CHAPTER – 3

UNITED NATIONS
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UNITED NATIONS

United Nations (UN) is an international organization whose stated aims are to facilitate cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress and human rights. The UN was founded in 1945 to replace the League of Nations to stop wars between nations and to provide a platform for dialogue. There are now 192 member states including almost every recognized independent state. From its headquarters on international territory within New York City, the UN and its specialized agencies decide on substantive and administrative issues in regular meetings held throughout the year.

PURPOSE

The purposes of the United Nations are to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations, to cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these ends.

HISTORY

The United Nations was founded as a successor to the League of Nations which was widely considered to have been ineffective in its role as an international governing body due to the fact that it had been unable to prevent World War II. The term "United Nations" was decided by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during World
War II, to refer to the Allies. Its first formal use was in the 1 January 1942. Declaration by the United Nations, which committed the Allies to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and pledged them not to seek a separate peace with the Axis powers. Thereafter, the Allies used the term "United Nations Fighting Forces" to refer to their alliance. The idea for the UN was espoused in declarations signed at the wartime Allied conferences in Moscow, Cairo and Tehran in 1943. From August to October 1944, representatives of the Republic of China, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union met to elaborate the plans at the Dumbarton Oaks estate in Washington, D.C. Those and later talks produced proposals outlining the purposes of the organization, its membership and organs and arrangements to maintain international peace and security and international economic and social cooperation. On 25 April 1945, the UN Conference on International Organization began in San Francisco. In addition to the governments, a number of non-governmental organizations were invited to assist in drafting the charter. The 50 nations represented at the conference signed the Charter of the United Nations two months later on 26 June. Poland had not been represented at the conference but a place had been reserved for it among the original signatories and it added its name later. The UN came into existence on 24 October 1945, after the Charter had been ratified by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — the Republic of China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States by a majority of the other 46 signatories. These countries are the permanent members of the Security Council and have veto power on any Security Council resolution reflects that they are the main victors of World War II or their successor states. People's Republic of China replaced the Republic of China in 1971 and Russia replaced the Soviet Union in 1991. Initially, the body was
known as the United Nations Organization or UNO. However by 1950s, English speakers are referring to it as the United Nations or the UN.

FINANCING AGENCIES OF UN BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Nation</th>
<th>Contribution (% of total UN budget)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>22.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>16.624%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>6.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>4.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.667%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.unitednations.org

The UN is financed from assessed and voluntary contributions from member states. The regular two-year budgets of the UN and its specialized agencies are funded by assessments. The General Assembly approves the regular budget and determines the assessment for each member. This is broadly based on the relative capacity of each country to pay, as measured by their Gross National Income (GNI) with adjustments for external debt and low per capita income. The Assembly has established the principle that the UN should not be overly dependent on any one member to finance its operations. Thus, there is a 'ceiling' rate, setting the maximum amount any member is assessed for the regular budget. In December 2000, the Assembly revised the scale of assessments to reflect current global circumstances. As part of that revision, the regular budget ceiling
was reduced from 25% to 22%. The U.S. is the only member that has met the ceiling. In addition to a ceiling rate, the minimum amount assessed to any member nation (or 'floor' rate) is set at 0.001% of the UN budget. Also for the least developed countries (LDC), a ceiling rate of 0.01% is applied. The current operating budget is estimated at $4.19 billion.

A large share of UN expenditures addresses the core UN mission of peace and security. The peacekeeping budget for the 2005-2006 fiscal year is approximately US $5 billion (compared to approximately US $1.5 billion for the UN core budget over the same period), with some 70,000 troops deployed in 17 missions around the world. UN peace operations are funded by assessments using a formula derived from the regular funding scale but including 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. As of 1 January 2008, the top 10 providers of assessed financial contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations were: the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, China, Canada, Spain and the Republic of Korea. Special UN programmes not included in the regular budget (such as UNICEF and UNDP) are financed by voluntary contributions from member governments. Most of this is financial contributions but some is in the form of agricultural commodities donated for afflicted populations.

