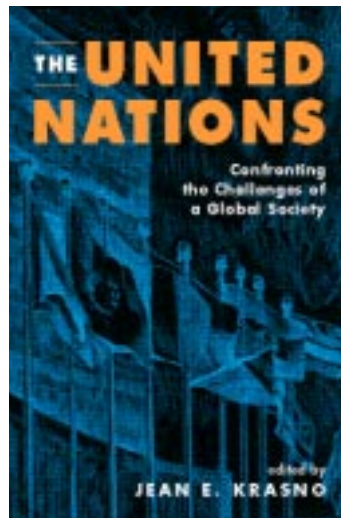


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Confronting the Challenges  
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Jean E. Krasno



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## The UN Landscape: An Overview

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Jean E. Krasno

The purpose of this brief chapter is to paint a broad landscape of the United Nations. This nearly universal Organization, with 191 members in 2003, can be viewed from several perspectives: as a focal point for global security issues, a world forum for debate, a network for developing universal norms and standards, and a vehicle for administering humanitarian assistance around the world, to name a few. The six principal bodies of the United Nations make up the core of the Organization, but its outreach goes far beyond the core to include a myriad of loosely affiliated funds, programs, agencies, and other related bodies. Since its inception in 1945, the UN has continued to grow and adapt to the challenges of a complex and changing world environment. Some UN activities that in 1945 appeared to be focal points of the UN landscape have retreated today from the foreground and in some cases have completely disappeared over the horizon, replaced by more relevant activities. Still, the central purpose of the UN has remained the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council, which holds the primary responsibility for security, remains the most publicly visible body. The Secretary-General is the single most important individual and the symbolic representative of the UN to the global public.

One of the most important recent evolutions in the UN has been the changing focus of the Organization from a primary concern for national security to the inclusion of human security within the state. The notion of state sovereignty as a centerpiece of the intergovernmental body is beginning to evolve to include the *responsibility* of the state to protect its citizens, not just the immunity of the state from interference. The Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by the Member States in 2000 and calls for the eradication of poverty, access to clean water, sanitation, and access to clean energy sources, is an example of the new emphasis on human security.

With two devastating world wars fresh in their memories, the founders of the United Nations wanted to create an organization that would prevent the outbreak of a third global conflict. Also fresh in their minds was the Great Depression and the economic disequilibrium that had preceded World War II, which many felt had contributed to the outbreak of the war. Therefore, conflict prevention was envisioned as incorporating several different approaches, including military might but not limited to it. In laying the groundwork for the United Nations in the UN Charter, the founders hoped that the nations that had united to fight the Axis powers would remain united to prevent future aggression and preserve peace, hence the name “United Nations.” The concept was that the five major powers that had the largest militaries and had fought together during the war—the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, China, and France—would lend their military might to the UN to fight any would-be aggressors. These five nations were given permanent seats on the UN’s fifteen-member Security Council. In addition to the use of military force, coercion was to also include pressure through the use of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation.

The use of coercion or the *threat* of force or sanctions, as spelled out in Chapter VII of the Charter, is only part of the picture, however. The UN is also to be a forum for dialogue and an environment in which negotiation and diplomatic solutions might replace the resort to war to settle disputes. Chapter VI of the Charter, titled “Pacific Settlement of Disputes,” also calls for rule of law and arbitration in the peaceful pursuit of order. Economic and social inequities that might contribute to conflict are also addressed, as well as the means to prepare non-self-governing territories and colonies for independence, in the hope of avoiding wars of independence or conflict over these territories. All these tools for preventing conflict, however encompassing, depend on the cooperation of the collectivity of the member nations.

### Allocation of Tasks and the Six Principal UN Bodies

Each of the aforementioned functions is allocated to one of the six principal bodies of the United Nations: the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Secretariat (headed by the Secretary-General), the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice.

