

# United Nations

The **United Nations** (UN) is an intergovernmental organization aiming to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.<sup>[2]</sup> It is the world's largest and most familiar international organization.<sup>[3]</sup> The UN is headquartered on international territory in New York City and has other main offices in Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna, and The Hague.

The UN was established after World War II with the aim of preventing future wars, succeeding the ineffective League of Nations.<sup>[4]</sup> On 25 April 1945, 50 governments met in San Francisco for a conference and started drafting the UN Charter, which was adopted on 25 June 1945 and took effect on 24 October 1945, when the UN began operations. Pursuant to the Charter, the organization's objectives include maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, promoting sustainable development, and upholding international law.<sup>[5]</sup> At its founding, the UN had 51 member states; with the addition of South Sudan in 2011, membership is now 193, representing almost all of the world's sovereign states.<sup>[6]</sup>

The organization's mission to preserve world peace was complicated in its early decades by the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union and their respective allies. Its missions have consisted primarily of unarmed military observers and lightly armed troops with primarily monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles.<sup>[7]</sup> UN membership grew significantly following widespread decolonization beginning in the 1960s. Since then, 80 former colonies have gained independence, including 11 trust territories that had been monitored by the Trusteeship Council.<sup>[8]</sup> By the 1970s, the UN's budget for economic and social development programmes far outstripped its spending on peacekeeping. After the end of the Cold War, the UN shifted and expanded its field operations, undertaking a wide variety of complex tasks.<sup>[9]</sup>

### United Nations



**Arabic:** منظمة الأمم المتحدة

**Chinese:** 联合国/聯合國


**French:** Organisation des Nations unies

**Russian:** Организация Объединённых Наций

**Spanish:** Organización de las Naciones Unidas



FlagEmblem



Members of the United Nations

<b>Headquarters</b>	760 United Nations Plaza New York City (international territory)
<b>Official languages</b>	Arabic · Chinese · English · French · Russian · Spanish <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Type</b>	Intergovernmental organization
<b>Membership</b>	193 member states 2 observer states
<b>Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Secretary-General</b> António Guterres</li><li>• <b>Deputy Secretary-General</b> Amina J. Mohammed</li><li>• <b>General Assembly President</b> Abdulla Shahid</li><li>• <b>Economic and Social Council President</b> Collen Vixen Kelapile</li><li>• <b>Security Council Presidency</b> Mexico</li></ul>
<b>Establishment</b>	

The UN has six principal organs: the General Assembly; the Security Council; the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); the Trusteeship Council; the International Court of Justice; and the UN Secretariat. The UN System includes a multitude of specialized agencies, funds and programmes such as the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, UNESCO, and UNICEF. Additionally, non-governmental organizations may be granted consultative status with ECOSOC and other agencies to participate in the UN's work.

- UN Charter signed 26 June 1945
- Charter entered into force 24 October 1945

#### Website

[www.un.org](http://www.un.org) (<https://www.un.org/>)  
[www.un.int](http://www.un.int) (<https://www.un.int/>)

#### Preceded by



League of Nations

The UN's chief administrative officer is the Secretary-General, currently Portuguese politician and diplomat António Guterres, who began his first five year-term on 1 January 2017 and was re-elected on 8 June 2021. The organization is financed by assessed and voluntary contributions from its member states.

The UN, its officers, and its agencies have won many Nobel Peace Prizes, though other evaluations of its effectiveness have been mixed. Some commentators believe the organization to be an important force for peace and human development, while others have called it ineffective, biased, or corrupt.



The United Nations Office at Geneva (Switzerland) is the second biggest UN centre, after the United Nations Headquarters (New York City).

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# History

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## Background

In the century prior to the UN's creation, several [international organizations](#) such as the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#) were formed to ensure protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and strife.<sup>[10]</sup>

In 1914, a political assassination in Sarajevo set off a chain of events that led to the outbreak of World War I. As more and more young men were sent down into the trenches, influential voices in Britain and the United States began calling for the establishment of a permanent international body to maintain peace in the postwar world. President Woodrow Wilson became a vocal advocate of this concept, and in 1918, he included a sketch of the international body in his [Fourteen Points](#) to end the war. In November 1918, the [Central Powers](#) agreed to an armistice to halt the killing in World War I. Two months later, the [Allies](#) met to hammer out formal peace terms at the [Paris Peace Conference](#). The [League of Nations](#) was approved, and in the summer of 1919 Wilson presented the [Treaty of Versailles](#) and the [Covenant of the League of Nations](#) to the [US Senate](#) which refused to consent to the ratification. On 10 January 1920, the [League of Nations](#) formally came into being when the [Covenant of the League of Nations](#), ratified by 42 nations in 1919, took effect.<sup>[11]</sup> The [League Council](#) acted as a type of executive body directing the Assembly's business. It began with four permanent members – [Great Britain](#), [France](#), [Italy](#), and [Japan](#). Although the United States never joined the League, the country did support its economic and social missions through the work of private philanthropies and by sending representatives to committees.

After some successes and some failures during the 1920s, the League proved ineffective in the 1930s. It failed to act against the [Japanese invasion of Manchuria](#) as in February 1933. Forty nations voted for Japan to withdraw from [Manchuria](#) but Japan voted against it and walked out of the League instead of withdrawing from Manchuria.<sup>[12]</sup> It also failed against the [Second Italo-Ethiopian War](#), despite trying to talk to [Benito Mussolini](#), but he used the time to send an army to Africa. The League had a plan for Mussolini to just take a part of Ethiopia, but he ignored the League and invaded Ethiopia. The League

tried putting sanctions on Italy, but Italy had already conquered Ethiopia and the League had failed.<sup>[13]</sup> After Italy conquered Ethiopia, Italy and other nations left the league. But all of them realized that it had failed and they began to re-arm as fast as possible.

During 1938, Britain and France tried negotiating directly with Hitler but this failed in 1939 when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. When war broke out in 1939, the League closed down, and its headquarters in Geneva remained empty throughout the war.<sup>[14]</sup>

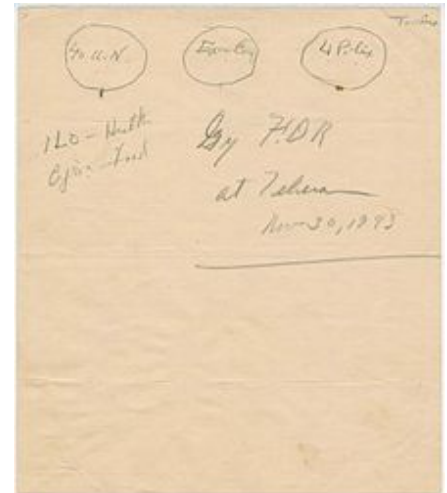
## Declarations by the Allies of World War II

The first specific step towards the establishment of the United Nations was the Inter-Allied conference that led to the Declaration of St James's Palace on 12 June 1941.<sup>[15][16]</sup> The United Kingdom and the USSR agreed an alliance the following month with the Anglo-Soviet Agreement. By August 1941, American President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had drafted the Atlantic Charter to define goals for the post-war world. At the subsequent meeting of the Inter-Allied Council in London on 24 September 1941, the eight governments in exile of countries under Axis occupation, together with the Soviet Union and representatives of the Free French Forces, unanimously adopted adherence to the common principles of policy set forth by Britain and United States.<sup>[17][18]</sup>

