

United Nations



The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 Member States. The mission and work of the United Nations takes action on issues confronting humanity in the 21st century, such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production, and more. 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

The UN also provides a forum for its members to express their views in the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and other bodies and committees. By enabling dialogue between its members, and by hosting negotiations, the Organization has become a mechanism for governments to find areas of agreement and solve problems together.

Purposes

The Purposes of the United Nations, as stated in the Charter, are to maintain international peace and security, take effective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, suppressing acts of aggression, and to settle international disputes using the principles of justice and international law. The purposes also include developing friendly relations among nations based on equal rights and self-determination of peoples, strengthening universal peace, achieving international cooperation in solving international economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian problems, and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in achieving these common goals.



Principles

In order to achieve the Purposes set out in the Charter, the United Nations and its members strive to uphold a specific set of Principles, including upholding the sovereign equality of all its Members, ensuring the rights and benefits of their membership, and requiring Members to fulfill their obligations as stated in the Charter. All Members are required to settle their international disputes by peaceful means to ensure international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered. All Members are also supposed to refrain from threatening the territorial integrity or political independence of any state that is inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations and giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action. The United Nations also ensures that states which are not Members also act in accordance with the Principles for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the United Nations is not allowed to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any Member.

Secretary-General



The UN's Chief Administrative Officer is the Secretary-General. The role of Secretary-General is equal parts advocate, diplomat, and spokesman for the interests of the world's peoples, in particular the poor and vulnerable among them. The current Secretary-General, and the ninth occupant of the post, is Mr. António Guterres of Portugal, who took office on 1 January 2017.

The Charter outlines the functions that are entrusted to the Secretary General by the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies. The Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to bring any matter which may threaten international peace and security to the attention of the Security Council. The Secretary-

General must also uphold the values and moral authority of the United Nations, and speak and act for peace, even at the risk of challenging or disagreeing with Member States.

General Assembly

The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative body of the UN. All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the only UN body with universal representation. The current Ambassador to the United Nations from United States is Kelly Craft. Each September, the full UN membership meets in the General Assembly Hall in New York City for the annual General Assembly session, which many heads of state attend and address. Decisions on important questions such as those on peace, security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.



International Court of Justice



The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial body of the United Nations. Its seat is at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. It is the only one of the six principal organs of the United Nations not located in New York. The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized agencies.

Security Council

The Security Council's primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members (5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members), who each have one vote. The Security Council determines the existence of threats to peace or acts of aggression, moderating disputes by peaceful means and recommending terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as implementation of internationally agreed development goals. It serves as the central mechanism for activities of the UN system and its specialized agencies in the economic, social and environmental fields, supervising subsidiary and expert bodies. It has 54 Members, elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms. It is the United Nations' central platform for reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on sustainable development.

NATO



NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is an alliance of countries from Europe and North America. Each member state has a permanent delegation at NATO's political headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Each delegation is headed by an ambassador, who represents their government in the Alliance's consultation and decision-making process. NATO's purpose is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means. It promotes democratic values and enables members to consult each other and cooperate to solve problems, build trust and prevent conflict.

NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and that an attack against one or several of its members is considered as an attack against all. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. Operations are carried out under the collective defense clause of NATO's charter, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. These can also be carried out under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries, and other international organizations. So far, Article 5 has been invoked once - in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001.



NATO Secretary General



The Secretary General is the Alliance's top international civil servant. He is responsible for steering the process of consultation and decision-making within the Alliance and ensuring that decisions are implemented. The Secretary General is also NATO's chief spokesperson and heads the International Staff, which provides advice, guidance and administrative support to the national delegations at NATO Headquarters. Candidates are nominated by member governments for an initial period of four years, which can be extended by mutual consent. The post has been held by Jens Stoltenberg, the former Prime Minister of Norway, since October 2014.

North Atlantic Council

The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the principal political decision-making body within NATO and is the ultimate authority at the head of a network of committees. Discussions and decisions cover all aspects of the Organization's activities and are often based on reports and recommendations prepared by subordinate committees, at the Council's request. Policies decided in the NAC require a unanimous vote from member states.

Nuclear Planning Group

The Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) reviews the Alliance's nuclear policy in light of the ever-changing security environment. While the North Atlantic Council is the ultimate authority within NATO, the NPG acts as the senior body on nuclear matters in the Alliance. It discusses specific policy issues associated with nuclear forces and wider issues such as nuclear arms control and nuclear proliferation. All members, with the exception of France which has decided not to participate, are part of the NPG irrespective of whether or not they themselves maintain nuclear weapons.

