

## II. About the United Nations Organization

### A. History and Composition

Before you start preparing for your Model UN, it is useful to know more information about the organization. An understanding of the history of the UN, its principles and its different components will greatly enhance your participation and preparation for a Model UN. There is more information than could fit in this manual, so we encourage you not only to use the resources that we have provided, but to also conduct your own research.

#### **What are the Origins of the United Nations?**

The creation of the United Nations came from the need to address international issues that its predecessor, the League of Nations (1919-1939), was not able to resolve. The League of Nations was created at the outcome of World War I as a way for states to mediate each other when in conflict and reduce the occurrence of war. Its failure can be attributed to the fact that many important States such as the United States, failed to include themselves as members.

The creation of the United Nations came from the need for nations who were at war during World War II (1939-1945) to replace the alliance systems of the past for a peaceful system of collective security and for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Although formalized after the conclusion of the war, the concept and principles of the United Nations were established through many discussions while World War II was in progress. Notably, reference is made to a United Nations-like organization in documents such as the “Atlantic Charter” (1941), the “St. James Palace Declaration” (1941-1942), and the “Declaration by United Nations” (1942). Concrete plans for the United Nations were made during the Teheran Conference (1943), the Yalta Conference (1945), the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1945) and the San Francisco Conference (1945). Each of these meetings established the theoretical and structural planks that were used to form the United Nations.

Initially, the name “United Nations” was brought forward by President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States to describe the Allied Powers who were at war during World War II. It was first used in the “Declaration by United Nations” of January 1, 1942 when twenty-six (26) nations pledged their governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan).

The most important aspect in the origin of the United Nations is the formation of its Charter<sup>1</sup>. The Charter represents the basis of the organization and directs and limits the possible and engaged action of the organization. The Charter was drawn up by the representatives of fifty countries at the “United Nations Conference on International Organization” who met in San Francisco from April 25 to June 26, 1945. These representatives deliberated on the basis of the proposals and decisions that had resulted from the wartime conferences.

The Charter of the United Nations was officially approved and signed in San Francisco on June 26, 1945, subject to the ratification of its contents by the governments of the signatory representatives.

With the ratification of the Charter by the United States, China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and a majority of the nations attending the San Francisco conference, the United Nations officially came into existence on *October 24, 1945*, which is now universally celebrated as “United Nations Day”. The Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is an integral part of the

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<sup>1</sup> You can find a version of the Charter of the United Nations Organization on the official Website of the Peace Resource Center at : <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/peace/docs/aunchart.htm>.

Charter, and Member States to the UN are also parties to the ICJ. In all, there were fifty (50) countries that signed the Charter, becoming the original members of the United Nations.<sup>2</sup>

### **United Nations bodies, locations around the world**

It is interesting to note that the United Nations is truly an International Organization, with offices world wide. The United Nations headquarters, located in New York City, is in an international territory of 18 hectares with its own security force, postal service and fire system. Four buildings are housed in this territory; the General Assembly building, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the Conference Building and a 39-floor Secretariat Building. New York is the home of the General Assembly, and the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. The land where these structures were built was donated by John D. Rockefeller, a major contributor to the United Nations.

The Peace Palace (Vredespaleis), located in The Hague, Netherlands, is a Neo-Renaissance style building constructed on land donated by Mr. Andrew Carnegie. The building itself, inaugurated in 1913, is home to The International Court of Justice, the Permanent Court of Arbitration, The Hague Academy of International Law and the Peace Palace Library. The palace that holds these bodies was originally built to house the Permanent Court of Arbitration which was established in 1899 but came to encompass all legal entities of the United Nations.

Palais des Nations, located in Geneva, Switzerland, is the former location of the League of Nations. Here you will find The Council Chamber, the venue for disarmament negotiations between member states of the United Nations, observer groups, organizations and NGO's. It also houses a very detailed library including 10 stories of books, over four-million UN Documents, specialized agency publications, an archive of material from the pre-League of Nations period and documentation from the League of Nations.

