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United Nations

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 Member States.

Its mission and work are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter and implemented by its various organs and specialised agencies.

Its activities include maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights, delivering humanitarian aid, promoting sustainable development and upholding international law.

History of UN Foundation

- In 1899, the International Peace Conference was held in The Hague to elaborate instruments for settling crises peacefully, preventing wars and codifying rules of warfare.
 - It adopted the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes and established the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which began work in 1902. This court was the forerunner of the UN International Court of Justice.
- The forerunner of the United Nations was the League of Nations, an organization conceived in circumstances of the First World War, and established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles "to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security."
 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) was also created in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League.
- The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A document called The Declaration by the United Nations was signed in 1942 by 26 nations, pledging their Governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers (Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis) and bound them against making a separate peace.
- United Nations Conference on International Organization (1945)
 - Conference held in San Francisco (USA), was attended by representatives of 50 countries and signed the United Nations Charter.
- The UN Charter of 1945 is the foundational treaty of the United Nations, as an intergovernmental organization.

Components

The main organs of the UN are

1. the General Assembly,
2. the Security Council,
3. the Economic and Social Council,
4. the Trusteeship Council,
5. the International Court of Justice,
6. and the UN Secretariat.

All the 6 were established in 1945 when the UN was founded.

1. General Assembly

- The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.
- All 193 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, 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 President of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term of office.
- 6 Main Committees: Draft resolutions can be prepared for the General Assembly by its six main committees: (1) First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), (2) Second Committee (Economic and Financial), (3) Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural), (4) Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization), (5) Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), (6) Sixth Committee (Legal).
 - Each Member State may be represented by one person on each Main Committee and on any other committee that may be established upon which all Member States have the right to be represented.
 - Member States may also assign advisers, technical advisers, experts or persons of similar status to these committees.
- Other Committees:

- General Committee: It meets periodically throughout each session to review the progress of the General Assembly and its committees and to make recommendations for furthering such progress. It is composed of the President of the General Assembly and 21 Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the Chairmen of the six Main Committees. The five permanent members of the Security Council serve as Vice-Presidents, as well.
- Credentials Committee: It is mandated to examine the credentials of representatives of Member States and to report to the General Assembly.

2. Security Council

- It has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- 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 on a regional basis.
- "Veto power" refers to the power of the permanent member to veto (Reject) any resolution of Security Council.
- The unconditional veto possessed by the five governments has been seen as the most undemocratic character of the UN.
- Critics also claim that veto power is the main cause for international inaction on war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, the United States refused to join the United Nations in 1945 unless it was given a veto. The absence of the United States from the League of Nations contributed to its ineffectiveness. Supporters of the veto power regard it as a promoter of international stability, a check against military interventions, and a critical safeguard against U.S. domination.

3. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

- It 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 has 54 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.
- Each year, ECOSOC structures its work around an annual theme of global importance to sustainable development. This ensures focused attention, among ECOSOC's array of partners, and throughout the UN development system.
- It coordinates the work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, ten functional commissions and five regional commissions, receives reports from nine UN funds and programmes and issues policy recommendations to the UN system and to Member States.

4. Trusteeship Council

- It was established in 1945 by the UN Charter, under Chapter XIII.
- Trust territory is a non-self-governing territory placed under an administrative authority by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations.
- A League of Nations mandate was a legal status for certain territories transferred from the control of one country to another following World War I, or the legal instruments that contained the internationally agreed-upon terms for administering the territory on behalf of the League of Nations.
- United Nations trust territories were the successors of the remaining League of Nations mandates, and came into being when the League of Nations ceased to exist in 1946.
- It had 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.

5. International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- The ICJ is the successor of the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), which was established by the League of Nations in 1920.

6. Secretariat

- The Secretariat comprises the Secretary-General 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 organs.
- The Secretary-General is chief administrative officer of the Organization, appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year, renewable term.
- UN staff members are recruited internationally and locally, and work in duty stations and on peacekeeping missions all around the world.