President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met at the White House in December 1941 for the Arcadia Conference. Roosevelt coined the term *United Nations* to describe the Allied countries. He suggested it as an alternative to "Associated Powers", which the U.S. used in World War I (the U.S. was never formally a member of the Allies of World War I but entered the war in 1917 as a self-styled "Associated Power"). The British Prime Minister accepted it, noting its use by Lord Byron in the poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.<sup>[19][20]</sup> The text of the Declaration by United Nations was drafted on 29 December 1941, by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Roosevelt aide Harry Hopkins. It incorporated Soviet suggestions but included no role for France. One major change from the Atlantic Charter was the addition of a provision for religious freedom, which Stalin approved after Roosevelt insisted.<sup>[21][22]</sup>

Roosevelt's idea of the "Four Powers", referring to the four major Allied countries, the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and Republic of China, emerged in the Declaration by United Nations.<sup>[23]</sup> On New Year's Day 1942, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, Maxim Litvinov, of the USSR, and T. V. Soong, of China, signed the "Declaration by United Nations",<sup>[24]</sup> and the next day the representatives of twenty-two other nations added their signatures. During the war, "the United Nations" became the official term for the Allies. To join, countries had to sign the Declaration and declare war on the Axis powers.<sup>[25]</sup> The Anglo-Soviet Treaty in 1942 formed a twenty-year political alliance between the British Empire and the Soviet Union.

The October 1943 Moscow Conference resulted in the Moscow Declarations, including the Four Power Declaration on General Security which aimed for the creation "at the earliest possible date of a general international organization". This was the first public announcement that a new international organization was being contemplated to replace the League of Nations. The Tehran Conference followed shortly afterwards at which Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met and discussed the idea of a post-war international organization.

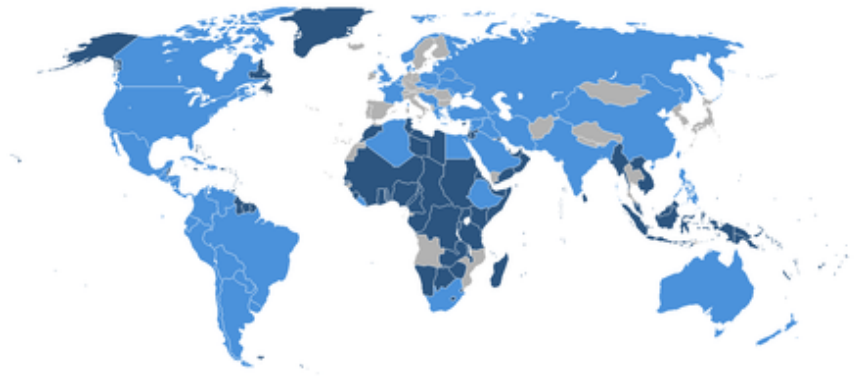


1943 sketch by Franklin Roosevelt of the UN original three branches: The Four Policemen, an executive branch, and an international assembly of forty UN member states

## Founding

The new international organization was formulated and negotiated among the delegations from the Allied Big Four at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference from 21 September to 7 October 1944. Representatives from the United States and the United Kingdom met first with those from the Soviet Union and, in the following week, with representatives from the Republic of China. They agreed on proposals for the aims, structure and functioning of the new international organization.<sup>[26][27][28]</sup>

It took the conference at Yalta, plus further negotiations with Moscow, before all the issues were resolved.<sup>[29]</sup>



The UN in 1945: founding members in light blue, protectorates and territories of the founding members in dark blue

By 1 March 1945, 21 additional states had signed the Declaration by United Nations.<sup>[30]</sup> After months of planning, the UN Conference on International Organization opened in San Francisco, 25 April 1945, attended by 50 governments and a number of non-governmental organizations.<sup>[31][32][33]</sup> The Big Four sponsoring countries invited other nations to take part and the heads of the delegations of the four chaired the plenary meetings.<sup>[34]</sup> Winston Churchill urged Roosevelt to restore France to its status of a major Power after the liberation of Paris in August 1944. The drafting of the Charter of the United Nations was completed over the following two months; it was signed on 26 June 1945 by the representatives of the 50 countries. The UN officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, upon ratification of the Charter by the five permanent members of the Security Council—the US, the UK, France, the Soviet Union and the Republic of China—and by a majority of the other 46 signatories.<sup>[35]</sup>

The first meetings of the General Assembly, with 51 nations represented,<sup>[a]</sup> and the Security Council took place in London beginning in January 1946.<sup>[35]</sup> Debates began at once, covering topical issues such as the presence of Russian troops in Iranian Azerbaijan, British forces in Greece and within days the first veto was cast.<sup>[38]</sup>

The General Assembly selected New York City as the site for the headquarters of the UN, construction began on 14 September 1948 and the facility was completed on 9 October 1952. Its site—like UN headquarters buildings in Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi—is designated as international territory.<sup>[39]</sup> The Norwegian Foreign Minister, Trygve Lie, was elected as the first UN Secretary-General.<sup>[35]</sup>

## Cold War Era

Though the UN's primary mandate was peacekeeping, the division between the US and USSR often paralysed the organization, generally allowing it to intervene only in conflicts distant from the Cold War.<sup>[40]</sup> Two notable exceptions were a Security Council resolution on 7 July 1950 authorizing a US-led coalition to repel the North Korean invasion of South Korea, passed in the absence of the USSR,<sup>[35][41]</sup> and the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement on 27 July 1953.<sup>[42]</sup>

On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly approved a resolution to partition Palestine, approving the creation of the state of Israel.<sup>[43]</sup> Two years later, Ralph Bunche, a UN official, negotiated an armistice to the resulting conflict.<sup>[44]</sup> On 7 November 1956, the first UN peacekeeping force was established to end



the Suez Crisis;<sup>[45]</sup> however, the UN was unable to intervene against the USSR's simultaneous invasion of Hungary following that country's revolution.<sup>[46]</sup>

On 14 July 1960, the UN established United Nations Operation in the Congo (UNOC), the largest military force of its early decades, to bring order to the breakaway State of Katanga, restoring it to the control of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by 11 May 1964.<sup>[47]</sup> While traveling to meet rebel leader Moïse Tshombe during the conflict, Dag Hammarskjöld, often named as one of the UN's most effective Secretaries-General,<sup>[48]</sup> died in a plane crash; months later he was posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>[49]</sup> In 1964, Hammarskjöld's successor, U Thant, deployed the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, which would become one of the UN's longest-running peacekeeping missions.<sup>[50]</sup>

With the spread of decolonization in the 1960s, the organization's membership saw an influx of newly independent nations. In 1960 alone, 17 new states joined the UN, 16 of them from Africa.<sup>[45]</sup> On 25 October 1971, with opposition from the United States, but with the support of many Third World nations, the mainland, communist People's Republic of China was given the Chinese seat on the Security Council in place of the Republic of China that occupied Taiwan; the vote was widely seen as a sign of waning US influence in the organization.<sup>[51]</sup> Third World nations organized into the Group of 77 coalition under the leadership of Algeria, which briefly became a dominant power at the UN.<sup>[52]</sup> On 10 November 1975, a bloc comprising the USSR and Third World nations passed a resolution, over the strenuous US and Israeli opposition, declaring Zionism to be racism; the resolution was repealed on 16 December 1991, shortly after the end of the Cold War.<sup>[53][54]</sup>

With an increasing Third World presence and the failure of UN mediation in conflicts in the Middle East, Vietnam, and Kashmir, the UN increasingly shifted its attention to its ostensibly secondary goals of economic development and cultural exchange.<sup>[55]</sup> By the 1970s, the UN budget for social and economic development was far greater than its peacekeeping budget.

