www.unece.org/trans/danger/what.html

At the United Nations level, all work related to the transport of dangerous goods is coordinated by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (TDG) and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling (GHS), which produces the "Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods", also called the "Orange Book" and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

In the special case of radioactive material, work is coordinated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which produces the Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material.

The Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the IAEA Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material are addressed not only to all Governments for the development of their national requirements for the domestic transport of dangerous goods, but also to international organizations such as

the International Maritime Organization (IMO),
the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and
regional commissions such as the Economic Commission for Europe

for regulations and international/regional agreements or conventions governing the international transport of dangerous goods by sea, air, road, rail and inland waterways.

Although the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the TDG and on the GHS is not a UNECE body, but is a body with activities of worldwide scope, the secretariat of the UN/ECE is responsible for its service.

United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

The UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods address the following main areas:

List of dangerous goods most commonly carried and their identification and classification;
Consignment procedures: labelling, marking, and transport documents;
Standards for packagings, test procedures, and certification;
Standards for multimodal tank-containers, test procedures and certification.

These recommendations contain all basic provisions for the safe carriage of dangerous goods, but they have to be completed by additional requirements which may have to be applied at national level or for international transport depending on the mode of transport envisaged. These recommendations, in the 10th revised edition published in 1997, are presented in a new form of Model regulations so that they can be more easily transposed into national or international legislation.

ECE subsidiary bodies dealing with the transport of dangerous goods

These bodies are subsidiary bodies of the Inland Transport Committee, and therefore they are concerned only with inland transport, i.e. road, rail and inland waterway. These bodies are

the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15), which is responsible for
the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) and
the European Provisions concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN) and
the Joint Meeting of the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the RID Committee of Experts, also called the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting. The RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting is serviced jointly by the ECE secretariat and the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF); it is responsible for ensuring harmonization between ADR, RID (Regulations concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by rail) and ADN.

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR)

ADR is based on the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods as regards the listing and classification of dangerous goods, their marking and labelling and packaging standards, but it also contains much more detailed provisions as regards

the types of packagings which may be used

the consignment procedures
transport equipment (vehicle to be used, vehicle construction and equipment)
transport operation (training of drivers, supervision, emergency procedures, loading and unloading, placarding of vehicles).

The ADR is intended primarily to increase the safety of international transport by road, but it is also an important trade facilitation instrument. Except for dangerous goods which are totally prohibited for carriage, and except when carriage is regulated or prohibited for reasons other than safety, the international carriage of dangerous goods by road is authorized by ADR on the territory of Contracting Parties provided that the conditions laid down in annexes A and B are complied with. There are at present 42 Contracting Parties to ADR.

It should be noted that the requirements of Annexes A and B of ADR have been annexed to the European Union Council Directive 94/55/EC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States with regard to the transport of dangerous goods, and therefore these requirements have become applicable not only to international transport of dangerous goods but also to domestic traffic in all countries of the European Union as from 1 January 1997 (for further details click here).

ADN

The European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN) was adopted on 25 May 2000 on the occasion of the Diplomatic Conference organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR).

(For further details see the ADN Agreement)