**United Nations Organization**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-F7VnSQcg0>

**History**

As World War II was about to end in 1945, nations were in ruins, and the world wanted peace. Representatives of 50 countries gathered at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco, California from 25 April to 26 June 1945. For the next two months, they proceeded to draft and then sign the UN Charter, which created a new international organization, the United Nations, which, it was hoped, would prevent another world war like the one they had just lived through.

Four months after the San Francisco Conference ended, the United Nations officially began, on 24 October 1945, when it came into existence after its Charter had been ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and by a majority of other signatories.

Now, more than 75 years later, the United Nations is still working to maintain international peace and security, give humanitarian assistance to those in need, protect human rights, and uphold international law.

At the same time, the United Nations is doing new work not envisioned for it in 1945 by its founders. The United Nations has set [sustainable development goals](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/) for 2030, in order to achieve a better and more sustainable future for us all. UN Member States have also agreed to [climate action](http://www.un.org/en/climatechange) to limit global warming.

**General Assembly**

[**https://youtu.be/Z0SVl6vncpQ**](https://youtu.be/Z0SVl6vncpQ)

The [General Assembly](http://www.un.org/en/ga/) is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. All [193 Member States](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/member-states) of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the only UN body with universal representation.  Each year, in September, the full UN membership meets in the General Assembly Hall in New York for the annual General Assembly session, and [general debate](https://gadebate.un.org/), which many heads of state attend and address. Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. Decisions on other questions are by simple majority.  The General Assembly, each year, elects a [GA President](http://www.un.org/pga/) to serve a one-year term of office.

## Security Council

## <https://youtu.be/G3ASTUma8-Y>

## Outdated <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HpQyXBney8>

The [Security Council](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/) has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security.  It has 15 Members ([5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/current-members)). Each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions. The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.  The Security Council has a [Presidency](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/presidency), which rotates, and changes, every month.

## International Court of Justice

## <https://youtu.be/DME-wfbt08c>

The [International Court of Justice](https://www.icj-cij.org/en) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Its seat is at the Peace Palace in the Hague (Netherlands). It is the only one of the six principal organs of the United Nations not located in New York (United States of America). The Court’s role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies. The International Court of Justice functions in accordance with its [Statute](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/statute-of-the-international-court-of-justice).

## Economic and Social Council

The [Economic and Social Council](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/) is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as implementation of internationally agreed development goals. It serves as the central mechanism for activities of the UN system and its specialized agencies in the economic, social and environmental fields, supervising subsidiary and expert bodies.  It has [54 Members](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/members), elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms. It is the United Nations’ central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on [sustainable development](https://sdgs.un.org/).

## Trusteeship Council

The [Trusteeship Council](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/trusteeship-council) was established in 1945 by the UN Charter, under [C](https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-xiii/index.html)[hapter XIII](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-13), to provide international supervision for 11 Trust Territories that had been placed under the administration of seven Member States, and ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the Territories for self-government and independence. By 1994, all Trust Territories had attained self-government or independence.  The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994. By a resolution adopted on 25 May 1994, the Council amended its rules of procedure to drop the obligation to meet annually and agreed to meet as occasion required -- by its decision or the decision of its President, or at the request of a majority of its members or the General Assembly or the Security Council.

## Secretariat

The [Secretariat](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/secretariat) comprises the [Secretary-General](https://www.un.org/sg/) and tens of thousands of international UN staff members who carry out the day-to-day work of the UN as mandated by the General Assembly and the Organization's other principal bodies. The Secretary-General is [Chief Administrative Officer](https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/role-secretary-general) of the Organization, appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year, renewable term. The Secretary-General is also a symbol of the Organization's ideals, and an advocate for all the world's peoples, especially the poor and vulnerable.

UN staff members are recruited internationally and locally, and work in duty stations and on peacekeeping missions all around the world.  But serving the cause of peace in a violent world is a dangerous occupation. Since the founding of the United Nations, hundreds of brave men and women [have given their lives](http://www.un.org/en/memorial/) in its service.

## UN entities with a primary responsibility for delivering humanitarian aid

The [United Nations Development Programme](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html) (UNDP),

the [United Nations Refugee Agency](http://www.unhcr.org/) (UNHCR),

the [United Nations Children's Fund](http://www.unicef.org/) (UNICEF),

the [World Food Programme](http://www.wfp.org/) (WFP) and

the [United Nations Population Fund](https://www.unfpa.org/) (UNFPA) have primary roles in the delivery of relief assistance.  
  
The [World Health Organization](http://www.who.org/) (WHO) coordinates the response to humanitarian health emergencies.