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The six principal organs of the United Nations are: General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of
Justice and Secretariat. The United Nations family is much larger, encompassing 15 agencies and several programmes and bodies.

1. **General Assembly**:

The General Assembly is the main deliberative assembly of the United Nations. Composed of all United Nations member states, the assembly meets in regular yearly sessions under a president elected from among the member states. Over a two-week period at the start of each session, all members have the opportunity to address the assembly. Traditionally, the Secretary-General makes the first statement, followed by the president of the assembly. The first session was convened on 10 January 1946 in the Westminster Central Hall in London and included representatives of 51 nations. When the General Assembly votes on important questions, a two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required. Examples of important questions include: recommendations on peace and security; election of members to organs; admission, suspension, and expulsion of members and budgetary matters. All other questions are decided by majority vote. Each member country has one vote. Apart from 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 Security Council consideration. One state, one vote power structure could enable states comprising just eight percent of the world population to pass a resolution by a two-thirds vote. However it is difficult to imagine a situation in which a recommendation by member states constituting just eight percent of the world's population would be adhered to by the remaining ninety-two percent of the population.
2. Security Council

The Security Council is charged with maintaining peace and security among countries. While other organs of the United Nations can only make 'recommendations' to member governments, the Security Council has the power to make binding decisions that member governments have agreed to carry out, under the terms of Charter Article 25. The decisions of the Council are known as United Nations Security Council resolutions. The Security Council is made up of 15 member states, consisting of five permanent seats and ten temporary seats. The permanent five are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. These members hold veto power over substantive but not procedural resolutions allowing a permanent member to block adoption but not to block the debate of a resolution unacceptable to it. The ten temporary seats are held for two-year terms with member states voted in by the General Assembly on a regional basis. The presidency of the Security Council is rotated alphabetically each month.

3. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) assists the General Assembly in promoting international economic and social cooperation and development. ECOSOC has 54 members, all of whom are elected by the General Assembly for a three-year term. The president is elected for a one-year term and chosen amongst the small or middle powers represented on ECOSOC. ECOSOC meets once a year in July for a four-week session. Since 1998, it has held another meeting each April with finance ministers heading key committees of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Viewed separate from the specialized bodies it coordinates, ECOSOC's functions include
information gathering, advising member nations and making recommendations. In addition, ECOSOC is well-positioned to provide policy coherence and coordinate the overlapping functions of the UN’s subsidiary bodies and it is in these roles that it is most active.

4. **Secretariat**

The United Nations Secretariat is headed by the Secretary-General assisted by a staff of international civil servants worldwide. It provides studies, information, and facilities needed by United Nations bodies for their meetings. It also carries out tasks as directed by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, the UN Economic and Social Council and other UN bodies. The United Nations Charter provides that the staff be chosen by application of the "highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity" with due regard for the importance of recruiting on a wide geographical basis. The Charter provides that the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any authority other than the UN. Each UN member country is enjoined to respect the international character of the Secretariat and not seek to influence its staff. The Secretary-General alone is responsible for staff selection. The Secretary-General’s duties include helping resolve international disputes, administering peacekeeping operations, organizing international conferences, gathering information on the implementation of Security Council decisions and consulting with member governments regarding various initiatives. Key Secretariat offices in this area include the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Secretary-General may
bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that in his or her opinion may threaten international peace and security.

**Secretary General**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations is the head of the Secretariat, one of the principal organs of the United Nations, and acts as the de facto spokesman and leader of the United Nations. The UN Charter provides little guidance for the selection of the Secretary General. The Charter states that "the Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council". Over the years the process has changed but always requires bartering and negotiation on the part of the five veto holding members of the Security Council.