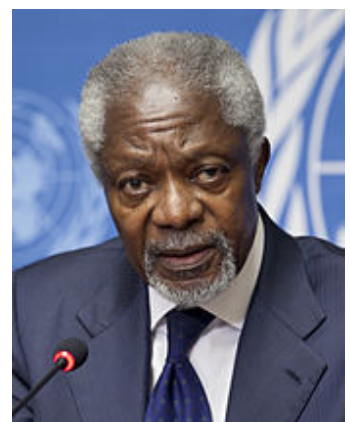
## Post–Cold War

After the Cold War, the UN saw a radical expansion in its peacekeeping duties, taking on more missions in five years than it had in the previous four decades.<sup>[56]</sup> Between 1988 and 2000, the number of adopted Security Council resolutions more than doubled, and the peacekeeping budget increased more than tenfold.<sup>[57][58][59]</sup> The UN negotiated an end to the Salvadoran Civil War, launched a successful peacekeeping mission in Namibia, and oversaw democratic elections in post-apartheid South Africa and post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia.<sup>[60]</sup> In 1991, the UN authorized a US-led coalition that repulsed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.<sup>[61]</sup> Brian Urquhart, Under-Secretary-General from 1971 to 1985, later described the hopes raised by these successes as a "false renaissance" for the organization, given the more troubled missions that followed.<sup>[62]</sup>

Beginning in the last decades of the Cold War, American and European critics of the UN condemned the organization for perceived mismanagement and corruption.<sup>[63]</sup> In 1984, US President Ronald Reagan, withdrew his nation's funding from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) over



Dag Hammarskjöld was a particularly active Secretary-General from 1953 until his death in 1961.



Kofi Annan, Secretary-General from 1997 to 2006

allegations of mismanagement, followed by the UK and Singapore.<sup>[64][65]</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General from 1992 to 1996, initiated a reform of the Secretariat, reducing the size of the organization somewhat.<sup>[66][67]</sup> His successor, Kofi Annan (1997–2006), initiated further management reforms in the face of threats from the US to withhold its UN dues.<sup>[67]</sup>

Though the UN Charter had been written primarily to prevent aggression by one nation against another, in the early 1990s the UN faced a number of simultaneous, serious crises within nations such as Somalia, Haiti, Mozambique, and the former Yugoslavia.<sup>[68]</sup> The UN mission in Somalia was widely viewed as a failure after the US withdrawal following casualties in the Battle of Mogadishu. The UN mission to Bosnia faced "worldwide ridicule" for its indecisive and confused mission in the face of ethnic cleansing.<sup>[69]</sup> In 1994, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda failed to intervene in the Rwandan genocide amid indecision in the Security Council.<sup>[70]</sup>



Flags of member nations at the United Nations Headquarters, seen in 2007

From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, international interventions authorized by the UN took a wider variety of forms. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 authorised the NATO-led Kosovo Force beginning in 1999. The UN mission (1999–2006) in the Sierra Leone Civil War was supplemented by a British military intervention. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was overseen by NATO.<sup>[71]</sup> In 2003, the United States invaded Iraq despite failing to pass a UN Security Council resolution for authorization, prompting a new round of questioning of the organization's effectiveness.<sup>[72]</sup>

Under the eighth Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, the UN intervened with peacekeepers in crises such as the War in Darfur in Sudan and the Kivu conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and sent observers and chemical weapons inspectors to the Syrian Civil War.<sup>[73]</sup> In 2013, an internal review of UN actions in the final battles of the Sri Lankan Civil War in 2009 concluded that the organization had suffered "systemic failure".<sup>[74]</sup> In 2010, the organization suffered the worst loss of life in its history, when 101 personnel died in the Haiti earthquake.<sup>[75]</sup> Acting under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 in 2011, NATO countries intervened in the Libyan Civil War.

The Millennium Summit was held in 2000 to discuss the UN's role in the 21st century.<sup>[76]</sup> The three day meeting was the largest gathering of world leaders in history, and culminated in the adoption by all member states of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a commitment to achieve international development in areas such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and public health. Progress towards these goals, which were to be met by 2015, was ultimately uneven. The 2005 World Summit reaffirmed the UN's focus on promoting development, peacekeeping, human rights, and global security.<sup>[77]</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals were launched in 2015 to succeed the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>[78]</sup>

In addition to addressing global challenges, the UN has sought to improve its accountability and democratic legitimacy by engaging more with civil society and fostering a global constituency.<sup>[79]</sup> In an effort to enhance transparency, in 2016 the organization held its first public debate between candidates for Secretary-General.<sup>[80]</sup> On 1 January 2017, Portuguese diplomat António Guterres, who previously served as UN High Commissioner for Refugees, became the ninth Secretary-General. Guterres has highlighted several key goals for his administration, including an emphasis on diplomacy for preventing conflicts, more effective peacekeeping efforts, and streamlining the organization to be more responsive and versatile to global needs.<sup>[81]</sup>

## Structure

The United Nations is part of the broader UN system, which includes an extensive network of institutions and entities. Central to the organisation are five principal organs established by the UN Charter: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN Secretariat.<sup>[82]</sup> A sixth principal organ, the Trusteeship Council, suspended operations on 1 November 1994, upon the independence of Palau, the last remaining UN trustee territory.<sup>[83]</sup>

Four of the five principal organs are located at the main UN Headquarters in New York City, while the ICJ is seated in The Hague.<sup>[84]</sup> Most other major agencies are based in the UN offices at Geneva,<sup>[85]</sup> Vienna,<sup>[86]</sup> and Nairobi;<sup>[87]</sup> additional UN institutions are located throughout the world. The six official languages of the UN, used in intergovernmental meetings and documents, are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.<sup>[88]</sup> On the basis of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, the UN and its agencies are immune from the laws of the countries where they operate, safeguarding the UN's impartiality with regard to host and member countries.<sup>[89]</sup>

Below the six organs sit, in the words of the author Linda Fasulo, "an amazing collection of entities and organizations, some of which are actually older than the UN itself and operate with almost complete independence from it".<sup>[90]</sup> These include specialized agencies, research and training institutions, programs and funds, and other UN entities.<sup>[91]</sup>

All organisations in the UN system obey the *Noblemaire principle*, which calls for salaries that will attract and retain citizens of countries where compensation is highest, and which ensures equal pay for work of equal value regardless of the employee's nationality.<sup>[92][93]</sup> In practice, the International Civil Service Commission, which governs the conditions of UN personnel, takes reference to the highest-paying national civil service.<sup>[94]</sup> Staff salaries are subject to an internal tax that is administered by the UN organizations.<sup>[92][95]</sup>

## Principal organs of the United Nations<sup>[96]</sup>

### UN General Assembly

— Deliberative assembly of all UN member states —



- May resolve non-compulsory recommendations to states or suggestions to the Security Council (UNSC);
- Decides on the admission of new members, following proposal by the UNSC;
- Adopts the budget;
- Elects the non-permanent members of the UNSC; all members of ECOSOC; the UN Secretary General (following

### UN Secretariat

— Administrative organ of the UN —



- Supports the other UN bodies administratively (for example, in the organization of conferences, the writing of reports and studies and the preparation of the budget);
- Its chairperson—the UN Secretary General—is elected by the General Assembly for a five-year mandate and is the UN's foremost representative.

