

International Organizations – The United Nations

A variety of international organizations are needed to help keep the peace and to ensure that rules and regulations are followed. The largest and most visible international organization is the United Nations. Created in 1945, the United Nations is entrusted with a huge mandate, which includes monitoring and helping to resolve international conflicts, human rights issues, disputes on the application of international law, war crimes, and humanitarian aid, just to name a few. However, the United Nations is not a world government, but an association of sovereign states and thus cannot make laws. Its primary role is to resolve international conflicts.

According to its charter, the UN has **four purposes**:

1. to maintain international peace and security
2. to develop friendly relations among nations
3. to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights
4. to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of countries

The United Nations overall mission is to *promote peaceful resolutions between states and to promote social progress and better living standards.*

Did You Know?

The United Nations is not the first international organization formed to prevent war between nations. After World War I, the Treaty of Versailles made a provision to create an international organization, known as the *League of Nations*. The mandate of the League of Nations was to avoid another world war and to settle disputes among countries peacefully. It aided in reducing armaments, and improved the quality of life for all people. The failure of the United States to join the League, the League's inability to stop Mussolini from attacking Ethiopia, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and the aggression of Hitler in the 1930s all showed the weaknesses that existed within the organization. While the League of Nations failed to prevent another world war and officially ceased to exist in 1946, the idea of the League served as the basis of the new United Nations.

The United Nations and Its Structure

The United Nations has six main branches or bodies, known as organs:

- The General Assembly
- The Security Council
- The Secretariat
- Economic and Social Council
- Trustee Council
- International Court of Justice

Activity

Answer all questions.

PART A:

Refer to the website www.un.org/en and answer the following:

1. When and under what circumstances was the United Nations founded?
2. Give two reasons why the *League of Nations* failed as an institution to preserve peace.
3. What is a Charter?
4. According to its Charter, what are the main aims of the United Nations?
5. What are the main bodies (aka 'organs') of the UN?
6. How many countries belong to the UN?
7. How does a country join the UN as a member state?
8. Name one country that is not a UN member.
9. How much does it cost to operate the UN?
10. Which of the UN's several activities gets most of the funding?
11. What does the UN Secretary-General do?
12. Who is the current UN Secretary-General?
13. How is the Secretary-General appointed?
14. What does the General Assembly do?
15. What does the Security Council do?
16. How many countries are permanent members of the Security Council? Which ones are they?
17. Which countries are the current non-permanent members of the Security Council?
18. When was the last time Canada was on the Security Council?
19. What is the role of the *Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC)?
20. What are the main functions of the *International Court of Justice* (ICJ)?
21. Where is the ICJ?
22. How does the ICJ differ from the *International Criminal Court*?
23. The UN stresses human rights. Upon what document does the organization depend for guidance on such matters?
24. Name one thing the UN does under the heading of humanitarian relief.
25. What UN agencies go by the following acronyms: ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, IMF, ICAO, UPU, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, IFAD, INIDO, IAEA, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF

PART B:

Complete the following organizer in point form:

UN Organ	Description, Functions, and Powers
General Assembly	
Security Council	
Secretariat	
Economic and Social Council	
Trustee Council	
International Court of Justice	

26. View YouTube Video, “Who Needs the United Nations: Reforming the UN” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kS1aiBCSbjo>

27. The United Nations has been criticized for a variety of shortcomings. Read the article *United Nations Reform* provided, and refer the to UN websites www.un.org/reform and www.un.org/ga/president/62/issues/reform.shtml including, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_the_United_Nations to identify and list what appear to be the organization’s current woes and what it proposes to do about them. Write a point-form response to this task.