Vienna International Center, also called "UNO City", is the final United Nations Headquarters. Located in Vienna, Austria, this location opened on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1979 to employ over 4,000 staff members from over 100 countries. Numerous agencies are housed here, including United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs to name a few.

### **The Purposes and Principles of the United Nations**

As expressed in Chapter 1 of the *Charter of the United Nations*, the purposes of the organization are many and are global in nature. The basic principles of the organization include:

- maintaining international peace and security;
- developing friendly relations among all nations;
- initiating, promoting and coordinating international efforts to solve economic, cultural, social and humanitarian problems throughout the globe;
- promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and,
- providing a center for harmonizing the efforts of nations in the attainment of common ends.

Guided by the *Charter of the United Nations*, the organization acts in accordance with the following fundamental principles:

- that all nations share equally in the future and fate of the globe and, therefore, there exists a sovereign equality of nations - whether large or small - in the debates and decisions that affect the globe;

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<sup>2</sup> Poland, which was not represented at the Conference, signed it later and became one of the original members, increasing the original Member States to fifty-one (51).

- that all nations, respecting their responsibilities in agreements, will fulfill their obligations under the Charter of the UN in good faith;
- that it is in the interest of all nations of the globe that Members of the United Nations settle international disputes by peaceful means that do not endanger the peace and security of the world;
- that the Members of the United Nations will assist the UN in any action that it takes and will not assist any nation against which the UN is taking preventative or enforcement actions;
- that the Members of the United Nations will refrain from threats or the use of force against other nations in the exercise of international relations;
- that the UN has the right to ensure that non-member nations act in accordance with the principles of international law for the general maintenance of international peace and security; and
- that the UN is not authorized to intervene in any matter which is essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any nation.

### **What are the official languages of the UN?**

The official languages of the United Nations are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. For all organs of the United Nations, the working languages are English and French. Working languages also include Spanish and Russian in the General Assembly and Spanish in the Economic and Social Council. Nevertheless, you will find that most Model UN activities take place in English, and sometimes in the official language of the host country.

### **Who are the members of the UN?**

Membership in the United Nations is open to all nations that accept the obligations of the *Charter of the United Nations* and in the judgment of the existing Members of the United Nations, are able and willing to carry out these obligations. The Charter Members of the United Nations are the nations which signed the “Declaration by United Nations” on January 1, 1942 or that took part in the San Francisco Conference of 1945 and signed and ratified the Charter. Other nations can be admitted to the United Nations by the General Assembly upon recommendation of the Security Council. Because of this the United Nations Organization has almost quadrupled in size since its foundation.

Members of the United Nations can be suspended or expelled from the organization by the General Assembly on recommendation of the Security Council. Considered to be an extremely serious decision, suspension can take place if the Security Council is involved in enforcement actions against a nation which is not responding to the interventions of the supreme body. Even more serious is the expulsion of a Member of the United Nations. A Member nation may be expelled from the organization if it continually violates the principles of the Charter. A recent example of the United Nations exercising this power was the expelling of Iraq from the formal process of the United Nations. They were only able to assist meetings as observers, not having voting rights.

Only the Security Council can readmit nations that have been acted upon in this manner.

### **What is the Structure of the UN?**

The United Nations is, by the very nature of its global responsibilities, a complex structure composed of inter-related working units. These units are referred to as “organs,” “commissions and programmes” and “specialized agencies.” The United Nations is composed of six organs which are also the largest autonomous councils and working groups of the United Nations. The United Nations commissions and programmes are operated by specialized groups normally concerned with specific matters of concern to organs of the United Nations. Thus, these commissions and programmes are under the authority of an organ of the United Nations. The specialized agencies of the United Nations are autonomous working units devoted to specific areas of United Nations work and coordinated by the Economic and Social Council.

When viewed globally, the structure that this inter-relationship of working units establishes is referred to as the “United Nations System” (See Appendix p. 57).