#### *The Security Council*

The function of international peace and security is primarily allocated to the Security Council. Because the United Nations does not have its own military or its own economic resources, the Organization is dependent on the voluntary contribution of these assets by Member States to implement its decisions. Therefore, the Security Council, with its authority to create resolutions binding on all members and with the influence of the permanent five (P-5),

is the center of power within the UN system. Yet the distribution of military and economic power since 1945 has changed significantly and the economies of Germany and Japan are now much greater than those of the other P-5 members with the exception of the United States. However, the combined military strength of the P-5 is still significant and the constitutions of both Germany and Japan limit their abilities to send troops abroad, thus constraining their capacity to contribute to collective security. Efforts to reform the Security Council since its last enlargement in the 1960s from the original eleven members to fifteen have failed in recent years. The Charter states that any amendments must have the concurrence of the P-5, and no permanent member is likely to vote itself off the Council. Efforts to enlarge the Council to include the bigger economies have also been met with resistance from competitors and lack of agreement. The members of the UN seem to be resigned to accepting the Council in its present form, at least for the time being.

#### *The General Assembly*

The General Assembly, comprising all the Member States (51 in 1945, 191 in 2003), fulfills the function of a central forum for global dialogue wherein pressing issues of concern from population to the environment can be discussed. Each fall, the General Assembly opens with a general debate, during which many foreign ministers and heads of state take the podium to add their governments' positions to the dialogue. While General Assembly resolutions are not binding and are considered recommendations only, the Assembly has the authority to determine the budget of the UN, or "power of the purse." Because of its nearly universal membership, its pronouncements can offer a kind of moral authority or collective conscience, as they did for many years in condemning the practice of apartheid in South Africa. That is not to say that all the work of the General Assembly and the interests of its members have moral overtones. As with all large bodies, much of its work is tedious and repetitive. Nevertheless, the UN is the only place where all Member States have permanent representatives as ambassadors throughout the year, so that when a crisis or issue arises, formal or informal conversations can take place conveniently and in a timely manner.

The General Assembly has six main committees, which deal separately with issues from disarmament to international law:

- First Committee: political and security issues, including disarmament.
- Second Committee: economic and financial issues.
- Third Committee: social, humanitarian, and cultural issues.
- Fourth Committee: trusteeship issues.
- Fifth Committee: administrative and budgetary issues.
- Sixth Committee: legal issues.

These committees can also create subsidiary bodies. For example, the Sixth Committee, which deals with legal issues, created the International Law Commission (ILC), a body of legal experts, to advise the committee and prepare draft documents. It has continued to function throughout the decades and, for example, developed drafts for the eventual statute that established the International Criminal Court, which went into effect in July 2002.

A very important role of the General Assembly over the years has been to oversee the decolonization of some eighty countries that were not brought into the trusteeship system but are now sovereign independent members of the UN. Chapter XI of the Charter, titled “Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories,” pronounced that it was the responsibility of the colonial powers “to develop self-government” in the territories under their control, “to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions.” In 1946, eight Member States produced a list of their combined non-self-governing “colonial” territories, which came to a total of seventy-two. By 1959, eight of them had become independent. Because of the slow pace of decolonization, in December 1960 the General Assembly passed resolution 1514 (XV), titled the “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,” also known as the “Declaration on Decolonization.” The declaration called for immediate steps to be taken to end colonial practices, and the UN gradually oversaw elections in many of these countries as they transitioned to independence. East Timor, which joined the UN in fall 2002, is one of the latest to become independent. Today only sixteen non-self-governing territories remain, including the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, Western Sahara, Bermuda, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and others.<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Secretariat and Secretary-General*

While the General Assembly offers the opportunity for open debate and consensus building, the Secretariat is most often the focal point for diplomacy in crisis situations, wherein the “good offices” of the Secretary-General and his or her representatives are put into play. The Office of the Secretary-General directs the Secretariat, a substantial bureaucracy whose main purpose is to serve the Member States in their work as members of the Security Council, the General Assembly, or other bodies. The Secretariat is divided into eleven departments and offices, such as the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Public Information (DPI), and the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA). The founders of the UN originally conceived of the Secretary-General as primarily an administrator. However, the Charter, in Article 99, gives the Secretary-General the authority to bring an issue before the Security Council, thereby leaving open a door for the Secretary-General to also play a political role in leading the administration of the UN. While the position has become considerably more

dynamic over the years, it must be remembered that the Secretary-General serves the Member States and has no assets of his or her own to implement policy decisions. While it often appears to the public that the Secretary-General is also the political leader of the Organization, this is a false impression.