Funds, Programmes, Specialized Agencies and Others

The UN system, also known unofficially as the "UN family", is made up of the UN itself (6 main organs) and many affiliated programmes, funds, and specialized agencies, all with their own membership, leadership, and budget.

Specialized agencies

- International labour Organization (ILO)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Bank Group
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- World Tourism Organization (WTO)

Functional commissions

- Statistical Commission
- Commission on Population and Development
- Commission for Social Development
- Commission on Human Rights

- Commission on the Status of Women
- Commission on Narcotic Drugs
- Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Commission on Science and Technology for Development
- Commission on Sustainable Development
- United Nations Forum on Forests

Regional Commissions

- Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Standing Committees

- Committee for Programme and Coordination
- Commission on Human Settlements
- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Committee on Negotiations with Intergovernmental Agencies
- Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Related bodies

- International Narcotics Control Board
- Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
- Committee for the United Nations Population Award
- Programme Coordination Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- Funds and programmes which send reports to ECOSOC
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP)
- World Food Programme (WFP)

- UN-HABITAT

Funds and Programmes

- **UNICEF**

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946, to provide emergency food and healthcare to children and mothers in countries that had been devastated by World War II.
- In 1950, UNICEF's mandate was extended to address the long-term needs of children and women in developing countries everywhere.
- In 1953, it became a permanent part of the United Nations System, and the words "international" and "emergency" were dropped from the organization's name, though it retained the original acronym, "UNICEF".
- Executive Board: A 36-member board establishes policies, approves programs and oversees administrative and financial plans. The members are government representatives who are elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), usually for three-year terms.
- UNICEF relies on contributions from governments and private donors.
- UNICEF's Supply Division is based in Copenhagen (Denmark) and serves as the primary point of distribution for such essential items as vaccines, antiretroviral medicines for children and mothers with HIV, nutritional supplements, emergency shelters, family reunification, and educational supplies.

- **UNFPA**

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), formerly the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency.
- Its mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, 'every childbirth is safe' and every young person's potential is fulfilled.
- In 2018, UNFPA launched efforts to achieve three transformative results, ambitions that promise to change the world for every man, woman and young person:
 - Ending unmet need for family planning
 - Ending preventable maternal death
 - Ending gender-based violence and harmful practices

- **UNDP**

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network.

- UNDP was established in 1965 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.
- It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries.
- The UNDP Executive Board is made up of representatives from 36 countries around the world who serve on a rotating basis.
- It is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from member nations.
- UNDP is central to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), a network that spans 165 countries and unites the 40 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other bodies working to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **UNEP**
 - The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) is a global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system.
 - It was founded by the UN General Assembly as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972.
 - UNEP and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 to assess climate change based on the latest science.
 - Since its founding, the UNEP has played a key role for the development of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). The secretariats for the following nine MEAs are currently hosted by UNEP:
 - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
 - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
 - Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer
 - Minamata Convention on Mercury
 - Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal
 - Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
 - Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- **UN-Habitat**

- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future.
- Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.
- It was established in 1978 as an outcome of the First UN Conference on Human Settlements and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat I) in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976.
- 2nd United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996, set the twin goals of the Habitat Agenda:
 - Adequate shelter for all
 - Development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.
- 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) was held in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. It elaborated on Goal-11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."
- **WFP**
 - World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
 - The WFP was established in 1963 by the FAO (The Food and Agriculture Organization) and the United Nations General Assembly.

UN Specialized Agencies

The UN specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the United Nations. All were brought into a relationship with the UN through negotiated agreements.

Some existed even before the First World War. Some were associated with the League of Nations. Others were created almost simultaneously with the UN. Others were created by the UN to meet emerging needs.

Articles 57 and 63 of the UN Charter provides provision of creating specialised agencies.