## **B: Organs of the United Nations Organization**

The six main organs of the United Nations System are:

- the General Assembly;
- the Security Council;
- the International Court of Justice;
- the Trusteeship Council;
- the Economic and Social Council; and
- the Secretariat.



### **The General Assembly**

<http://www.un.org/ga/>

The General Assembly is the assembly of all the Members of the United Nations and is headquartered in the United Nations Building in New York City. Each nation is represented by no more than 5 delegates who sit in the General Assembly. Methods by which these representatives are chosen vary and are determined by the Member nation itself. Also, several observers, such as the Vatican or Palestine, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are recognized within the United Nations; they have a right to circulate documents and fully exploit their presence by influencing the negotiations processes but cannot vote on substantive matters.

*The functions of the General Assembly are:*

- to consider and make recommendations on principles of international cooperation in the maintenance of peace and security including those principles that govern disarmament and the regulation of arms;
- to discuss any problem affecting peace and security and, except where a situation or dispute is being discussed by the Security Council, to take action on the problem;
- to discuss and make recommendations on any question that lies within the scope of the Charter or that affects the powers and functions of any of the organs of the United Nations;
- to initiate studies and make recommendations to promote:
  - international political cooperation;
  - the development of international law and its codification;
  - the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; and
  - international collaboration in economic, cultural, social, educational and health fields.
- to make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation, regardless of origin, which might impair friendly relations among nations;
- to elect the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council and the 54 members of the Economic and Social Council;
- to elect the 15 judges of the International Court of Justice and to appoint the Secretary-General, jointly with the Security Council; and,
- to consider and approve the budget of the United Nations and to divide this budget among the Members of the United Nations in the form of contributions that are made to the organization.

It is important to note that the General Assembly is neither a “legislature” nor a “parliament” in any definition of these terms. Respecting the sovereignty of its Members, the General Assembly offers a forum in which nations may share views and come to understandings regarding global international peace and security.

Resolutions of the General Assembly are only recommendations to Members and are not to be recognized as “global laws.” However, the Member States who vote in favor of a resolution have a moral obligation to adjust their national legislation in accordance.

During the Cold War, usage of the “veto” created a lack of unanimity in the Security Council. This led to the passing of a resolution allowing for definitive action to be promoted by the General Assembly. The “Uniting for Peace” Resolution of November 1950 allowed the General Assembly of the United Nations to consider matters and make recommendations to the Member states in order to take collective measures (ie. use of armed force) in order to maintain or restore international peace and security. This particular resolution gave a wide field of responsibilities to the General Assembly that were not necessarily within the terms of the Charter however

The General Assembly’s voting procedure is very particular and varies according to the questions presented before it. For instance, in order to adopt a resolution on important issues such as peace and security, election of Members to organs, suspension or expulsion of Members and budgetary matters, the General Assembly needs to attain a two-thirds majority. On other questions placed before the General Assembly (ie. General session agenda items) a simple majority is required to be adopted. Recognizing the “sovereign equality” of the Members of the United Nations in attempting to deal with the problems of the world, all votes cast in the General Assembly are equal whether the nation is large or small. Each nation can cast one vote on a resolution before the General Assembly.

The General Assembly, the largest of the organs of the United Nations, meets once each year in New York, although historically it has met elsewhere, and in special circumstances, has shifted its session to other locations to hear specific speakers. The annual session opens in September, although the General Assembly can be convened at any time by the Security Council to cope with emergency situations.

The General Assembly supervises the work of six (6) committees that are under its jurisdiction. These committees are also the ones that are mostly simulated at Model UN conferences. These are:

- the First Committee: Disarmament and International Security;
- the Second Committee: Economic and Financial;
- the Third Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural;
- the Fourth Committee: Special Political and Decolonization;
- the Fifth Committee: Administrative and Budgetary; and
- the Sixth Committee: Legal.

Under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly Plenary are:

- the General Committee and
- the Credentials Committee.



### **The Security Council**

<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>

The Security Council of the United Nations is composed of 15 Member nations. Five of these are permanent and the remaining ten are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. The Permanent Members of the Security Council are:

The Peoples’ Republic of China;  
The Republic of France;  
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;  
The Russian Federation; and  
The United States of America.

