



4 The United Nations (UN)

What are we going to learn in this chapter? The United Nations, an international organisation was established to ensure peace and security at the international level. In the present chapter, we shall study its objectives, principles, structure and role in securing peace.

The United Nations: A Background

Two world wars were fought at the start of the twentieth century. Life and property were destroyed on a large scale in these wars. As a result, the League of Nations was established after the First World War and the United Nations was established after the Second World War out of a realisation that there has to be a mechanism to establish world peace. The League of Nations did not succeed at all. But after the use of the nuclear weapons in the Second World War, the idea took root that such destructive wars should be stopped and that it is the collective responsibility of all nations to do so. The United Nations was established after the Second World War to instill this understanding among all nations.

Chronology of the establishment of the United Nations

The Atlantic Treaty was signed between Prime Minister of England Sir Winston Churchill and American President Franklin D Roosevelt during the Second World War on 14th August 1941. According to this treaty, a decision was taken to set up a permanent mechanism to establish international security after the Second World War was over. Detailed discussions followed on this decision in two conferences among allied powers in 1944 and 1945 and a draft of the treaty to

establish an international organisation was prepared. At San Francisco in America, representatives of fifty countries drafted the Charter of the United Nations after discussions. As soon as the war got over, the Charter was signed on 24th October 1945 and the United Nations was established. The United Nations is an international organisation of sovereign nations.



Can you tell?

- Did India participate in the conferences during the Second World War ?
- Which day is celebrated as United Nations day ?

The Objectives of the United Nations

The United Nations is the world's largest international organisation. In the beginning, only 50 countries were members of the United Nations. Today, this number has gone up to 193. All these member nations come together on the platform of the United Nations. The United Nations has its own definite objectives. Briefly, the United Nations takes up all necessary measures for establishing international peace.

- To establish friendly relations among nations.
- To enhance international security by solving international disputes.
- To safeguard and foster human rights and freedom.

Along with these, the United Nations also aim at enhancing economic cooperation at the international level.

All member countries are bound by duty to respect the diplomatic privileges of sovereign nations, not to attack other countries and abide by international law and treaties.

The United Nations is an organisation created by the coming together of sovereign nations. Naturally, it is based on certain principles or rules. They are briefly stated as follows :

Principles of United Nations

1. All member nations will have the same status. There is no discrimination among nations based on geographical size, economic or military power.
2. All member nations of the United Nations should respect the freedom and geographical unity of other member nations.
3. All member nations should solve their international disputes and mutual differences by peaceful means.

Can you answer the following questions?

- Can the United Nations intervene militarily if there is a serious threat to international peace?
- What steps have the United Nations taken to foster human rights and freedom?

Structure of the United Nations :

The United Nations Charter describes the structure and functioning of the organisation :

The United Nations has six main organs:

- (1) General Assembly
- (2) Security Council
- (3) Economic and Social Council
- (4) International Court of Justice
- (5) Trusteeship Council
- (6) Secretariat



United Nations-General Assembly

Apart from these six major organs, there are many affiliated organisations of the United Nations that help it in its functions. They are called specialised agencies. Working in specific areas, they help different nations in those areas. The following are some of these important agencies : International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

General Assembly : All the member countries are members of the General Assembly. The position and status of all the countries, whether they are rich or poor, big or small, is the same. Every year the General Assembly meets in its session from September to December. During the session, the General Assembly discusses important issues like environment, disarmament, etc. The decisions in the General Assembly are taken by majority. These decisions are in the form of resolutions. Thus, the General Assembly only passes resolutions; it does not make laws. The significance of the General Assembly lies in being a platform for representatives of member nations to come together and discuss and make policy decisions on issues of global importance.

Functions of General Assembly

- (1) To elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council
- (2) To choose the United Nations Secretary General and the judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in consultation with the Security Council
- (3) To pass the annual budget of the United Nations

The headquarters of the United Nations are at New York. English, French, Russian, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic are the official languages of the United Nations.

Security Council : There are 15 members in the Security Council. Of them, five are permanent members, while ten are non-permanent members. The non-permanent members are chosen every two years by the General Assembly. America, Russia, England, France and China are permanent members of the Security Council. They have the veto power. For any decision to be taken, the assent of all five permanent members and four non-permanent members is necessary. If even one of the five permanent member uses his veto i.e. gives a negative vote, the decision cannot be taken.

