



12 February 2015 - UN Radio has come a long way from the 1946 makeshift studios and offices at the United Nations Headquarters in Lake Success, New York. [World Radio Day](#) marks the anniversary of the first broadcast by UN Radio when it transmitted its first call sign: "This is the United Nations calling the peoples of the world."

Lacking its own broadcast facilities, UN Radio made arrangements with leading broadcasting organizations to relay its programs to different regions. They focussed mainly on the important post World War II issues of international peace and security and were broadcast in the Organization's then five official languages – Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

By 1950 UN Radio broadcast for more than six hours daily in 33 languages with some 100 countries and territories rebroadcasting its programs on a regular basis. The content of these transmissions was mainly the proceedings of meetings at UN Headquarters; news bulletins and documentaries.

A cassette-based interlude

At the end of 1985, shortwave broadcasts were suspended due to the sudden rise of transmission charges. UN Radio program production and distribution became more dependent on taped programs as opposed to direct shortwave broadcasting. Each year, UN Radio sent out 110,000 tapes offering countries which had few if any New York correspondents a voice from the United Nations. Total distribution for 1997 reached 205,000 tapes/cassettes.

By this point, UN Radio had gained new recognition in peacekeeping operations. The power, outreach and cost-effectiveness of broadcast radio information played a key role in supporting the operation of numerous UN missions around the world.

UN Radio Today

These days it's much easier to just [subscribe to UN Radio's podcast](#) , or listen online.

In this year's World Radio Day Message Ban Ki-moon stated that “every year, United Nations Radio broadcasts over 1,200 documentaries, news items and editorials”, which is more than three items every day.

As a low-cost medium, radio is ideally suited to reach remote communities and vulnerable people who lack access to mainstream society. Radio offers a platform to intervene in the public debate, irrespective of a person's educational level.

At least 75% of households in developing countries have access to a radio, which is astonishing

given that only 60% have access to improved sanitation facilities. Given its ability to reach such a large proportion of the human population, radio continues to play a strong and specific role in emergency communication and disaster relief.

However, it is said that up to a billion people still do not have access to radio today. This must change.

Follow [World Radio Day on Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to get involved with the events and celebrations taking place today worldwide.