### International Court of J

— Universal court for inter law —



- Decides disputes between states that recognize its jurisdiction;
- Issues legal opinions;
- Renders judgment by rel majority. Its fifteen judge elected by the UN General Assembly for nine-year t



their proposal by the UNSC); and the fifteen judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Each country has one vote.

### UN Security Council

— For international security issues —



- Responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security;
- May adopt compulsory resolutions;
- Has fifteen members: five permanent members with veto power and ten elected members.

### UN Economic and Social Council

— For global economic and social affairs —



- Responsible for co-operation between states as regards economic and social matters;
- Co-ordinates co-operation between the UN's numerous specialized agencies;
- Has 54 members, elected by the General Assembly to serve staggered three-year mandates.

### UN Trusteeship Council

— For administering territories (*currently inactive*)



- Was originally designed to manage colonial possessions that were former League Nations mandates;
- Has been inactive since when Palau, the last trust territory, attained independence.

## General Assembly

The General Assembly is the main deliberative assembly of the UN. Composed of all UN member states, the assembly meets in regular yearly sessions, but emergency sessions can also be called.<sup>[97]</sup> The assembly is led by a president, elected from among the member states on a rotating regional basis, and 21 vice-presidents.<sup>[98]</sup> The first session convened 10 January 1946 in the Methodist Central Hall in London and included representatives of 51 nations.<sup>[35]</sup>

When the General Assembly decides on important questions such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, a two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required.<sup>[99][100]</sup> All other questions are decided by a majority vote. Each member country has one vote. Apart from the approval of budgetary matters, resolutions are not binding on the members. The Assembly may make recommendations on any matters within the scope of the UN, except matters of peace and security that are under consideration by the Security Council.<sup>[97]</sup>

Draft resolutions can be forwarded to the General Assembly by its six main committees:<sup>[101]</sup>

- First Committee (Disarmament and International Security)
- Second Committee (Economic and Financial)



Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet general secretary, addressing the UN General Assembly in December 1988

- Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural)
- Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization)
- Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary)
- Sixth Committee (Legal)

As well as by the following two committees:

- General Committee – a supervisory committee consisting of the assembly's president, vice-president, and committee heads
- Credentials Committee – responsible for determining the credentials of each member nation's UN representatives

## Security Council

The Security Council is charged with maintaining peace and security among countries. While other organs of the UN can only make "recommendations" to member states, the Security Council has the power to make binding decisions that member states have agreed to carry out, under the terms of Charter Article 25.<sup>[102]</sup> The decisions of the council are known as United Nations Security Council resolutions.<sup>[103]</sup>

The Security Council is made up of fifteen member states, consisting of five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly: Estonia (term ends 2021), India (2022), Indonesia (2022), Mexico (2022), Niger (2021), Norway (2022), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2021), Tunisia (2021), and Vietnam (2021).<sup>[104]</sup> The five permanent members hold veto power over UN resolutions, allowing a permanent member to block adoption of a resolution, though not debate. The ten temporary seats are held for two-year terms, with five member states per year voted in by the General Assembly on a regional basis.<sup>[105]</sup> The presidency of the Security Council rotates alphabetically each month.<sup>[106]</sup>



Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, demonstrates a vial with alleged Iraq chemical weapon probes to the UN Security Council on Iraq war hearings, 5 February 2003

## UN Secretariat

The UN Secretariat carries out the day-to-day duties required to operate and maintain the UN system.<sup>[107]</sup> It is comprised of tens of thousands of international civil servants worldwide and headed by the Secretary-General, who is assisted by the Deputy Secretary-General.<sup>[108]</sup> The Secretariat's duties include providing information and facilities needed by UN bodies for their meetings; it also carries out tasks as directed by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and other UN bodies.<sup>[109]</sup>

The Secretary-General acts as the *de facto* spokesperson and leader of the UN. The position is defined in the UN Charter as the organization's "chief administrative officer".<sup>[110]</sup> Article 99 of the charter states that the secretary-general can bring to the Security Council's attention "any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security", a phrase that Secretaries-General since Trygve Lie have interpreted as giving the position broad scope for action on the world stage.<sup>[111]</sup> The office has evolved into a dual role of an administrator of the UN organization and a diplomat and mediator addressing disputes between member states and finding consensus to global issues.<sup>[112]</sup>

The Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly, after being recommended by the Security Council, where the permanent members have veto power. There are no specific criteria for the post, but over the years it has become accepted that the position shall be held for one or two terms of five years.<sup>[113]</sup> The current Secretary-General is António Guterres of Portugal, who replaced Ban Ki-moon in 2017.

Secretaries-General of the United Nations<sup>[114]</sup>

No.	Name	Country of origin	Took office	Left office	Notes
-	<u>Gladwyn Jebb</u>	 <u>United Kingdom</u>	24 October 1945	2 February 1946	Served as Acting Secretary-General until Lie's election
1	<u>Trygve Lie</u>	 <u>Norway</u>	2 February 1946	10 November 1952	Resigned
2	<u>Dag Hammarskjöld</u>	 <u>Sweden</u>	10 April 1953	18 September 1961	Died in office
3	<u>U Thant</u>	 <u>Burma</u>	30 November 1961	31 December 1971	First non-European to hold office
4	<u>Kurt Waldheim</u>	 <u>Austria</u>	1 January 1972	31 December 1981	
5	<u>Javier Pérez de Cuéllar</u>	 <u>Peru</u>	1 January 1982	31 December 1991	
6	<u>Boutros Boutros-Ghali</u>	 <u>Egypt</u>	1 January 1992	31 December 1996	Served for the shortest time
7	<u>Kofi Annan</u>	 <u>Ghana</u>	1 January 1997	31 December 2006	
8	<u>Ban Ki-moon</u>	 <u>South Korea</u>	1 January 2007	31 December 2016	
9	<u>António Guterres</u>	 <u>Portugal</u>	1 January 2017	<i>Incumbent</i>	



Current secretary-general, António Guterres

## International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), sometimes known as the World Court,<sup>[115]</sup> is the primary judicial organ of the UN. It is the successor to the Permanent Court of International Justice and occupies that body's former headquarters in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, making it the only principal organ not based in New York City. The ICJ's main function is adjudicating disputes among states; it has heard cases concerning war crimes, violations of state sovereignty, ethnic cleansing, and

other issues.<sup>[116]</sup> The court can also be called upon by other UN organs to provide advisory opinions on matters of international law.<sup>[117]</sup> All UN member states are parties to the ICJ Statute, which forms an integral part of the UN Charter, and nonmembers may also become parties. The ICJ's rulings are binding upon parties and, along with its advisory opinions, serve as sources of international law.<sup>[118]</sup> The court is composed of 15 judges appointed to nine-year terms by the General Assembly; every sitting judge must be from a different nation.<sup>[117][119]</sup>



The ICJ ruled that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008 did not violate international law.

## Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) assists the General Assembly in promoting international economic, social, and humanitarian co-operation and development.<sup>[120]</sup> It was established to serve as the UN's primary forum for global issues and is the largest and most complex UN body.<sup>[120]</sup> ECOSOC's functions include gathering data, conducting studies, advising member nations, and making recommendations.<sup>[121][122]</sup> Its work is carried out primarily by subsidiary bodies focused on a wide variety of topics; these include the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which advises UN agencies on issues relating to indigenous peoples; the United Nations Forum on Forests, which coordinates and promotes sustainable forest management; the United Nations Statistical Commission, which co-ordinates information-gathering efforts between agencies; and the Commission on Sustainable Development, which co-ordinates efforts between UN agencies and NGOs working towards sustainable development. ECOSOC may also grant consultative status to nongovernmental organizations;<sup>[121]</sup> as of April 2021, close to 5,600 organizations have this status.<sup>[123][124]</sup>

## Specialized agencies

The UN Charter stipulates that each primary organ of the United Nations can establish various specialized agencies to fulfil its duties.<sup>[125]</sup> Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the United Nations and each other through the co-ordinating machinery of the Economic and Social Council. Each was integrated into the UN system through an agreement with the UN under UN Charter article 57.<sup>[126]</sup> There are fifteen specialized agencies, which perform functions as diverse as facilitating international travel, preventing and address pandemics, and promoting economic development.<sup>[127][b]</sup>



## Specialized agencies of the United Nations

No.	Acronym	Agency	Headquarters	Head	Established in
1	FAO	<b><u>Food and Agriculture Organization</u></b>	 Rome, <u>Italy</u>	 <u>Qu Dongyu</u>	1945
2	ICAO	<b><u>International Civil Aviation Organization</u></b>	 Montreal, Quebec, <u>Canada</u>	 <u>Juan Carlos Salazar</u>	1947
3	IFAD	<b><u>International Fund for Agricultural Development</u></b>	 Rome, <u>Italy</u>	 <u>Gilbert Hounbo</u>	1977
4	ILO	<b><u>International Labour Organization</u></b>	 Geneva, <u>Switzerland</u>	 <u>Guy Ryder</u>	1946 (1919)
5	IMO	<b><u>International Maritime Organization</u></b>	 London, <u>United Kingdom</u>	 <u>Kitack Lim</u>	1948
6	IMF	<b><u>International Monetary Fund</u></b>	 Washington, D.C., <u>United States</u>	 <u>Kristalina Georgieva</u>	1945 (1944)
7	ITU	<b><u>International Telecommunication Union</u></b>	 Geneva, <u>Switzerland</u>	 <u>Houlin Zhao</u>	1947 (1865)
8	UNESCO	<b><u>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</u></b>	 Paris, <u>France</u>	 <u>Audrey Azoulay</u>	1946
9	UNIDO	<b><u>United Nations Industrial Development Organization</u></b>	 Vienna, <u>Austria</u>	 <u>Li Yong</u>	1967
10	UNWTO	<b><u>World Tourism Organization</u></b>	 Madrid, <u>Spain</u>	 <u>Zurab Pololikashvili</u>	1974
11	UPU	<b><u>Universal Postal Union</u></b>	 Bern, <u>Switzerland</u>	 <u>Masahiko Metoki</u>	1947 (1874)
12	WBG	<b><u>World Bank Group</u></b>	 Washington, D.C., <u>United States</u>	 <u>David Malpass</u> (president)	1945 (1944)
13	WHO	<b><u>World Health Organization</u></b>	 Geneva, <u>Switzerland</u>	 <u>Tedros Adhanom</u>	1948
14	WIPO	<b><u>World Intellectual Property Organization</u></b>	 Geneva, <u>Switzerland</u>	 <u>Daren Tang</u>	1974
15	WMO	<b><u>World Meteorological Organization</u></b>	 Geneva, <u>Switzerland</u>	 <u>Petteri Taalas</u> (secretary-general)  <u>Gerhard Adrian</u> (president)	1950 (1873)

## Other bodies

The United Nations system includes a myriad of autonomous, separately-administered funds, programmes, research and training institutes, and other subsidiary bodies.<sup>[128]</sup> Each of these entities have their own area of work, governance structure, and budget; several, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), operate independently of the UN but maintain formal partnership agreements. The UN performs much of its humanitarian work through these institutions, such as preventing famine and malnutrition (World Food Programme), protecting vulnerable and displaced people (UNHCR), and combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic (UNAIDS).<sup>[129]</sup>

## Membership

All the world's undisputed independent states, apart from Vatican City, are members of the United Nations.<sup>[6][c]</sup> South Sudan, which joined 14 July 2011, is the most recent addition, bringing a total of 193 UN member states.<sup>[130]</sup> The UN Charter outlines the rules for membership:

1. Membership in the United Nations is open to all other peace-loving states that accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.
2. The admission of any such state to membership in the United Nations will be effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. Chapter II, Article 4.<sup>[131]</sup>

In addition, there are two non-member observer states of the United Nations General Assembly: the Holy See (which holds sovereignty over Vatican City) and the State of Palestine.<sup>[132]</sup> The Cook Islands and Niue, both states in free association with New Zealand, are full members of several UN specialized agencies and have had their "full treaty-making capacity" recognized by the Secretariat.<sup>[133]</sup>

Indonesia is the first and the only nation to withdraw its membership from the United Nations, in protest to the election of Malaysia as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1965 during conflict between the two countries.<sup>[134]</sup> After forming CONEFO as a short-lived rival to the UN, Indonesia resumed its full membership in 1966.

## Group of 77

The Group of 77 (G77) at the UN is a loose coalition of developing nations, designed to promote its members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the UN. Seventy-seven nations founded the organization, but by November 2013 the organization had since expanded to 133 member countries.<sup>[135]</sup> The group was founded 15 June 1964 by the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The group held its first major meeting in Algiers in 1967, where it adopted the Charter of Algiers and established the basis for permanent institutional structures.<sup>[136]</sup> With the adoption of the New International



Under Sukarno, Indonesia became the first and only country to leave the United Nations.

Economic Order by developing countries in the 1970s, the work of the G77 spread throughout the UN system. Similar groupings of developing states also operate in other UN agencies, such as the Group of 24 (G-24), which operates in the IMF on monetary affairs.

## Objectives

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### Peacekeeping and security

The UN, after approval by the Security Council, sends peacekeepers to regions where armed conflict has recently ceased or paused to enforce the terms of peace agreements and to discourage combatants from resuming hostilities. Since the UN does not maintain its own military, peacekeeping forces are voluntarily provided by member states. These soldiers are sometimes nicknamed "Blue Helmets" for their distinctive gear.<sup>[137][138]</sup> Peacekeeping forces as a whole received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988.<sup>[139]</sup>



A Nepalese soldier on a peacekeeping deployment providing security at a rice distribution site in Haiti during 2010

The UN has carried out 71 peacekeeping operations since 1947; as of April 2021, over 88,000 peacekeeping personnel from 121 nations were deployed on 12 missions, mostly in Africa.<sup>[140]</sup> The largest is the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which has close to 19,200 uniformed personnel;<sup>[141]</sup> the smallest, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), consists of 113 civilians and experts charged with monitoring the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir. UN peacekeepers with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) have been stationed in the Middle East since 1948, the longest-running active peacekeeping mission.<sup>[142]</sup>