Functions of the Security Council

- (1) The main responsibility of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security. The Security Council may suggest one among the following alternatives in situations of international conflict : end/resolve conflict and make efforts to establish peace, impose economic sanctions or take a decision of military action against the aggressor nation.
- (2) To prepare policies for arms control
- (3) To play a joint role along with the General Assembly in the appointments of the judges of the International Court of Justice and of the United Nations Secretary General.

Suggestions are being made to reform the Security Council and make it more democratic. India is making efforts to get the permanent membership of the Security Council.

Economic and Social Council : The main objective of this organisation is to coordinate the economic and social policies of the United Nations. The Council has 54 members. They are selected by the General Assembly. Each member has a tenure of three years and each year, one-third of the members are newly chosen. Decisions are taken by majority vote.

Functions

- (1) Initiate discussions at the global level on issues like poverty, unemployment, economic and social inequality and suggest policies to tackle these problems.
- (2) Discuss issues like women's questions, empowerment of women, human rights, fundamental freedoms, global trade, health related issues, etc. and make decisions.
- (3) Make efforts to establish cultural and educational cooperation at the international level.
- (4) Coordinate the functioning of the different organisations working in association with the United Nations.

Secretariat : The Secretariat has the responsibility of carrying out the administrative tasks of the United Nations. The chief of the Secretariat is the

Secretary General. He is selected by the General Assembly and the Security Council. His tenure is of five years.

Functions

- (1) To call international conferences on global problems like climate change, human rights, disarmament, etc.
- (2) To organise the meetings of the General Assembly and Security Council
- (3) To compile information
- (4) To supply information to the media

International Court of Justice : International Court of Justice means the judicial branch of the United Nations. The International Court of Justice is located at The Hague in the Netherlands. There are 15 judges in the International Court of Justice. They are chosen by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Every judge has tenure of nine years.

Functions

- (1) To settle the disputes between two or more member nations of the United Nations.
- (2) To interpret international law authentically.
- (3) To advise the various organs or subsidiary bodies of the United Nations about legal issues.

Let's write!

- * Write the names of United Nations Secretary Generals till now.
- * Is it necessary that the Secretary General should be a citizen of one of the great powers/the big five?
- * Are citizens of a particular country given priority for being Secretary General ?
- * Who is the current Secretary General and which country does he belong to?

International Criminal Court:

The International Criminal Court is an inter-governmental organisation and an international tribunal. Its headquarters are at The Hague in the Netherlands. The International Criminal Court has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes that are of concern to the international community.

The Trusteeship Council : After the Second World War, the territories that were undeveloped were placed under the responsibility of the developed nations. The latter were supposed to help bring about the development of the trust territories and once they attain independence from their colonies, help establish democracy. The work of the Trusteeship Council is over as there are no trust territories left.

The work of the Trusteeship Council ended when Palau got independence on 1st November 1994. Palau is an island in the Pacific ocean, 500 m. east of Philippines.

Millennium Development Goals

The United Nations member nations came together in 2000 and decided upon the development goals for the new millennium. Some of the important goals are as follows :

- To eliminate poverty and hunger
- To make the facilities of primary education available
- To bring about women's empowerment, reduce infant mortality rate
- To take special care of the health of pregnant women
- To fight diseases like AIDS, malaria, etc.
- To protect the environment and increase the cooperation between developed and developing countries

A time period has been decided to achieve these goals.

India has made considerable progress in the direction of achieving the millennium development goals with the help of UNICEF and UNESCO.

UNICEF is an affiliated organisation of the United Nations. It works towards making nutritious food and health care available to children. Several workshops were organised in India to find out measures to overcome malnutrition among babies and children.

UNESCO, another affiliated organisation of the United Nations works towards peace and security in the world by promoting cooperation between member countries in the fields of education, science and culture.

United Nations and preservation of peace

The objective of the United Nations is to settle international conflict peacefully. The United Nations Charter lays down the ways and means to be employed to achieve this goal. It includes appointing an intermediary acceptable to the nations involved in the conflict, use the legal procedure, appoint an arbitrator to solve the dispute and if needed, to take recourse to military means and ensure that conflict will not occur again. In modern times, human security has been threatened by terrorism, racist and religious conflict. As a result, the function of securing peace of the United Nations has acquired a lot of importance.