Originally, the Security Council consisted of 11 Members; however, the organ grew to its present size in 1965 through an amendment to the Charter. The main chamber in which the Security Council sits is located in the United Nations Headquarters Building in New York. However, the Security Council may still meet at other locations if such a scenario is considered to be advisable.

The functions and powers of the Security Council of the United Nations are:

- to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations;
- to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- to recommend methods of adjusting disputes between nations or terms of settlement for such disputes;
- to formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate arms;
- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call upon Members of the United Nations to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force in order to stop or prevent aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor; and
- to exercise the trusteeship functions of the United Nations in strategic areas.

The Security Council acts on behalf of all of the Members of the United Nations and, in return, these Members agree to carry out the decisions of this organ and to make available upon request the facilities necessary for the maintenance of world peace and security. Among the facilities that can be requested are armed forces units and materials.

Voting in the Security Council (on all matters other than questions of procedure) is based on a one-vote-one-nation basis. For a resolution to pass, two essential things must happen. A vote of 9 Members in favour of the resolution is the minimum requirement to pass a resolution. If the votes casted by the member states include a “no” vote, this vote cannot be from one of the permanent members. This is because a “no” vote from the member states is considered a “veto”. Any Member of the Security Council may abstain from matters placed before the Council, but an abstention does not constitute a “veto” of action. In addition, any Member of the Security Council – permanent or elected – is required to abstain from voting on any decision that concerns the specific settlement of a dispute to which that nation is party.

The structure of the Security Council can vary depending on international voluntarism and on special circumstances. It is composed of two *Standing Committees* at present that are composed of all Members of the Security Council and they are:

- the Committee of Experts on Rules of Procedures which studies and advises on rules of procedures and technical matter; and
- the Committee on Admission of New Members.

*Ad Hoc* Committees and working groups can also be established as needed to facilitate the work of the Security Council. Finally, Peacekeeping Operations and the International Court of Justice are under the authority and command of the Security Council.

The Security Council is organized to be able to function on a continuous, 24-hour per day, 7-days a week basis if necessary and to be convened at a moment's notice. At least one representative of each of the Members serving on the Security Council is required to be present at all times at the United Nations Headquarters Building in New York to allow for this kind of situation.



## **The Economic and Social Council**

<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/>

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) also meets in the United Nations Headquarters building in New York and is composed of fifty-four Members. Eighteen of these Members are elected to their positions by the General Assembly every year, serving on ECOSOC for a three-year term. This means that every year, there are eighteen seats available for election. Retiring Members are eligible for immediate re-election for as many consecutive mandates as wished.

ECOSOC originally consisted of 18 Members but was increased to its present size during the reorganization of the United Nations in 1971.

The functions of the Economic and Social Council are:

- to be responsible, under the authority of the General Assembly, for the economic and social activities of the United Nations;
- to make or initiate studies, reports and recommendations on international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters;
- to promote the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world;
- to coordinate the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations by means of consultation with these agencies as well as through recommendations to the General Assembly of the United Nations;
- to perform services, approved by the General Assembly, for Members of the United Nations and, upon request, for the Specialized Agencies; and
- to consult with non-governmental organizations throughout the world that are concerned with matters with which ECOSOC deals.

Voting in the Economic and Social Council is by simple majority on a one-nation-one-vote basis.

ECOSOC is divided in functional and regional commissions that play a very important role in the advancement and the bettering of living conditions around the world. The functional commissions are:

- the Commission on Human Rights;
- the Commission on Narcotic Drugs;
- the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice;
- the Commission on the Commission on Science and Technology for Development;
- the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- the Commission on Status of Women;
- the Commission on Population and Development;
- the Commission for Social Development; and
- the Statistical Commission.

The Regional Commissions are the following:

- the Economic Commission for Africa;
- the Economic Commission for Europe;
- the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;
- the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific; and
- the Economic Commission for Western Asia.