5. **International Court of Justice**

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) located in The Hague, Netherlands, is the primary judicial organ of the United Nations. Established in 1945 by the United Nations Charter, the Court began work in 1946 as the successor to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The Statute of the International Court of Justice is similar to that of its predecessor is the main constitutional document constituting and regulating the Court. It is based in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, sharing the building with the Hague Academy of International Law, a private centre for the study of international law. Several of the Court's current judges are either alumni or former faculty members of the Academy. Its purpose is to adjudicate disputes among states. The court has heard cases related to war crimes, illegal state interference and ethnic cleansing and continues to hear
cases. A related court, the International Criminal Court (ICC), began operating in 2002 through international discussions initiated by the General Assembly. It is the first permanent international court charged with trying those who commit the most serious crimes under international law, including war crimes and genocide. The ICC is functionally independent of the UN in terms of personnel and financing but some meetings of the ICC governing body, the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, are held at the UN. There is a "relationship agreement" between the ICC and the UN that governs how the two institutions regard each other legally.

WORKING MECHANISM

When States become Members of the United Nations they agree to accept the obligations of the UN Charter, an international treaty that sets out basic principles of international relations. According to the Charter, the UN has four purposes: to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. The United Nations is not a world government and it does not make laws. It does provide the means to help resolve international conflicts and formulate policies on matters affecting all of us. At the UN all the Member States — large and small, rich and poor with differing political views and social systems have a voice and a vote in this process. The United Nations has six main organs. Five of them are - the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the Secretariat are based at UN Headquarters in New York. The sixth, the International Court of Justice, is located at The Hague in the Netherlands.
The UN System

The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and 13 other independent organizations known as "specialized agencies" are linked to the UN through cooperative agreements. These agencies, among them the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization are autonomous bodies created by intergovernmental agreement. They have wide-ranging international responsibilities in the economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related fields. Some of them, like the International Labour Organization and the Universal Postal Union are older than the UN itself. In addition, a number of UN offices, programmes and funds such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) work to improve the economic and social condition of people around the world. They report to the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. All these organizations have their own governing bodies, budgets and secretariats. Together with the United Nations, they are known as the UN family or the UN system. Together they provide technical assistance and other forms of practical help in virtually all economic and social areas.

UN Activities for Development

One of the UN's central mandates is the promotion of higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development. As much as 70 per cent of the work of the UN system is devoted to accomplishing this mandate. Guiding the work is the belief that eradicating poverty and improving the well-being of people everywhere are necessary steps in creating conditions for lasting world peace. The UN has unique strengths in promoting development. Its presence is global and its
The UN has played a crucial role in building international consensus on action for development. Beginning in 1960, the General Assembly has helped set priorities and goals through a series of 10-year International Development Strategies. The UN continues formulating new development objectives in such key areas as sustainable development, the advancement of women, human rights, environmental protection and good governance along with programmes to make them a reality.

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, world leaders adopted a set of Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and ensuring environmental sustainability through a set of measurable targets to be achieved by the year 2015. Some options are - halving the proportion of those who earn less than a dollar a day, achieving universal primary education; eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education and dramatically reducing child mortality while increasing maternal health. The General Assembly scheduled a five-year review of its 2000 Millennium Declaration to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the United Nations in 2005.
Assistance for Development

The UN system works in a variety of ways to promote economic and social goals. The mandates of the specialized agencies cover virtually all areas of economic and social endeavour. The agencies provide technical assistance and other forms of practical help to countries around the world. In cooperation with the UN, they help formulate policies, set standards and guidelines, foster support and mobilize funds. The World Bank, for example, provided $20.1 billion in development loans in fiscal year 2004 to nearly 100 developing countries. Close coordination between the UN and the specialized agencies is ensured through the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), comprising the Secretary-General, the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Trade Organization. The UN programmes and funds work under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to carry out the UN's economic and social mandate. To enhance overall cooperation, the Secretary-General in 1997 set up the UN Development Group, comprising the UN operational programmes and funds. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN's largest provider of grants for sustainable human development worldwide, is actively involved in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the lead UN organization working for the long-term survival, protection and development of children. Active in nearly 160 countries and territories, its programmes focus on immunization, primary health care, nutrition and basic education. Many other UN programmes work for development, in partnership with governments and NGOs. The World Food Programme (WFP) is the largest international food aid organization for both emergency relief and
development. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is the largest international provider of population assistance. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) works to encourage sound environmental practices everywhere and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) assists people living in health-threatening housing conditions. To increase the participation of developing countries in the global economy, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) promotes international trade. UNCTAD also works with the World Trade Organization (WTO), a separate entity, in assisting developing countries' exports through the International Trade Centre.