- **FAO**
 - In 1945, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was created In Quebec City, Canada, by the first session of the newly created United Nations.
 - FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

- FAO is also a source of knowledge and information, and helps developing countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.
- **ICAO**
 - Under the Chicago Convention, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) was established in 1944, as a UN specialized agency. It manages the administration and governance of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).
 - It provides the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.
- **IFAD**
 - The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was established as an international financial institution in 1977 through United Nations General Assembly Resolution as one of the major outcomes of the 1974–World Food Conference.
 - This conference was organized by the United Nations in response to the food crises of the early 1970s, when global food shortages were causing widespread famine and malnutrition, primarily in the Sahelian countries of Africa. It was realized that food insecurity and famine were not so much failures in food production but structural problems relating to poverty.
- **ILO**
 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social justice and promote decent work by setting international labour standards.
 - It sets international labour standards, promotes rights at work and encourages decent employment opportunities, the enhancement of social protection and the strengthening of dialogue on work-related issues.
 - As an agency of the League of Nations, it was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I.
 - 9 International Labour Conventions and 10 Recommendations which dealt with hours of work in industry, unemployment, maternity protection, night work for women, minimum age, and night work for young persons in industry were adopted in less than two years (by 1922).
 - By signing of the United Nation agreement whereby the ILO became the first United Nations specialized agency in 1946.
 - The Organization won the Nobel Peace Prize on its 50th anniversary in 1969 for pursuing decent work and justice for workers.
 - In 1980, the ILO played a major role in the emancipation of Poland from dictatorship by giving its full support to the legitimacy of the Solidarnosc

Union, based on respect for Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, which Poland had ratified in 1957.

- It emphasised that the future of work is not predetermined: Decent work for all is possible but societies have to make it happen. It is precisely with this imperative that the ILO established its Global Commission on the Future of Work as part of its initiative to mark its centenary in 2019.
 - Its job is to undertake an in-depth examination of the future of work that can provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21st century.

- **IMF**

- UN Monetary and Financial Conference (1944, also called Bretton Woods Conference), Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, United States was held to regulate the international monetary and financial order after the conclusion of World War II.
 - It resulted in the foundation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1945.

- **World Bank**

- UN Monetary and Financial Conference (1944, also called Bretton Woods Conference), was held to regulate the international monetary and financial order after the conclusion of World War II. It resulted in the foundation of IBRD in 1945. IBRD is the founding institution of World Bank

- **IMO**

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.

- **ITU**

- International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that is responsible for issues that concern information and communication technologies (ICT). It is the oldest among all the specialised agencies of the UN.
- It was founded in 1865 and based in Geneva, Switzerland. It works on the principle of international cooperation between governments (Member States) and the private sector (Sector Members, Associates and Academia).
- ITU is the premier global forum through which parties work towards consensus on a wide range of issues affecting the future direction of the ICT industry.
- It allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, develops the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly

interconnect, and strives to improve access to ICTs to underserved communities worldwide.

- **UNESCO**

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in 1945 to develop the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” as a means of building lasting peace. It is located in Paris (France).
- In this spirit, UNESCO develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance.
- By promoting cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures, UNESCO strengthens bonds among nations.

- **UNIDO**

- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalisation and environmental sustainability.

- **WHO**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nations’ specialized agency for health.
- It was established in 1948, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It is an intergovernmental organization and works in collaboration with its Member States usually through the Ministries of Health.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) is responsible for
 - providing leadership on global health matters,
 - shaping the health research agenda,
 - setting norms and standards,
 - providing evidence-based policy options,
 - providing technical support to countries,
 - and monitoring and assessing health trends.

- **UNCTAD**

- UNCTAD supports developing countries to access the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively. It helps to use trade, investment, finance, and technology as vehicles for inclusive and sustainable development.

- **UNODC**

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime.
- It was established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention.

- UNODC is mandated to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.
- **UNHCR**
 - The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950, during the aftermath of the Second World War, to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes.
 - In 1954, UNHCR won the Nobel Peace Prize for its groundbreaking work in Europe.
 - The start of the 21st century has seen UNHCR help with major refugee crises in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.
 - It also uses its expertise to help many internally displaced by conflict and expanded its role in helping stateless people.
- **ESCAP**
 - United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the main economic and social development centre of the UN in the region, headquartered in Bangkok (Thailand) in 1947.
 - It responds to the development needs and priorities of the region through its convening authority, economic and social analysis, normative standard-setting and technical assistance.



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