The Economic and Social Council and these permanent commissions entertain very close relations with many affiliated bodies (which will be discussed later) in order to coordinate their efforts, to transfer information, and to work without doubling efforts.





### **The Trusteeship Council of the United Nations**

<http://www.un.org/documents/tc.htm>

The function of the Trusteeship Council was to supervise the steadily decreasing number of Trust Territories that existed. Trust Territories were the successors of the League of Nations mandates. These were transferred over to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations after the League of Nations ceased to exist. This organ of the United Nations composed of the Permanent Members of the Security Council promoted the development of self-government and independence of Trust Territories. The Trusteeship Council suspended its operations after the granting of independence to the last Trust Territory, Palau, in 1994.



### **The International Court of Justice**

<http://www.icj-cij.org/>

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the United Nations. It sits at the Peace Palace (Vredespaleis), located in The Hague, Netherlands. The International Court of Justice is composed of 15 judges that are elected by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. The principal legal systems of the world are represented in the Court, yet there can not be two judges of the same State on the International Court of Justice during the same term.

The body functions under the internationally agreed upon *Statute of the International Court of Justice* that is an integral part of the *Charter of the United Nations*. Each Member of the United Nations has automatic access to the Court and each Member is pledged to comply with the decisions of the Court in any case to which it is a party.

The jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice includes all cases that are referred to it through the parties involved in the case. In addition to these, the Court has jurisdiction over all matters specially provided for in the *Charter of the United Nations* or through treaties and conventions in force.

The International Court of Justice also performs an important function in giving advisory opinions on legal matters. The only bodies at present authorized to request advisory opinions of the Court are the five organs of the United Nations and sixteen specialized agencies of the United Nations. Upon receiving a request, the Court decides which States and organizations might provide useful information and gives them the opportunity to present written or oral statements. In principle, the Court's advisory opinions are consultative in character and are therefore not binding on the requesting bodies. Since 1946, the Court has given 24 Advisory Opinions concerning admission to United Nations membership, reparation for injuries suffered in the service of the United Nations, territorial status of South-West Africa (Namibia) and Western Sahara, judgments rendered by international administrative tribunals, expenses of certain United Nations operations, and the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.



### **The Secretariat and the Secretary-General of the United Nations**

<http://www.un.org/documents/st.htm>

<http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/index.shtml>

The vast administrative functions of the United Nations are performed by the Secretariat. This organ is in operation throughout the year and services the programmes and policies laid down by all parts of the organization. The Secretariat is located in the United Nations Headquarters Building in New York. However,



employees of the Secretariat work at various locations throughout the world - wherever the United Nations Organization is in operation. This central body also services all United Nations bodies and committees located in New York and acts as a coordinating agent between bodies, programmes and policies throughout the world with the offices in key cities - namely Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva, Nairobi, Santiago and Vienna, and has offices all over the world - by translating and interpreting speeches and documents, for instance, into all of the UN's official languages.

Secretariat staff, estimated to consist of approximately some 9,000 international civil servants, answers only to the United Nations Organization and pledges to refrain from receiving information, directions or influence from any other party, especially from their national governments. Their tasks and responsibilities include informing the world's communication media about the work of the United Nations; organizing, according to the Secretary-General's requests, international conferences on matters of global concern; and assisting the Secretary-General in all enterprises he might undertake.

The head of the Secretariat is the Secretary-General of the United Nations who is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year renewable term. There have been seven Secretaries-General of the United Nations since the foundation of the organization.

#### *Secretaries-General of the United Nations*

- Trygve Lie of Norway (1946-1952)
- Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden (1953-1961)
- U Thant of Burma (1961-1971)
- Kurt Waldheim of Austria (1971-1981)
- Javier Pérez de Cuéllar of Peru (1981-1991)
- Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt (1991-1996)
- Kofi Annan of Ghana (1997-Present)

The powers of the Secretary-General of the United Nations are outlined in Chapter XV of the Charter of the United Nations.