**Pooling Resources**

The UN system is increasingly pooling its efforts to tackle complex problems that cut across organizational areas of expertise and defy the efforts of any country acting alone. The Joint UN Programme on AIDS pools the expertise of eight UN agencies and programmes to combat an epidemic that currently affects some 40 million people worldwide. In 2004 alone, some 3 million people died of AIDS, while 5 million were newly infected with HIV. A Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, called for by the Secretary-General in 2001, is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities. By 2005, it had committed some $3 billion in 128 countries to support aggressive interventions against these three diseases which kill over 6 million people every year. Joint initiatives to expand immunization and develop new vaccines have enlisted the support of business leaders, philanthropic foundations, non-governmental organizations and governments, as well as UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank. The Global Environment Facility, a $4.5 billion fund administered by UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank, helps developing countries carry out
environmental programmes. UN system works closely with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an African Union initiative that serves as a framework for international support for African development.

Reforms

Since its founding, there have been many calls for reform of the United Nations. But there is little clarity, let alone consensus, about how to reform it. Some want the UN to play a greater or more effective role in world affairs, others want its role reduced to humanitarian work. There have also been numerous calls for the UN Security Council's membership to be increased to reflect the current geo-political state, for different ways of electing the UN's Secretary-General and for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly. An official reform programme was begun by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan soon after starting his first term in 1997. Reforms mentioned include changing the permanent membership of the Security Council (which currently reflects the power relations of 1945); making the bureaucracy more transparent, accountable and efficient; making the UN more democratic; and imposing an international tariff on arms manufacturers worldwide. In September 2005, the UN convened a World Summit that brought together the heads of most member states, calling the summit "a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take bold decisions in the areas of development, security, human rights and reform of the United Nations." Kofi Annan had proposed that the summit agree on a global "grand bargain" to reform the UN, revamping international systems for peace and security, human rights and development, to make them capable of addressing the extraordinary challenges facing the UN in the 21st century.
Management Reform

The UN has been accused of bureaucratic inefficiency and waste. During the 1990s the United States, currently the largest contributor to the UN, gave this inefficiency as a reason for withholding their dues. The repayment of the dues was made conditional on a major reforms initiative. In 1994 the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was established by the General Assembly to serve as an efficiency watchdog. Further management reforms have been proposed through the World Summit, including changes to the OIOS, the establishment of an ethics office and a review of UN mandates that are older than five years. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is being restructured to more clearly define its scope and mandate. It will receive more resources. In addition, to improve the oversight and auditing capabilities of the General Assembly, an Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC) is being created. In June 2007, the Fifth Committee created a draft resolution for the terms of reference of this committee. An ethics office was established in 2006, responsible for administering new financial disclosure and whistleblower protection policies. Working with the OIOS, the ethics office also plans to implement a policy to avoid fraud and corruption. The Secretariat is in the process of reviewing all UN mandates that are more than five years old. The review is intended to determine which duplicative or unnecessary programmes should be eliminated. Not all member states are in agreement as to which of the over 7000 mandates should be reviewed. The dispute centres on whether mandates that have been renewed should be examined. As of September 2007, the process is ongoing.
**Personnel Policy**