The United Nations makes efforts to ensure that violence does not erupt in strife-torn areas and normalcy is restored as soon as possible by, for example, starting schools, creating awareness among the people about human rights, make social, economic, political facilities available, conduct elections, etc.

- * Find out about the campaigns run by the United Nations to establish peace in countries like Yugoslavia, Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, Haiti, Thailand, etc.
- * Make a list of names of member countries, which are at the forefront in sending their troops for the United Nations peacekeeping forces.



Indian Peacekeeping Forces

United Nations Peacekeeping : The peacekeeping activity of the United Nations involves creating appropriate circumstances favourable for bringing about permanent peace in strife-torn areas. The peacekeeping forces help these areas to progress towards peace. In conflict-ridden areas, security is provided and at the same time, help is extended for

establishing peace. The United Nations takes up peacekeeping as one of the tasks for safeguarding and fostering peace in the world. Following things are other actions the United Nations may take supplementary to peacekeeping activities:

- * Prevention of conflict and mediation
- * Actually establish peace
- * Implement the measures of protecting peace
- * Peace-building

The United Nations and India

India had participated in the different Conferences that were held before the establishment of the United Nations. India has participated in bringing issues like decolonisation, disarmament, racial segregation on the United Nations platform.

In 1946, India was the first country to raise the question of racism in the United Nations. India has always led the discussions about the problems of undeveloped and developing countries. India has always sent her troops to participate in the United Nations peacekeeping forces. Not just that, India has sent an all-woman peacekeeping force as well. It is evident from the foregoing analysis that India makes serious efforts to solve international conflicts by peaceful means.



Exercises

1. Choose the correct option from the given options and complete the statements.

- (1) This country is not a permanent member of United Nations Security Council –
- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| (a) America | (b) Russia |
| (c) Germany | (d) China |

- (2) This international organisation conducts workshops in India on remedial measures to tackle the problem of malnutrition among children –
- | | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| (a) UNICEF | (b) UNESCO |
| (c) Trusteeship Council | |
| (d) Redcross | |

- (3) The number of members of the United Nations –
 (a) 190 (b) 193
 (c) 198 (d) 199

2. State whether the following statements are true or false. Give reasons for your answer.

- (1) The United Nations General Assembly is a platform to discuss global problems.
- (2) The status of all the member nations of the United Nations is not equal.
- (3) A resolution can be passed even if China exercises its veto power.
- (4) India has played a major role in the work of the United Nations.

3. Explain the following concepts.

- (1) Veto
- (2) UNICEF

4. Answer in brief.

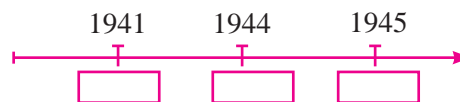
- (1) Write the reasons for the establishment of the United Nations.
- (2) What is the role of the Peacekeeping Forces of the United Nations.
- (3) Write the objectives of the United Nations.

5. Complete the following activity as per the given instructions.

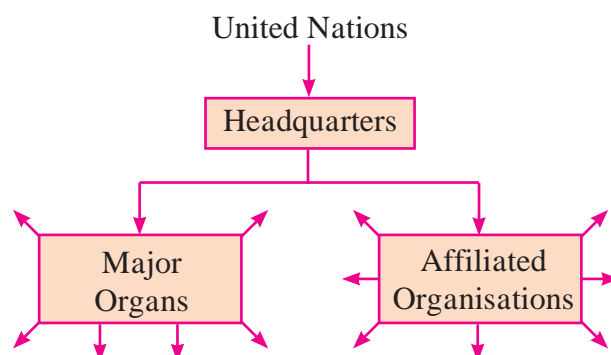
- (1) Complete the following chart giving information about the organs of the United Nations.

No.	Organ	Number of members	Functions
1.	United Nations General Assembly		
2.	United Nations Security Council		
3.	International Court of Justice		
4.	Economic and Social Council		

- (2) Show the chronology of the establishment of the United Nations.



- (3) Complete the following tree diagram about the United Nations.



Projects

- (1) Compile some information about the projects implemented by the United Nations for the development of Children and Women.
- (2) Collect some information about the World Health Organisation.