A study by the RAND Corporation in 2005 found the UN to be successful in two out of three peacekeeping efforts. It compared efforts at nation-building by the UN to those of the United States, and found that seven out of eight UN cases are at peace, as compared with four out of eight U.S. cases at peace.<sup>[143]</sup> Also in 2005, the Human Security Report documented a decline in the number of wars, genocides, and human rights abuses since the end of the Cold War, and presented evidence, albeit circumstantial, that international activism—mostly spearheaded by the UN—has been the main cause of the decline in armed conflict in that period.<sup>[144]</sup> Situations in which the UN has not only acted to keep the peace but also intervened include the Korean War (1950–53) and the authorization of intervention in Iraq after the Gulf War (1990–91).<sup>[145]</sup> Further studies published between 2008 and 2021 determined UN peacekeeping operations to be more effective at ensuring long-lasting peace and minimizing civilian casualties.<sup>[146]</sup>

The UN has also drawn criticism for perceived failures. In many cases, member states have shown reluctance to achieve or enforce Security Council resolutions. Disagreements in the Security Council about military action and intervention are seen as having failed to prevent the Bangladesh genocide in 1971,<sup>[147]</sup> the Cambodian genocide in the 1970s,<sup>[148]</sup> and the Rwandan genocide in 1994.<sup>[149]</sup> Similarly, UN inaction is blamed for failing to either prevent the Srebrenica massacre in 1995 or complete the peacekeeping operations in 1992–93 during the Somali Civil War.<sup>[150]</sup> UN peacekeepers have also been accused of child rape, soliciting prostitutes, and sexual abuse during various peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,<sup>[151]</sup> Haiti,<sup>[152]</sup> Liberia,<sup>[153]</sup> Sudan and what is now South

Sudan,<sup>[154]</sup> Burundi, and Ivory Coast.<sup>[155]</sup> Scientists cited UN peacekeepers from Nepal as the likely source of the 2010–13 Haiti cholera outbreak, which killed more than 8,000 Haitians following the 2010 Haiti earthquake.<sup>[156]</sup>

In addition to peacekeeping, the UN is also active in encouraging disarmament. Regulation of armaments was included in the writing of the UN Charter in 1945 and was envisioned as a way of limiting the use of human and economic resources for their creation.<sup>[102]</sup> The advent of nuclear weapons came only weeks after the signing of the charter, resulting in the first resolution of the first General Assembly meeting calling for specific proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction".<sup>[157]</sup> The UN has been involved with arms-limitation treaties, such as the Outer Space Treaty (1967), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), the Seabed Arms Control Treaty (1971), the Biological Weapons Convention (1972), the Chemical Weapons Convention (1992), and the Ottawa Treaty (1997), which prohibits landmines.<sup>[158]</sup> Three UN bodies oversee arms proliferation issues: the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission.<sup>[159]</sup> Additionally, many peacekeeping missions focus on disarmament: several operations in West Africa disarmed roughly 250,000 former combatants and secured tens of thousands of weapons and millions of munitions.<sup>[160]</sup>



The UN Buffer Zone in Cyprus was established in 1974 following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

## Human rights

One of the UN's primary purposes is "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion", and member states pledge to undertake "joint and separate action" to protect these rights.<sup>[125][161]</sup>



Eleanor Roosevelt with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1949

In 1948, the General Assembly adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drafted by a committee headed by American diplomat and activist Eleanor Roosevelt, and including the French lawyer René Cassin. The document proclaims basic civil, political, and economic rights common to all human beings, though its effectiveness towards achieving these ends has been disputed since its drafting.<sup>[162]</sup> The Declaration serves as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" rather than a legally binding document, but it has become the basis of two binding treaties, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>[163]</sup> In practice, the UN is unable to take significant action against human rights abuses without a Security Council resolution, though it does substantial work in investigating and reporting abuses.<sup>[164]</sup>

In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, followed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.<sup>[165]</sup> With the end of the Cold War, the push for human rights action took on new impetus.<sup>[166]</sup> The United Nations Commission on Human Rights was formed in 1993 to oversee human rights issues for the UN, following the recommendation of that year's World Conference on Human Rights. Jacques Fomerand, a scholar of the UN, describes this organization's mandate as "broad and vague", with only "meagre" resources to



carry it out.<sup>[167]</sup> In 2006, it was replaced by a Human Rights Council consisting of 47 nations.<sup>[168]</sup> Also in 2006, the General Assembly passed a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,<sup>[169]</sup> and in 2011 it passed its first resolution recognizing the rights of LGBT people.<sup>[170]</sup>

Other UN bodies responsible for women's rights issues include United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a commission of ECOSOC founded in 1946; the United Nations Development Fund for Women, created in 1976; and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, founded in 1979.<sup>[171]</sup> The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, one of three bodies with a mandate to oversee issues related to indigenous peoples, held its first session in 2002.<sup>[172]</sup>

## Economic development and humanitarian assistance

Another primary purpose of the UN is "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character".<sup>[161]</sup> Numerous bodies have been created to work towards this goal, primarily under the authority of the General Assembly and ECOSOC.<sup>[174]</sup> In 2000, the 192 UN member states agreed to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015.<sup>[175]</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals were launched in 2015 to succeed the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>[78]</sup> The SDGs have an associated financing framework called the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

### Millennium Development Goals<sup>[173]</sup>

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), an organization for grant-based technical assistance founded in 1945, is one of the leading bodies in the field of international development. The organization also publishes the UN Human Development Index, a comparative measure ranking countries by poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy, and other factors.<sup>[176][177]</sup> The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), also founded in 1945, promotes agricultural development and food security.<sup>[178]</sup> UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) was created in 1946 to aid European children after the Second World War and expanded its mission to provide aid around the world and to uphold the convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>[179][180]</sup>

The World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are independent, specialized agencies and observers within the UN framework, according to a 1947 agreement. They were initially formed separately from the UN through the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944.<sup>[181]</sup> The World Bank provides loans for international development, while the IMF promotes international economic co-operation and gives emergency loans to indebted countries.<sup>[182]</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO), which focuses on international health issues and disease eradication, is another of the UN's largest agencies. In 1980, the agency announced that the eradication of smallpox had been completed. In subsequent decades, WHO largely eradicated polio, river blindness, and leprosy.<sup>[183]</sup> The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), begun in 1996, coordinates the organization's response to the AIDS epidemic.<sup>[184]</sup> The UN Population Fund, which also dedicates part of its resources to combating HIV, is the world's largest source of funding for reproductive health and family planning services.<sup>[185]</sup>



Three former directors of the Global Smallpox Eradication Programme reading the news that smallpox has been globally eradicated in 1980

Along with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the UN often takes a leading role in co-ordinating emergency relief.<sup>[186]</sup> The World Food Programme (WFP), created in 1961, provides food aid in response to famine, natural disasters, and armed conflict. The organization reports that it feeds an average of 90 million people in 80 nations each year.<sup>[186][187]</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in 1950, works to protect the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless people.<sup>[188]</sup> UNHCR and WFP programmes are funded by voluntary contributions from governments,



In Jordan, UNHCR remains responsible for the Syrian refugees and the Zaatari refugee camp.

corporations, and individuals, though the UNHCR's administrative costs are paid for by the UN's primary budget.<sup>[189]</sup>

Other global issues

Since the UN's creation, over 80 colonies have attained independence. The General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960 with no votes against but abstentions from all major colonial powers. The UN works towards decolonization through groups including the UN Committee on Decolonization, created in 1962.<sup>[190]</sup> The committee lists seventeen remaining "Non-Self-Governing Territories", the largest and most populous of which is Western Sahara.<sup>[191]</sup>

Beginning with the formation of the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1972, the UN has made environmental issues a prominent part of its agenda. A lack of success in the first two decades of UN work in this area led to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which sought to give new impetus to these efforts.<sup>[192]</sup> In 1988, the UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), another UN organization, established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which assesses and reports on research on global warming.<sup>[193]</sup> The UN-sponsored Kyoto Protocol, signed in 1997, set legally binding emissions reduction targets for ratifying states.<sup>[194]</sup>

The UN also declares and co-ordinates international observances that bring awareness to issues of international interest or concern; examples include World Tuberculosis Day, Earth Day, and the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.<sup>[195]</sup>

Funding

The UN budget for 2020 was \$3.1 billion,<sup>[197]</sup> not including additional resources donated by members, such as peacekeeping forces.

