

## **UNITED NATIONS —**

### **AN INTERESTING AND PLEASANT COLLECTION**

by Dr. E. Aquilina

Though the United Nations Organisation was formed in 1945, it started issuing its postage stamps as late as 1951, when on the 24th October, the first Definitive series was put out for sale to the public in general.

U.N. postage stamps in United States currency are mailed from the U.N. post office in New York; these are so elegant and attractive that they are collected by philatelists throughout the world. Their message is simple and truthful, and as it travels to every part of the globe, millions of people learn more about the principles and work of the U.N. and its agencies.

The establishment of the U.N. Postal Administration was unanimously approved by the General Assembly on the 16th Nov. 1950, and proved to be a milestone not only in the history of the United Nations itself but also in that of philately. It was thus that for the first time, an international organisation, dedicated under the Charter of the U.N. to world peace and security, started issuing its own stamps.

One might not be very far from the truth, in describing U.N. stamps as 'couriers of peace'. Designed by artists of varying background from many nations, and printed in all parts of the world by the best security printers, such stamps are sold on behalf of the United Nations which comprise more than 130 countries.

Many people from all walks of life, and from quite a number of organisations and business houses, make use of the U.N. postal facilities. On the other hand, it is the United States Post Office Department that operates the U.N. postal station at the U.N. Headquarters, receiving all the revenue from postage used on mailings.

There are four types of U.N. postal issues:-

- 1) Postage stamps of the Definitive Series.
- 2) Postage stamps of the Air Mail Series.
- 3) Postage stamps of the Commemorative Series.
- 4) Postal Stationery.

People from all over the world collect such postal material not only for its philatelic and educational value, but also as a means of supporting the aims of the U.N. Thus it follows that the proceeds from the sale of stamps etc. are credited annually to the U.N. budget, decreasing accordingly the contribution of Member States.

To make things easier for philatelists and collectors, the U.N. Postal Administration has established Agencies overseas from which U.N. stamps are obtainable at face value, and in local currency. At the time of writing, there are more than 50 countries benefitting from this facility. The General Post Office Malta is one of this selected few; an agreement in this connection was signed at Valletta on the 19th Feb. 1969, between the Postmaster General, and the U.N. Representative.

Following on to the footsteps achieved through the success and popularity of U.N. stamps in United States currency, another postal agreement was signed at Geneva on the 11th December 1968 between the President of the General Directorate of the Swiss Postal Department, and the U.N. Representative. This authorised the issue of U.N. postage stamps from all mail emanating from the Palais des Nations, U.N. Office at Geneva. The actual stamps, all of a definitive nature were first issued on the 4th October 1969; although similar to those valid for postage from the U.N. post office in New York, the denominations of this letter group were in Swiss currency.

The final change in this connection, made its appearance in January 1971, when the U.N. Postal Administration started issuing Commemorative stamps simultaneously in United States and Swiss denominations.

The whole U.N. collection is relatively cheap, easy to complete not beyond the reach of the everyday philatelist. Highly artistic as it is, and with a strong touch of international flavour, it definitely appeals to a wide range of philatelists and collectors who rightly enough feel very proud of having such a philatelic work of art in their possession.