The UN and its agencies are immune to the laws of the countries where they operate, safeguarding UN's impartiality with regard to the host and member countries. This independence allows agencies to implement human resources policies that may even be contrary to the laws of a host or a member country. Despite their independence in matters of human resources policy, the UN and its agencies voluntarily apply the laws of member states regarding same-sex marriages allowing decisions about the status of employees in a same-sex partnership to be based on nationality. The UN and its agencies recognize same-sex marriages only if the employees are citizens of countries that recognize the marriage. This practice is not specific to the recognition of same-sex marriage but reflects a common practice of the UN for a number of human resources matters. It has to be noted though that some agencies provide limited benefits to domestic partners of their staff and that some agencies do not recognise same-sex marriage or domestic partnership of their staff.

**UN LINKED SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

There are many organizations and agencies that are linked to the UN through special agreements like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>MAIN FUNCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Works to improve agricultural productivity and food security and to better the living standards of rural populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is an autonomous intergovernmental organization under the aegis of the UN, it works for the safe and peaceful uses of atomic energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICAO</td>
<td>International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) sets international standards for the safety, security and efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) mobilizes financial resources to raise food production and nutrition levels among the poor in developing countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization (ILO) formulates policies and programmes to improve working conditions and employment opportunities, and sets labour standards used by countries around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMO</td>
<td>International Maritime Organization (IMO) works to improve international shipping procedures, raise standards in marine safety and reduce marine pollution by ships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunication Union (ITU) fosters international cooperation to improve telecommunications of all kinds, coordinates usage of radio and TV frequencies, promotes safety measures and conducts research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes education for all, cultural development, protection of the world's natural and cultural heritage, international cooperation in science, press freedom and communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIDO</td>
<td>UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promotes the industrial advancement of developing countries through technical assistance, advisory services and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPU</td>
<td>Universal Postal Union (UPU) establishes international regulations for postal services, provides technical assistance and promotes cooperation in postal matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization (WHO) coordinates programmes aimed at solving health problems and the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health. It works in such areas as immunization, health education and the provision of essential drugs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIPO</td>
<td>World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) promotes international protection of intellectual property and fosters cooperation on copyrights, trademarks, industrial designs and patents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMO</td>
<td>World Meteorological Organization (WMO) promotes scientific research on the Earth's atmosphere and on climate change, and facilitates the global exchange of meteorological data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Tourism Organization (WTO) serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund (IMF) facilitates international monetary cooperation and financial stability and provides a permanent forum for consultation, advice and assistance on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>World Bank</strong></td>
<td>World Bank provides loans and technical assistance to developing countries to reduce poverty and advance sustainable economic growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICAO</strong></td>
<td>International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) codifies the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PEACE AND SECURITY**

The 1945 UN Charter envisaged a system of regulation that would ensure "the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources". The advent of nuclear weapons came only weeks after the signing of the Charter and provided immediate impetus to concepts of arms limitation and disarmament. In fact, the first resolution of the first meeting of the General Assembly (24 January 1946) was entitled "The Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy" and called upon the commission to make specific proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction."

**Disarmament**

The UN has established several forums to address multilateral disarmament issues. The principal ones are the First Committee of the General Assembly, the UN Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. Items on the agenda include consideration of the possible merits of a nuclear test ban, outer-space arms control, efforts to ban chemical weapons and land mines, nuclear and conventional disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, reduction of military budgets and measures to strengthen
international security. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs promotes the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the strengthening of the disarmament regimes in respect to other weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons. It also promotes disarmament efforts in the area of conventional weapons, especially land mines and small arms which are the weapons of choice in contemporary conflicts.