The duties and responsibilities of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General are exclusively international. Each staff member, without regard to nationality, is an international civil servant who serves the world and, in doing so, also serves in the highest interests of his or her own country.

## **C. Programs and Commissions of the United Nations Organization**

There are many specialized programmes and commissions that are continually working within the United Nations System. Many work directly under the supervision and authority of an organ of the United Nations. A few examples of these programs and commissions are listed below along with their official Web Site.



**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP)**

<http://www.undp.org>

Established in 1966, the United Nations Development Program's main purpose is to assist countries in their efforts to engage in sustainable human development in order to address issues such as poverty. The UNDP achieves this goal by helping these countries through the implementation of development programmes. The UNDP provides technical aid in over 100 less-developed nations with projects that are executed mainly by the Specialized Agencies of the UN. In addition, the UNDP increasingly works from a global approach in order to address the emerging and consolidated transnational issues such as terrorism, organized crime and the environment. These bi- and multi-lateral approaches are constantly encouraged and implemented by the program through their regional efforts.



## **THE UN DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM)**

<http://www.unifem.undp.org>

The UN Development Fund for Women was created in 1984 to address the economic and political situation of women in the world. The role of UNIFEM is to ensure a strong representation of women in the UN system, the participation of women in various development programmes, and promoting and protecting women's rights. Its goals also include gender equality and empowerment of women in all aspects of societies in order to link women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas. By operating under the aegis of UNDP, UNIFEM develops and encourages collaboration by providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies.



## **THE UN CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)**

<http://www.unicef.org>

<http://www.unicef.org/voy/>

The UN Children's Fund was originally established as a temporary program in 1946 to help children who were victims of war. It became a permanent body in 1953 with a larger mandate that attributed greater importance to the protection of children rights. The initiatives undertaken by UNICEF target health, education and other services for mothers and children with an emphasis on meeting their basic needs. The program has also implemented a Web site for youth action where youth can be directly involved in bettering the world through idea exchange, discussion and positive criticism on many issues concerning youth and children.



## **THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP)**

<http://www.wfp.org>

The World Food Program was born in 1961 as the food aid organization of the UN system. The WFP's mission statement revolves around the distribution of food and money to promote development and provide emergency relief in times of crisis. It aims for a hunger free world. Since 1963, the Rome-based organization has invested \$27.8 billion US and more than 43 million metric tonnes of food to combat hunger, promote economic and social development and provide relief assistance in emergencies throughout the world. The WFP works closely with the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, a specialized agency) to address some of the issues and crises that surface and to facilitate greater access to information on food production and on crop growing, as well as to technical, financial and administrative resources.



## **UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM (UNEP)**

<http://www.unep.org>

Established in 1972, the UN Environment Program coordinates UN environmental activities, monitors changes in the environment, and conducts research, seminars and training programmes on the environment. UNEP's motto is "Environment for Development" and as such, promotes sustainable development as the key to comprehensive care for the environment. UNEP aids less-developed nations on environmental aspects of development in order for them to gain the expertise, experience and knowledge necessary to fully develop with respect to their natural resources without compromising the quality of life of future generations.



## **UN DRUG CONTROL PROGRAM (UNDCP)**

<http://www.undcp.org>

Created in 1990, the UN Drug Control Program co-ordinates all UN drug control activity, including relevant treaties, rural development, crop substitution program, and other international actions against the production and trade of illegal narcotics. Since 1997 it has worked closely with the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, which also deals with crime and international terrorism.



## **UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)**

<http://www.unhcr.ch>

Founded in 1950 by the GA, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees assists peoples forced to leave their country for different reasons, such as avoiding political persecution, fleeing a war-torn country, or escaping a natural disaster ravaging their homeland. Its primary function is to ensure the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily at the outset of the problem, to integrate locally or to resettle in an another country, often a neighboring one. The UNHCR coordinates refugee care, resettlement, and repatriation through governments, voluntary agencies and NGOs on a worldwide basis.