Military Committee

The Military Committee is NATO's primary source for military policy and strategic advice. It is an essential link between the political decision-making process and the military structure of NATO. The Military Committee is responsible for translating political decision and guidance into military direction, and for recommending measures considered necessary for the defense of NATO member states and the implementation of decisions regarding military operations. It also develops strategic policy and concepts, and prepares an annual long-term assessment of the strength and capabilities of countries and areas posing a risk to NATO's interests.

European Union



The European Union is a group of 28 countries in Europe. Its headquarters are located in Brussels, Belgium. In 1945, after two major World Wars and various political revolutions wrecked much of the economic progress states had made up to that point. In the beginning, only 6 countries in Europe started working together: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Soon, more and more countries in Europe joined them and the European Union was made.

Today, 28 countries are part of the European Union. All countries that are part of the European Union work together to: uphold peace in Europe, ensure the welfare of its citizens, keep things are fair for all people, respect the languages and cultures of all member nations, strengthen the European economy, promote the use of Euro, and do business with each other first.

The Euro



The euro is the official currency of 19 European Union countries which collectively make up the euro area, also known as the Eurozone. Some EU countries have yet to meet the criteria required to join the euro area while others (Denmark and the United Kingdom) have opted not to participate. Within the euro area, the euro is the only legal tender. In the absence of a specific agreement concerning the means of payment, creditors are obliged to accept payment in euros. Parties may also agree to transactions using other official foreign currencies (e.g. the US dollar). They may also agree to use privately issued

'money' like local exchange trading systems (e.g. voucher-based payment systems) or virtual currencies (e.g. Bitcoin).

President of the European Council

The current President of the European Council is Donald Tusk. He started his first term on 1 December 2014 and was re-elected in 2017. His second term will end on 30 November 2019. The President of the European Council is responsible for: chairing European Council meetings and driving forward its work, ensuring the preparation of European Council meetings and the continuity of their work, facilitating cohesion and consensus within the European Council, and presenting a report to the European Parliament after each European Council meeting. The President of the European Council also ensures the external representation of the EU at the level of heads of state or government on issues related to the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and at international summits, usually alongside the President of the European Commission.



European Council

The European Council brings together EU leaders to set the EU's political agenda. It represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries. One of the EU's 7 official institutions, the Council holds summit meetings between EU leaders, chaired by a president. The European Council decides on the EU's overall direction and political priorities, but it does not pass laws. It deals with complex or sensitive issues that cannot be resolved at lower levels of intergovernmental cooperation and sets the EU's common foreign & security policy.

The European Council is made up of the heads of state or government of all EU countries, the European Council President, and the European Commission President. It is convened and chaired by its President, who represents the EU to the outside world. The European Council usually meets 4 times a year – but the President can convene additional meetings to address urgent issues. Issues are voted on by consensus, and votes usually require unanimity or will accept a qualified majority in some cases. Only the heads of state/government can vote.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is a directly-elected EU body with legislative, supervisory, and budgetary responsibilities. Part of its legislative duties include passing EU laws based on European Commission proposals, deciding on international agreements and reviewing the Commission's work program to propose legislation. Supervisory functions include overseeing all EU institutions, electing the Commission President and presiding over the elections, examining citizens' petitions and setting up inquiries, and discussing monetary policy with the European Central Bank. Budgetary responsibilities include establishing and approving the EU's long-term budget.

The number of MEPs (Members of European Parliament) for each country is roughly proportionate to its population, but no country can have fewer than 6 or more than 96 MEPs. The total number cannot exceed 751 (750 plus the President). Parliament's work is comprised of two main stages: committees to prepare legislation and sessions to pass legislation. Parliament has 20 committees that examine proposals for legislation for each policy area, and MEPs can put forward amendments or propose to reject a bill. These issues are also debated within the political groups. During a plenary session, MEPs gather in the chamber to give a final vote on the proposed legislation and the proposed amendments.

Council of the European Union (Member States)



In the Council, government ministers from each EU country meet to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies. The ministers have the authority to commit their governments to the actions agreed on in the meetings. Together with the European Parliament, the Council is the main decision-making body of the EU. It negotiates and adopts EU laws based on proposals from the European Commission, coordinates member states' policies, and concludes agreements between the EU and other countries or international organizations.

There are no fixed members of the EU Council. Instead, each country sends their minister responsible for that policy area. All discussions & votes take place in public; to be passed, decisions usually require a qualified majority (55% of countries with 28 current members, representing at least 65 % of total EU population). To block a decision, at least 4 countries are needed (representing at least 35% of total EU population).

European Commission

The Commission is the sole EU institution responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation for the European Parliament and European Council. It protects the interests of the EU and its citizens on issues that can't be dealt with effectively at national level, manages EU policies and allocates EU funding, and sets EU spending priorities, together with the Council and Parliament. The Commission ensures that EU law is properly applied in all the member countries and speaks on behalf of all EU countries in international bodies, in particular in areas of trade policy and humanitarian aid.