**Peacekeeping**

UN peacekeepers are sent 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 of the UN. All UN peacekeeping operations must be approved by the Security Council. The founders of the UN had envisaged that the UN would act to prevent conflicts between nations and make future wars impossible. Those hopes have not been fully realized. During the Cold War (from about 1945 until 1991), the division of the world into hostile camps made peacekeeping agreement extremely difficult. Following the end of the Cold War, there were renewed calls for the UN to become the agency for achieving world peace as there are several dozen ongoing conflicts that continue to rage around the globe. The UN Peace-Keeping Forces (called the Blue Helmets) received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988. In 2001, the UN and Secretary General Kofi Annan won the Nobel Peace Prize "for their work for a better organized and more peaceful world. The UN maintains a series of United Nations Medals awarded to military service members who enforce UN accords. The first such decoration issued was the United Nations Service Medal, awarded to UN forces who
participated in the Korean War. The NATO Medal is designed on a similar concept and both are considered international decorations instead of military decorations.

Successes in Security Issues

UN peacekeeping light armed mechanised vehicle in Bovington Tank Museum, Dorset. The Human Security Report 2005, produced by the Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia with support from several governments and foundations, documented a dramatic, but largely unrecognized, decline in the number of wars, genocides and human rights abuses since the end of the Cold War. Statistics include:

1. a 40% drop in violent conflict
2. an 80% drop in the most deadly conflicts
3. an 80% drop in genocide and policide.

Peace Enforcement

The UN has not only acted to keep the peace but also occasionally intervened in armed conflicts, the first of which was the Korean War (1950-1953). More recently, the UN authorized the intervention in Iraq after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The pursuit of human rights was a central reason for creating the UN. World War II atrocities and genocide led to a ready consensus that the new organization must work to prevent any similar tragedies in the future. An early objective was creating a legal framework for considering and acting on complaints about human rights violations. The
UN Charter obliges all member nations to promote "universal respect for and observance of human rights" and to take "joint and separate action" to that end. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights though not legally binding was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948 as a common standard of achievement for all. The Assembly regularly takes up human rights issues. The UN and its agencies are central in upholding and implementing the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A case in point is support by the UN for countries in transition to democracy. Technical assistance in providing free and fair elections, improving judicial structures, drafting constitutions, training human rights officials and transforming armed movements into political parties have contributed significantly to democratization worldwide. The UN has helped run elections in countries with little democratic history, including recently in Afghanistan and East Timor. The UN is also a forum to support the right of women to participate fully in the political, economic, and social life of their countries. The UN contributes to raising consciousness of the concept of human rights through its covenants and its attention to specific abuses through its General Assembly, Security Council resolutions or International Court of Justice rulings.

**Human Rights Council**

The purpose of the Human Rights Council is to address human rights violations. The Council is the successor to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which was often criticised for the high-profile positions it gave to member states that did not guarantee the human rights of their own citizens. The United Nations General Assembly established the Human Rights Council on 15 March 2006. The council has 47 members
distributed by region which each serve three year terms and may not serve three consecutive terms. A candidate to the body must be approved by a majority of the General Assembly. In addition, the council has strict rules for membership, including a universal human rights review. While some members with questionable human rights records have been elected, it is fewer than before with the increased focus on each member state's human rights record.

**Indigenous Rights Issues**

On 17 September 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a declaration outlining the rights of some 370 million indigenous peoples around the world. Following two decades of debate, the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" was approved. The Declaration outlines the individual and collective rights to culture, language, education, identity, employment and health thereby addressing post-colonial issues which had confronted Indigenous peoples for centuries. The Declaration aims to maintain, strengthen and encourage the growth of Indigenous institutions, cultures and traditions. It also prohibits discrimination against Indigenous peoples and promotes their active participation in matters which concern their past, present and future. The declaration was approved when 143 member states voted in its favour. Eleven member states abstained and four voted against the text namely Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.
Treaty Bodies

The United Nations linked human rights treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties. There are now seven UN-linked human rights treaty bodies, including the Human Rights Committee and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Secretariat services are provided regarding all of those by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Humanitarian Assistance