## **UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)**

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/>

The position of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, based in Geneva, Switzerland (with offices also at the UN Headquarters in New York) was established in 1993 in order to promote and protect human rights. The UN High Commissioner's role includes carrying out all human rights activities organized by the United Nations as well as the investigation of human rights infringements across the world by acting as an inspiration to the international community as a moral leader and a voice for the victims. Together with the OHCHR system, the High Commissioner for Human Rights presses the international community to act against violations of international law and human rights, as well as works to prevent such matters from occurring.



## **UN RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES (UNRWA)**

<http://www.un.org/unrwa/>

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees runs refugee camps and coordinates aid for over 3.7 million Palestinian refugees, providing them with emergency relief, health care and educational services as well as reconstruction programmes for homes. The UNRWA was founded in 1949 and began its operations in 1950 as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations. The Agency's chief officer, the Commissioner-General, is appointed by the UN Secretary-General after consultation with the Advisory Commission and is the only head of a United Nations body to report directly to the General Assembly. The GA renews the mandate of this non-permanent body because of the large number of Palestine refugees persisting in times of war and of peace. The Advisory Commission meets annually to review the Agencies activities. Its membership consists of Belgium, Egypt, France, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Palestine Liberation Organization attends as an observer.

## UN CONFERENCE OF TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

<http://www.unctad.org>

The UN Conference on Trade and Development is a research, technical aid and negotiation body with an emphasis on funding, trade, technology and sustainable development. This program was created in 1964 and its main goal is to help developing countries adjust to new economic trends such as globalization by increasing their development opportunities. Furthermore, UNCTAD contributes to improving the trade and investment capacities of these countries by integrating them into the international economic arena and enforcing their management capacities through the forum for intergovernmental discussions it provides.



UNAIDS



<http://www.unaids.org/en/default.asp>

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS, is the main advocate for global action on the epidemic. Its nine co-sponsors are UNICEF, the WFP, UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank group. The Co-sponsors and the UNAIDS Secretariat comprise the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations, which meets annually.

UNAIDS leads, strengthens and supports an expanded response aimed at preventing transmission of HIV, providing care and support, reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV/AIDS, and alleviating the impact of the epidemic. UNAIDS supports a more effective global response to AIDS through actions regarding leadership and advocacy for effective action on the epidemic; strategic information to guide efforts against AIDS worldwide; tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the epidemic and of responses to it; civil society engagement and partnership development; and mobilization of resources to support an effective response<sup>3</sup>.

## D. The Specialized Agencies of Organs of the United Nations Organization

There are sixteen Specialized Agencies within the United Nations System. These autonomous structures work within the UN system. Most of these Specialized Agencies report to the Economic and Social Council and/or the General Assembly. Below is a review of the most commonly known Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. Other specialized agencies can be found in *Appendix 1*.



**THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)**

<http://www.fao.org>

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations helps the nations of the world increase the output of farmlands, forestlands and fisheries and seeks to increase nutrition levels. This was the first Specialized Agency to be officially established (1945). The primary mandate of the FAO is to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity, bettering the lives of rural populations and contributing to the growth of the world economy regardless of the development level of participating nations. It acts as a neutral forum where developed and developing countries exchange information, policy information, expertise and knowledge to defeat world hunger.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited from the official Web site of UNAIDS in the section *About UNAIDS* available at the aforementioned url address.



## UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC & CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

<http://www.unesco.org>

Established in 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization works to spread global peace and security through general awareness. The areas in which UNESCO concentrates its efforts include the promotion of literacy, the advancement of scientific knowledge and the increase of international understanding of the world through the exchange of education and culture. As its name cites, it works in the global fields of education, social and natural sciences, information & communication, and culture. UNESCO simultaneously works on a series of Special Focuses, inspired by its traditional thematic areas mentioned above, including Afghanistan, Africa, Iraq, Least Developed Countries, Indigenous People, Education for All, Culture for Peace, and Dialogue among Civilizations.



## WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

<http://www.who.org>

The World Health Organization works toward the goal of the highest possible levels of health for all. WHO helps to launch campaigns to eradicate mass diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis while coordinating efforts to control the spread of epidemics such as HIV/AIDS. The agency trains health workers at all levels and promotes international medical research while working in cooperation with civil society and a wide range of NGOs across the globe. It is interesting to note that “health” is defined in the WHO’s Constitution as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition is just beginning to be globally accepted by national governments and the private sector because it implies further funding and interventions at all levels.



## THE WORLD BANK GROUP (IBRD, IFC, IDA, MIGA)

<http://www.worldbank.org>

The World Bank Group is made up of different financial entities that have a long historical origin.

### ***The World Bank – The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)***

The roots of the World Bank, originally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, are traced to the aftermath of World War II. During the first years, the IBRD’s main objective was to help in the reconstruction of Europe from the damages of the Second World War by awarding loans and investing in development programmes across the continent. With decolonization, the World Bank’s objectives have shifted to reducing poverty and raising living standards. These efforts are supported by the appropriation of loans for economic development and the increases in international investment. The World Bank supplies approximately US\$20 billion in loans each year with interest rates higher than average market rates to ensure that Member States take out loans only in crude necessity.

### ***The International Finance Corporation (IFC)***

An affiliate of the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, was established in 1956. The aim of the IFC is to promote private sector investment in less developed and developing countries in order to reduce poverty. By providing advice and technical assistance to governments, financing projects created by the private sector in developing states and assisting these companies with other sources of finances through the international financial markets, the IFC works with the World Bank Group to improve living standards globally.



### ***The International Development Association (IDA)***

The International Development Association, established in 1960, is a second associate of the World Bank. It awards loans for important development projects in underdeveloped nations without regard to whether the projects are revenue producing or directly productive. Loans from the IDA are interest free for 30 to 40 years.

### ***The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)***

The last affiliate of the World Bank Group is the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) which was founded in 1985. It helps to secure loans for under-developed countries by providing research, financial advice and information on investment opportunities and the creation of programmes.



### **THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)**

<http://www.imf.org>

Since the International Monetary Fund was founded in 1946 its mission has been to promote international monetary cooperation across the globe. The IMF has enabled nations to work together on international monetary problems, on currency convertibility and stabilization problems. The IMF has also expanded its operations to offer financial and technical assistance, supervision of certain countries' financial decision making and loans to those with negative commercial balance.

**WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION**



### **THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)**

<http://www.wto.org>

The World Trade Organization, created in 1995, is the successor of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established in 1950. Its role is to promote the easing of trade barriers through the operation of international trade treaties between states. The objective is to facilitate trade among producers of goods and services in order to further develop economic growth internationally. The WTO is the only international organization dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. To do this, it administers trade agreements; acts as a forum for trade negotiations; settles trade disputes; reviews national trade policies; assists developing countries in trade policy issues through technical assistance and training programmes; and cooperates with other international organizations. The WTO is an autonomous body with an agreement of cooperation with the UN; hence, it works on an intergovernmental basis which is independent from the UN system but is affiliated to it.



### **THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)**

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

Established in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is the only surviving institution created by the Treaty of Versailles. It deals with labour issues and is fairly autonomous of the UN. It is uniquely structured in that three sides of labour relations are represented: workers, employers and government. It looks out for the basic rights of workers such as the right to organize, collective bargaining, and equality of opportunity and treatment. It also works on improving the quality of employment by providing technical assistance in training, employment policy, and labour law.



## THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

<http://www.icc-cpi.int/php/index.php>

Although no longer formally a part of the United Nations system, the ICC is commonly found in Model UN proceedings and has, therefore, been included in this guide. The Statute of the ICC came into force July 1, 2002 after 60 member states of the UN ratified the Rome Statute. It is based in The Hague, Netherlands and will have the power to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is intended to be complementary to national courts and will prosecute only when national courts can't or won't prosecute supposed perpetrators of crimes against humanity due to internal politics or because they cannot provide a fair trial within their justice system.