The UN is financed from assessed and voluntary contributions from member states. The General Assembly approves the regular budget and determines the assessment for each member. This is broadly based

Top 25 contributors to the United Nations budget for the period 2019–2021<sup>[196]</sup>

Member state	Contribution (% of UN budget)
<u>United States</u>	22.000
<u>China</u>	12.005
<u>Japan</u>	8.564

on the relative capacity of each country to pay, as measured by its gross national income (GNI), with adjustments for external debt and low per capita income.<sup>[198]</sup>

The Assembly has established the principle that the UN should not be unduly dependent on any one member to finance its operations. Thus, there is a "ceiling" rate, setting the maximum amount that any member can be assessed for the regular budget. In December 2000, the Assembly revised the scale of assessments in response to pressure from the United States. As part of that revision, the regular budget ceiling was reduced from 25% to 22%.<sup>[199]</sup> For the least developed countries (LDCs), a ceiling rate of 0.01% is applied.<sup>[198]</sup> In addition to the ceiling rates, the minimum amount assessed to any member nation (or "floor" rate) is set at 0.001% of the UN budget (\$55,120 for the two year budget 2013–2014).<sup>[200]</sup>

A large share of the UN's expenditure addresses its core mission of peace and security, and this budget is assessed separately from the main organizational budget.<sup>[201]</sup> The peacekeeping budget for the 2015–16 fiscal year was \$8.27 billion, supporting 82,318 troops deployed in 15 missions around the world.<sup>[142]</sup> UN peace operations are funded by assessments, using a formula derived from the regular funding scale that includes a weighted surcharge for the five permanent Security Council members, who must approve all peacekeeping operations. This surcharge serves to offset discounted peacekeeping assessment rates for less developed countries. The largest contributors for the UN peacekeeping financial operations for the period 2019–2021 are : the United States (27.89%), China (15.21%), Japan (8.56%), Germany (6.09%), the United Kingdom (5.78%), France (5.61%), Italy (3.30%), and Russia (3.04%).<sup>[202]</sup>

	<b>Germany</b>	6.090
	<b>United Kingdom</b>	4.567
	<b>France</b>	4.427
	<b>Italy</b>	3.307
	<b>Brazil</b>	2.948
	<b>Canada</b>	2.734
	<b>Russia</b>	2.405
	<b>South Korea</b>	2.267
	<b>Australia</b>	2.210
	<b>Spain</b>	2.146
	<b>Turkey</b>	1.371
	<b>Netherlands</b>	1.356
	<b>Mexico</b>	1.292
	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	1.172
	<b>Switzerland</b>	1.151
	<b>Argentina</b>	0.915
	<b>Sweden</b>	0.906
	<b>India</b>	0.834
	<b>Belgium</b>	0.821
	<b>Poland</b>	0.802
	<b>Algeria</b>	0.788
	<b>Norway</b>	0.754
	<b>Other member states</b>	12.168

Special UN programmes not included in the regular budget, such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme, are financed by voluntary contributions from member governments, corporations, and private individuals.<sup>[203][204]</sup>

## Evaluations, awards, and criticism

### Evaluations

In evaluating the UN as a whole, Jacques Fomerand writes that the "accomplishments of the United Nations in the last 60 years are impressive in their own terms. Progress in human development during the 20th century has been dramatic, and the UN and its agencies have certainly helped the world become a more hospitable and livable place for millions".<sup>[205]</sup> Evaluating the first 50 years of the UN's history, the author Stanley Meisler writes that "the United Nations never fulfilled the hopes of its founders, but it accomplished a great deal nevertheless", citing its role in decolonization and its many successful peacekeeping efforts.<sup>[206]</sup>



The 2001 Nobel Peace Prize to the UN—diploma in the lobby of the UN Headquarters in New York City

British historian Paul Kennedy states that while the organization has suffered some major setbacks, "when all its aspects are considered, the UN has brought great benefits to our generation and ... will bring benefits to our children's and grandchildren's generations as well."<sup>[207]</sup>

Former French President François Hollande stated in 2012 that "France trusts the United Nations. She knows that no state, no matter how powerful, can solve urgent problems, fight for development and bring an end to all crises ... France wants the UN to be the centre of global governance".<sup>[208]</sup> In his 1953 address to the United States Committee for United Nations Day, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed the view that, for all its flaws, "the United Nations represents man's best organized hope to substitute

the conference table for the battlefield".<sup>[209]</sup>

UN peacekeeping missions are assessed to be generally successful. An analysis of 47 peace operations by Virginia Page Fortna of Columbia University found that UN-led conflict resolution usually resulted in long-term peace.<sup>[210]</sup> Political scientists Hanne Fjelde, Lisa Hultman and Desiree Nilsson of Uppsala University studied twenty years of data on peacekeeping missions, including in Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic, concluding that they were more effective at reducing civilian casualties than counterterrorism operations by nation states.<sup>[211]</sup> Georgetown University professor Lise Howard postulates that UN peacekeeping operations are more effective due to their emphasis on "verbal persuasion, financial inducements and coercion short of offensive military force, including surveillance and arrest", which are likelier to change the behavior of warring parties.<sup>[146]</sup>

## Awards

A number of agencies and individuals associated with the UN have won the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their work. Two Secretaries-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, and Kofi Annan, were each awarded the prize (in 1961 and 2001, respectively), as were Ralph Bunche (1950), a UN negotiator, René Cassin (1968), a contributor to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull (1945), the latter for his role in the organization's founding. Lester B. Pearson, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, was awarded the prize in 1957 for his role in organizing the UN's first peacekeeping force to resolve the Suez Crisis. UNICEF won the prize in 1965, the International Labour Organization in 1969, the UN Peacekeeping Forces in 1988, the International Atomic Energy Agency (which reports to the UN) in 2005, and the UN-supported Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in 2013. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees was awarded in 1954 and 1981, becoming one of only two recipients to win the prize twice. The UN as a whole was awarded the prize in 2001, sharing it with Annan.<sup>[212]</sup> In 2007, IPCC received the prize "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change."<sup>[213]</sup>

## Criticism

### Role

In a sometimes-misquoted statement, U.S. President George W. Bush stated in February 2003—referring to UN uncertainty towards Iraqi provocations under the Saddam Hussein regime—that "free nations will not allow the UN to fade into history as an ineffective, irrelevant debating



society."<sup>[214][215][216]</sup>

In 2020, President Barack Obama in his memoir *A Promised Land* noted, "In the middle of the Cold War, the chances of reaching any consensus had been slim, which is why the U.N. had stood idle as Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary or U.S. planes dropped napalm on the Vietnamese countryside. Even after the Cold War, divisions within the Security Council continued to hamstring the U.N.'s ability to tackle problems. Its member states lacked either the means or the collective will to reconstruct failing states like Somalia, or prevent ethnic slaughter in places like Sri Lanka."<sup>[217][218]</sup>



Marking of the UN's 70th anniversary – Budapest, 2015

Since its founding, there have been many calls for reform of the UN but little consensus on how to do so. Some want the UN to play a greater or more effective role in world affairs, while others want its role reduced to humanitarian work.