The position can be used as a bully pulpit to promote multilateralism and put issues like poverty eradication and HIV/AIDS on the world agenda, but the Secretary-General must walk a very fine line to maintain the legitimacy and impartiality of the UN while not offending any of the major powers. The personality of the Secretary-General can determine the role of the office. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar preferred to keep a low profile and delegate mediation between disputing parties to talented staff members. Dag Hammarskjöld often inserted himself directly into negotiations and in so doing suffered the wrath of Member States like the Soviet Union, which called for his resignation. Kofi Annan, the current Secretary-General, seems to have found the delicate balancing point. He will at times become directly involved or carefully select others to take the lead. The following is a list of the Secretaries-General who have served the UN over the years:

Trygve Lie (Norway), 1946–1952  
 Dag Hammarskjöld (Sweden), 1953–1961  
 U Thant (Burma), 1961–1971  
 Kurt Waldheim (Austria), 1972–1981  
 Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (Peru), 1982–1991  
 Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Egypt), 1992–1996  
 Kofi Annan (Ghana), 1997–2006

#### *The Economic and Social Council*

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established to serve as the central body for discussing international social and economic concerns and to initiate studies and reports and promote humanitarian issues. ECOSOC also has the authority, along with the General Assembly, to call international conferences and to consult with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The global conferences on human rights, the environment, population, and women's rights, to just name a few, have been some of the most important contributions made by ECOSOC. These global conferences provide an important forum for including the voices of civil society in the workings of the UN as represented by NGOs affiliated with ECOSOC and DPI that participate sometimes directly in the conferences or in parallel NGO forums in a way not possible in other UN bodies. There are now some 1,500 NGOs that have consultative status with ECOSOC and that may send observers to meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. NGOs are increasingly viewed as important partners not only in representing civil society in the formulation of policies but also in implementing policies and norm promotion in countries around the world.

ECOSOC, a fifty-four-member body, holds one five-week session each year, held alternately in New York and Geneva. Its year-round work is carried out by its subsidiary commissions and committees. Some of these bodies include the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Regional Commissions for Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Asia, and Asia and the Pacific. ECOSOC originally had eighteen members, but with a growing number of countries joining the UN from the developing world, the body was expanded in 1965 by a Charter amendment to include twenty-seven members and was enlarged again to its current membership of fifty-four in 1973. The members are elected by the General Assembly to serve a three-year term. Although ECOSOC is given the status of one of the six main organs of the UN, it actually functions under the General Assembly and is often criticized for duplicating the work of the Assembly's six main committees. Some critics have called for ECOSOC's elimination, but the majority of its membership, which comprises developing countries, is unlikely to listen to these demands.

#### *The Trusteeship Council*

Having fulfilled its function, the work of the Trusteeship Council is one of the activities of the UN that has disappeared over the horizon. Considered one of the six main bodies of the UN in the Charter, the Trusteeship Council was established to administer the eleven original trust territories and prepare them for independence or self-government. That work has been accomplished, but the Council still exists in theory and the UN continues to maintain the elegant Trusteeship Council chamber at UN headquarters next to the ECOSOC chamber. The trusteeship territories were not to be confused with colonial holdings. They were (1) territories held under the League of Nations as mandates and inherited by the UN, (2) territories detached from enemy states after World War II, and (3) territories voluntarily placed under the system.

Membership on the Council had its own peculiar system. It included Member States that had been given administrative authority over a trust territory, all of the P-5, plus a number of members not administering a territory that were elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms, the total number of which was to equal the number of states on the Council that were administering a territory. In 1994, the last of the territories, Palau, a Pacific island territory, gained independence and became a member of the UN. The role of the Council was to supervise the governance of the territories by the administering state and to receive petitions and grievances by the inhabitants seeking redress. The Council would make an annual report to the General Assembly on its work, thereby delegating accountability to the administering state. In this way it was to the advantage of the administering state to rid itself of this responsibility, and the Council put itself out of business by its success. Formally, the Trusteeship Council still exists, but with only the P-5 as members.