In conjunction with other organizations such as the Red Cross, the UN provides food, drinking water, shelter and other humanitarian services to populaces suffering from famine, displaced by war, or afflicted by other disasters. Major humanitarian branches of the UN are the World Food Programme (which helps feed more than 100 million people a year in 80 countries), the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees with projects in over 116 countries, as well as peacekeeping projects in over 24 countries.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The UN is involved in supporting development e.g. by the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is the largest multilateral source of grant technical assistance in the world. Organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are leading institutions in the battle against diseases around the world, especially in poor countries. The UN Population Fund is a major provider of
reproductive services. It has helped reduce infant and maternal mortality in 100 countries. The UN also promotes human development through various related agencies. The World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example, are independent, specialized agencies and observers within the UN framework, according to a 1947 agreement. They were initially formed as separate from the UN through the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944. The UN annually publishes the Human Development Index (HDI), a comparative measure ranking countries by poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy and other factors.

Although most people associate the United Nations with the issues of peace and security, the vast majority of its resources are devoted to economic development, social development and sustainable development. United Nations development efforts have profoundly affected the lives and well-being of millions of people throughout the world. Guiding the United Nations work is the conviction that lasting international peace and security are possible only if the economic and social well-being of people everywhere is assured. Many of the economic and social transformations that have taken place globally in the last five decades have been significantly affected in their direction and shape by the work of the United Nations. As the global centre for consensus-building, the United Nations has set priorities and goals for international cooperation to assist countries in their development efforts and to foster a supportive global economic environment.
Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals are eight goals that all 192 United Nations member states have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015. The United Nations Millennium Declaration signed in September 2000, commits the states to:

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

Common Interests

International debate on economic and social issues has increasingly reflected the common interest of rich and poor countries in solving the many problems that transcend national boundaries. Issues such as the environment, refugees, organized crime, drug trafficking and AIDS are seen as global problems requiring coordinated action. The impact of poverty and unemployment in one region can be quickly felt in others, not least through migration, social disruption and conflict. Similarly, in the age of a global economy, financial instability in one country is immediately felt in the markets of others.

Coordinating Development Activities
The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the principal body coordinating the economic and social work of the United Nations. It is serviced by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs. The entire family of United Nations organizations works for economic, social and sustainable development.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

[1] There has been controversy and criticism of the UN organization and its activities since at least the 1950s. In the United States, an early opponent of the UN was the John Birch Society, which began a "get US out of the UN" campaign in 1959, charging that the UN's aim was to establish a "One World Government." In 1967, Richard Nixon, while running for President of the United States, criticized the UN as "obsolete and inadequate" for dealing with then-present crises like the Cold War. Jeane Kirkpatrick who was appointed by Ronald Reagan to be United States Ambassador to the United Nations, wrote in a 1983 opinion piece in The New York Times that the process of discussions at the Security Council "more closely resembles a mugging" of the United States "than either a political debate or an effort at problem solving." In a February 2003 speech, soon before the United States invasion of Iraq (for which he had been unable to get UN approval), George W. Bush said, "free nations will not allow the United Nations to fade into history as an ineffective, irrelevant debating society."

[2] The Security Council has been criticized for being unable to act in a clear and decisive way when confronted with a crisis. The veto power of the five permanent members has often been cited as the cause of this problem. However, according to UN Charter interpretations that were made law by the General Assembly's 'Uniting for Peace'...
resolution, adopted 3 November 1950, the Assembly may make any recommendations necessary to restore international peace and security, in cases where the Security Council because of lack of unanimity between its permanent members fails to act in situations where there appears to be a threat to international peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression. Given this, the position that reform of the Security Council veto power is a necessary prerequisite to ensuring the effectiveness of the UN Organization has been questioned. The makeup of the Security Council dates back to the end of World War II and this division of powers is often said to no longer represent the current power realities in the world. Critics question the effectiveness and relevance of the Security Council because responsibility for the enforcement of its resolutions lies primarily with the Council members themselves and there are often no consequences for violating a Security Council resolution.