or of 1 U.S.C. 112a. In deciding what level of significance must be reached before a particular arrangement becomes an international agreement, the entire context of the transaction and the expectations and intent of the parties must be taken into account. It is often a matter of degree. For example, a promise to sell one map to a foreign nation is not an international agreement; a promise to exchange all maps of a particular region to be produced over a period of years may be an international agreement. It remains a matter of judgment based on all of the circumstances of the transaction. Determinations are made pursuant to §181.3. Examples of arrangements that may constitute international agreements are agreements that: (i) Are of political significance; (ii) involve substantial grants of funds or loans by the United States or credits payable to the United States; (iii) constitute a substantial commitment of funds that extends beyond a fiscal year or would be a basis for requesting new appropriations; (iv) involve continuing and/or substantial cooperation in the conduct of a particular program or activity, such as scientific, technical, or other cooperation, including the exchange or receipt of information and its treatment, or the pooling of data. However, individual research grants and contracts do not ordinarily constitute international agreements.

(3) *Specificity, including objective criteria for determining enforceability.* International agreements require precision and specificity in the language setting forth the undertakings of the parties. Undertakings couched in vague or very general terms containing no objective criteria for determining enforceability or performance are not normally international agreements. Most frequently such terms reflect an intent not to be bound. For example, a promise to “help develop a more viable world economic system” lacks the specificity essential to constitute a legally binding international agreement. However, the intent of the parties is the key factor. Undertakings as general as those of, for example, Articles 55 and 56 of the United Nations Charter have been held to create internationally binding obligations intended as such by the parties.

(4) *Necessity for two or more parties.* While unilateral commitments on occasion may be legally binding, they do not constitute international agreements. For example, a statement by the President promising to send money to Country Y to assist earthquake victims would not be an international agreement. It might be an important undertaking, but not all undertakings in international relations are in the form of international agreements. Care should be taken to examine whether a particular undertaking is truly unilateral in nature, or is part of a larger bilateral or multilateral set of undertakings. Moreover, “consideration,” as that term is used in domestic contract law, is not required for international agreements.

(5) *Form.* Form as such is not normally an important factor, but it does deserve consideration. Documents which do not follow the customary form for international agreements, as to matters such as style, final clauses, signatures, or entry into force dates, may or may not be international agreements. Failure to use the customary form may constitute evidence of a lack of intent to be legally bound by the arrangement. If, however, the general content and context reveal an intention to enter into a legally binding relationship, a departure from customary form will not preclude the arrangement

from being an international agreement. Moreover, the title of the agreement will not be determinative. Decisions will be made on the basis of the substance of the arrangement, rather than on its denomination as an international agreement, a memorandum of understanding, exchange of notes, exchange of letters, technical arrangement, protocol, note verbale, aide-memoire, agreed minute, or any other name.

(b) *Agency-Level agreements.* Agency-level agreements are international agreements within the meaning of the Act and of 1 U.S.C. 112a if they satisfy the criteria discussed in paragraph (a) of this section. The fact that an agreement is concluded by and on behalf of a particular agency of the United States Government, rather than the United States Government, does not mean that the agreement is not an international agreement. Determinations are made on the basis of the substance of the agency-level agreement in question.

(c) *Implementing agreements.* An implementing agreement, if it satisfies the criteria discussed in paragraph (a) of this section, may be an international agreement, depending upon how precisely it is anticipated and identified in the underlying agreement it is designed to implement. If the terms of the implementing agreement are closely anticipated and identified in the underlying agreement, only the underlying agreement is considered an international agreement. For example, the underlying agreement might call for the sale by the United States of 1000 tractors, and a subsequent implementing agreement might require a first installment on this obligation by the sale of 100 tractors of the brand X variety. In that case, the implementing agreement is sufficiently identified in the underlying agreement, and would not itself be considered an international agreement within the meaning of the Act or of 1 U.S.C. 112a. Project annexes and other documents which provide technical content for an umbrella agreement are not normally treated as international agreements. However, if the underlying agreement is general in nature, and the implementing agreement meets the specified

criteria of paragraph (a) of this section, the implementing agreement might well be an international agreement. For example, if the underlying agreement calls for the conclusion of “agreements for agricultural assistance,” but without further specificity, then a particular agricultural assistance agreement subsequently concluded in “implementation” of that obligation, provided it meets the criteria discussed in paragraph (a) of this section, would constitute an international agreement independent of the underlying agreement.

(d) *Extensions and modifications of agreements.* If an undertaking constitutes an international agreement within the meaning of the Act and of 1 U.S.C. 112a, then a subsequent extension or modification of such an agreement would itself constitute an international agreement within the meaning of the Act and of 1 U.S.C. 112a.

(e) *Oral agreements.* Any oral arrangement that meets the criteria discussed in paragraphs (a)(1)–(4) of this section is an international agreement and, pursuant to section (a) of the Act, must be reduced to writing by the agency that concluded the oral arrangement. In such written form, the arrangement is subject to all the requirements of the Act and of this part. Whenever a question arises whether an oral arrangement constitutes an international agreement, the arrangement shall be reduced to writing and the decision made in accordance with § 181.3.

§ 181.3 Determinations.

(a) Whether any undertaking, document, or set of documents constitutes or would constitute an international agreement within the meaning of the Act or of 1 U.S.C. 112a shall be determined by the Legal Adviser of the Department of State, a Deputy Legal Adviser, or in most cases the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs. Such determinations shall be made either on a case-by-case basis, or on periodic consultation, as appropriate.

(b) Agencies whose responsibilities include the negotiation and conclusion