**Five Greatest Successes and Failures**

**Successes**

*Peace*

Due partly to UN conflict resolution and peacekeeping initiatives, the number of people dying in conflicts has declined since 1945. Worldwide, fewer people died in conflict in the first decade of the 21st century than any decade of the 20th.

*Ending famine*

Large parts of the world’s population suffer from poverty and hunger, and thousands die of malnourishment every year. But the numbers have fallen from the 20th century, when more than 70 million died from famine. The UN’s World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organisation, and UN-sponsored emergency aid management can take some of the credit.

*Countries who gave up The Bomb*

The UN had a hand in countries voluntarily deciding to give up weapons because they were too efficient. South Africa did this at the end of apartheid, and Kazakhstan did so when the Soviet Union fell apart.

*Protecting the Galapagos Islands …*

... and 1,000 other World Heritage sites. The UN cultural organisation UNESCO is a leader in protection of the world’s most important natural and historic places.

**Failures**

*Genocide in Rwanda and Srebrenica*

The UN had an “Assistance Mission” for Rwanda in 1994, which failed to stop the majority Hutus from killing almost a million members of the Tutsi minority. The massacre of more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men at the hands of Serb forces in Srebrenica in 1995 was another UN failure. The sight of a UN peacekeeping force commander drinking a toast with the Serb commander damaged the UN’s reputation.

*Rape and child sex abuse in the Congo*

UN peacekeepers were accused of paying for sex or raping women and young girls they were supposed to be protecting in the Democratic Republic of Congo in early 2005. There have been similar allegations in countries ranging from Cambodia to Bosnia to Haiti.

*Spreading cholera in Haiti*

Genome testing showed that the world’s worst recent outbreak of cholera, which swept through Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, was likely started by a Nepali UN peacekeeping force who carried the disease. More 700,000 were infected and 8,000 died.

*Iraq oil for food programme*

This UN programme enabled Iraq to gain relief from international sanctions by selling oil through the UN, which would supervise the delivery of food and medicine with the resulting cash. However, the money ended up in private hands and became the worst financial scandal in UN history.

**The UN is now an outdated body.’ Discuss. (45 Marks)**

The United Nations (UN) was set up at the end of World War II to maintain peace and security amongst states, the successor to the League of Nations. However, the UN has attracted a great deal of criticism, often based on the belief that it is an outdated body. However, such criticisms fail to take account of how the UN has adapted and developed since 1945.   
  
There have been various allegations that the UN is outdated. Considerable criticism has focused on the make-up of the Security Council, which continues to reflect the great power politics of 1945, with the USA, Russia, China, the UK and France being permanent members with veto powers. Pressure to reform the Security Council has grown considerably, with suggestions that new permanent members should include either major economic powers and significant UN contributors such as Japan and Germany, or rising states that can represent a broader range of continents such as Brazil and South Africa. The UN has also been criticised because its budgetary position has historically been based on the ability to pay, creating tensions within and between the global North and the global South. Considerable resentment has grown up in the USA, the largest contributor to all the UN’s budgets, as it is confronted by a General Assembly in which all states have equal voting rights. On the other hand, this budgetary imbalance has led to allegations that economically developed states are more favourably dealt with by the UN. A further line of criticism is that the UN largely operates as an intergovernmental body, which has very few means of enforcing its decisions and bringing transgressors into line. In that sense, the UN was formed by great powers that did not want it to develop the kind of authority which might limit their freedom of manoeuvre in the future. In an interconnected world in which challenges increasingly have a transnational if not global dimension, such weak intergovernmentalism may no longer be appropriate. This has been illustrated by the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and by difficulties in the UN carrying out its peacekeeping role.   
  
  
On the other hand, the UN can also be defended. In relation to peacekeeping, its primary limitations are not so much internal as ones that stem from the politics of great power rivalry. Nevertheless, after the end of the Cold War the UN supported the trend towards humanitarian intervention, responding to the rise of interdependence and underlining the importance of human rights in global politics. Indeed, the UN has remained remarkably up-to-date in its willingness to expand its agenda and broaden its concerns, especially in relation to economic and social questions. This can be seen in global conferences that have been arranged to address pressing problems such as the environment and development (Rio, 1992), human rights (Vienna, 1993), population (Cairo, 1994), women’s issues (Beijing, 1995) and so on. The UN makes a major contribution to facilitating cooperation on development issues, by, for examples, its Human Development Reports and, since 2000, by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In these ways, the UN, despite limited resources, has responded to a growing sense of interdependence and the globalisation of human concerns.