### *The International Court of Justice*

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and replaced the Permanent Court of International Justice, which had functioned during the incarnation of the League of Nations. All members of the UN are automatically members of the ICJ, and the Court's statute is a part of the UN Charter. The Court, which is located in The Hague, settles disputes *between states*. Individuals cannot be members of the Court and no individual can be tried under the Court. The ICJ can also offer advisory opinions, but only designated UN bod-



UN Photo 186850/A. Brizzi

International Court of Justice, The Hague, the Netherlands.

ies like the General Assembly and the Security Council, not states, can request an advisory opinion.

The fifteen judges sitting on the Court are elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council based on their qualifications and serve a term of nine years. Five judges are elected every three years and a judge can be reelected, though no two judges can come from the same country. The full fifteen judges can hear a case or they can create a smaller body among the judges, called a chamber, if the parties so request. In 1993 the Court established a seven-member chamber to deal with environmental cases falling within its jurisdiction. If a party to a dispute requests an additional judge, that request can be granted if none of the fifteen are of the party's nationality. Many cases deal with boundary or territorial disputes and most are brought voluntarily by the parties to the Court. Some examples of cases brought before the Court include the dispute between the United States and Canada regarding the Gulf of Maine, the dispute between Libya and Malta regarding the continental shelf, the border dispute between Burkina Faso and Mali, and the dispute between Finland and Denmark regarding passage through the Great Belt.<sup>2</sup> Since 1946 the Court has delivered seventy-six judgments on cases ranging from land frontiers and maritime boundaries to hostage taking, the right of asylum, nationality, rights of passage, and economic rights. Over the years the Court has also issued twenty-four advisory opinions on such issues as the territorial status of Namibia and Western Sahara, the responsibility of Member States to pay expenses of the United Nations, and the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

While the Court heard relatively few cases during the Cold War period, this is changing according to ICJ judge Rosalyn Higgins:

It is no coincidence that by 1992 the Court had over twelve cases waiting for disposal. This is exactly because states from all over the world are coming to the Court, not reluctantly dragged there by reference to instruments they now wished they had never signed, but voluntarily. This undoubtedly reflects an increasing confidence in the Court, not only as an institution of great competence and impartiality but one perceived as capable of ensuring that its interpretation of international law is at once predictable and responsive to diverse legitimate needs.<sup>3</sup>

Higgins's prediction that the Court would begin to hear more and more cases has proven correct. In 2004 the ICJ has twenty-two cases on its docket.

### Voting Procedures Within the UN System

The United Nations uses an amalgamation of voting mechanisms borrowed from both domestic and international practices and grafted onto the decision-making procedures in the different UN bodies. Voting is a paramount activity in

the UN and subject to extensive lobbying and vote trading. To illustrate, decisions are taken by vote in the Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC, special committees of the Council and Assembly, UN-sponsored global conferences, treaty conferences, and the governing bodies of the UN funds, programs, and agencies that make up the UN system.

At least four voting mechanisms function simultaneously with variations among the different bodies:

- The egalitarian practice of one country, one vote, borrowed from international law and treaty conference practice.
- The elitist great power privilege tradition, which evolved in Europe.
- Majoritarian decisionmaking, borrowed from democratic theory and practice.
- Consensus, or unanimity, based on European conference procedures and treaty law.<sup>4</sup>

Consensus, as had been required by the League of Nations, was seen as a stumbling block and had to be replaced. Unanimity meant that one country, no matter what its intentions, could block any action emanating from the League. That practice was to be avoided. The United Nations abandoned consensus in favor of majority voting in its standing bodies. However, consensus has been retained for multilateral treaty agreements formulated under UN auspices. Conference and other declarations that intend to represent global norms generally strive for consensus but may resort to majority rule if outliers continue to hold positions that would undermine the intent of the document.