## Representation and structure

Core features of the UN apparatus, such as the veto privileges of some nations in the Security Council, are often described as fundamentally undemocratic, contrary to the UN mission, and as a main cause of inaction on genocides and crimes against humanity.<sup>[219][220]</sup>

Jacques Fomerand states the most enduring divide in views of the UN is "the North–South split" between richer Northern nations and developing Southern nations. Southern nations tend to favour a more empowered UN with a stronger General Assembly, allowing them a greater voice in world affairs, while Northern nations prefer an economically laissez-faire UN that focuses on transnational threats such as terrorism.<sup>[221]</sup>

There have also been numerous calls for the UN Security Council's membership to be increased, for different ways of electing the UN's Secretary-General, and for a UN Parliamentary Assembly.

## Exclusion of countries

After World War II, the French Committee of National Liberation was late to be recognized by the U.S. as the government of France, and so the country was initially excluded from the conferences that created the new organization. Future French president Charles de Gaulle criticized the UN, famously calling it a *machin* ("contraption"), and was not convinced that a global security alliance would help maintain world peace, preferring direct defence treaties between countries.<sup>[222]</sup>

Since 1971, the Republic of China on Taiwan has been excluded from the UN and since then has always been rejected in new applications. Taiwanese citizens are also not allowed to enter the buildings of the United Nations with ROC passports. In this way, critics agree that the UN is failing its own development goals and guidelines. This criticism also brought pressure from the People's Republic of China, which regards the territories administered by the ROC as their own territory.<sup>[223][224]</sup>

## Independence

Throughout the Cold War, both the US and USSR repeatedly accused the UN of favouring the other. In 1953, the USSR effectively forced the resignation of Trygve Lie, the Secretary-General, through its refusal to deal with him, while in the 1950s and 1960s, a popular US bumper sticker read, "You can't spell communism without U.N."<sup>[225]</sup>

## Bias

Critics such as Dore Gold, an Israeli diplomat, Robert S. Wistrich, a British scholar, Alan Dershowitz, an American legal scholar, Mark Dreyfus, an Australian politician, and the Anti-Defamation League consider UN attention to Israel's treatment of Palestinians to be excessive.<sup>[226]</sup> In September 2015, Saudi Arabia's Faisal bin Hassan Trad was elected Chair of the UN Human Rights Council panel that appoints independent experts,<sup>[227]</sup> a move criticized by human rights groups.<sup>[228][229]</sup>

## Effectiveness

The United States has preferred a feeble United Nations in major projects undertaken by the UN so as to forestall UN interference with, or resistance to, United States policies, according to international relations scholar Edward Luck, former director of the Center on International Organization of the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University. "The last thing the U.S. wants is an independent U.N. throwing its weight around," Luck said. Similarly, former US Ambassador to the United Nations Daniel Patrick Moynihan explained that "The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. The task was given to me, and I carried it forward with not inconsiderable success."<sup>[230]</sup>

In 1994, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN to Somalia Mohamed Sahnoun published "Somalia: The Missed Opportunities",<sup>[231]</sup> a book in which he analyses the reasons for the failure of the 1992 UN intervention in Somalia, showing that, between the start of the Somali civil war in 1988 and the fall of the Siad Barre regime in January 1991, the UN missed at least three opportunities to prevent major human tragedies; when the UN tried to provide humanitarian assistance, they were totally outperformed by NGOs, whose competence and dedication sharply contrasted with the UN's excessive caution and bureaucratic inefficiencies. If radical reform were not undertaken, warned Mohamed Sahnoun, then the UN would continue to respond to such crises with inept improvisation.<sup>[232]</sup>

## Inefficiency and corruption

Critics have also accused the UN of bureaucratic inefficiency, waste, and corruption. In 1976, the General Assembly established the Joint Inspection Unit to seek out inefficiencies within the UN system. During the 1990s, the US withheld dues citing inefficiency and only started repayment on the condition that a major reforms initiative be introduced. In 1994, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was established by the General Assembly to serve as an efficiency watchdog.<sup>[233]</sup>

In 2004, the UN faced accusations that its recently ended Oil-for-Food Programme — in which Iraq had been allowed to trade oil for basic needs to relieve the pressure of sanctions — had suffered from widespread corruption, including billions of dollars of kickbacks. An independent inquiry created by the UN found that many of its officials had been involved, as well as raising "significant" questions about the role of Kojo Annan, the son of Kofi Annan.<sup>[234]</sup>

## Model United Nations

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The United Nations has inspired the extracurricular activity Model United Nations (MUN). MUN is a simulation of United Nations activity based on the UN agenda and following UN procedure. MUN is usually attended by high school and university students who organize conferences to simulate the various UN committees to discuss important issues of the day.<sup>[235]</sup> Today, Model United Nations

educates tens of thousands on United Nations activity around the world. Model United Nations has many famous and notable alumni, such as former Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon.<sup>[236]</sup>

## See also

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- International relations
- List of country groupings
- List of current Permanent Representatives to the United Nations
- List of multilateral free-trade agreements
- United Nations in popular culture
- United Nations Memorial Cemetery
- United Nations television film series
- World Summit on the Information Society
- Spying on United Nations leaders by United States diplomats

## Notes

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- a. Poland had not been represented among the fifty nations at the San Francisco conference due to the reluctance of the Western superpowers to recognize its post-war communist government. However, the Charter was later amended to list Poland as a founding member, and Poland ratified the Charter on 16 October 1945.<sup>[36][37]</sup>
- b. Some sources identify seventeen specialized agencies, taking into account the three specialized agencies that make up the World Bank Group, which is now treated as one organization: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).
- c. For details on Vatican City's status, see Holy See and the United Nations.

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## External links

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- Records of the UN Registry (<https://search.archives.un.org/united-nations-registry-section-1946-1979>) at the United Nations Archives

## Official websites

- Official website (<https://www.un.org/>) 
- The United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) (<https://www.unric.org/>)
- United Nations Volunteers (<https://www.unv.org/>)
- United Nations Documentation Research Guide (<http://research.un.org/en/docs>)
- Official YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5O114-PQNYkurlTg6hekZw>) (English)

## Others

- Searchable archive (<http://www.undemocracy.com/>) of UN discussions and votes
- United Nations Association of the UK (<http://www.una.org.uk/>) – independent policy authority on the UN
- Website (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/>) of the Global Policy Forum, an independent think tank on the UN
- UN Watch (<http://www.unwatch.org/>) – NGO monitoring UN activities
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