The Security Council has the most complex system of voting among the UN bodies because its operating procedures include a mixture of the four elements:

- Egalitarian practice of one country, one vote: each of the fifteen members of the Council has one vote.
- Great power elite privilege: the five powers—China, France, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom—while having one vote each, also have permanent seats on the Council; the remaining ten serve two-year terms, are elected by the General Assembly, and cannot serve consecutive terms.
- Majoritarianism: an affirmative vote of the Council must have a supermajority of nine votes in favor to pass.
- Unanimity: affirmative consensus of the five permanent members must be achieved for a resolution to pass; even one P-5 negative vote, or veto, blocks passage; an abstention is not considered a veto and does not block a resolution from passing if there are nine votes in favor, and the veto cannot be used on procedural matters.

To further complicate matters, if a permanent member is a party to a conflict and the Council takes up the issue, that member loses its vote if the resolution falls under Chapter VI of the Charter, which calls for the peaceful settlement of disputes. However, that permanent member's vote is restored if the resolution falls under Chapter VII, which deals with enforcement measures. In writing the Charter, the founders understood that the major powers would need to agree on authorizing the use of force; fighting among the major powers was to be avoided. In addition, these powers would not join the UN if force could be used without their consent. But it was considered that all nations should accept peaceful solutions to a dispute.

On a few occasions, the Security Council, under manipulation primarily by the United States, has been able to circumvent the major power veto. Under the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, created in 1950, if the Security Council is unable to act, by procedural vote in the Council, the issue can be moved to the General Assembly. In this capacity, to avoid vetoes by the Soviet Union, decisions regarding North Korea in the 1950s were exercised by the General Assembly. This procedure was enacted again in 1956, this time to avoid vetoes by France and the United Kingdom regarding the conflict during the Suez crisis. It is less likely that the "Uniting for Peace" resolution would be exercised today because the major powers on the Council cannot be confident that the General Assembly, with its current 191 members, would cooperate or make a decision quickly enough in a crisis. The United States has also lost its dominance in the General Assembly since the mid-1960s, and other permanent members are unlikely to relinquish their privileges on the Council to the Assembly, where they don't have the veto.

Voting in the General Assembly is dramatically simpler than in the Security Council. All decisions are taken by majority vote, no consensus is required,<sup>5</sup> and there are no vetoes. Each member has one vote. Decisions on important issues are made by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. These important issues include the budget, peace and security, election of members to the Security Council and ECOSOC, the admission of new members to the United Nations, the expulsion of members, and other such questions that the Assembly decides are important. All other resolutions require a simple majority of those present and voting. Because resolutions emanating from the Assembly are not binding, it was not considered essential to have consensus. Members not agreeing with the outcome are not required to comply. Of course, organizational questions decided by the Assembly, as listed above, are put into effect and assessments on members to pay the regular budget and peacekeeping costs are considered an obligation of membership as stated in the Charter and confirmed by an advisory opinion of the ICJ.

The election of the Secretary-General is an interesting case in which both the Security Council and the General Assembly are involved. The Charter states in Article 97, "The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General

Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.” In practice, this has meant that the Security Council, after deliberation and a voting procedure that includes the veto, has selected its choice of a single candidate and the Assembly has always approved that choice. However, in recent years the Assembly made clear that it would only approve a candidate whose nationality was African because before Boutros-Ghali no Secretary-General had represented the African continent. When Boutros-Ghali only served one term and not the expected two, the Assembly reaffirmed its demand. In this way the Assembly has begun to assert its decisionmaking powers.

Voting in the remaining principal bodies of the UN is by simple majority, including decisions by the ICJ, for which the president of the Court, also one of the fifteen serving judges, can break a tie if one should occur. Voting by the governing boards of the UN’s programs, funds, and agencies is determined by each organization’s own procedures, as is voting by treaty bodies.

### UN Programs, Funds, and Specialized Agencies

There are a myriad of organizations within the UN system that focus on specific issues. While it is beyond the purview of this chapter to elaborate on each of these entities, it is important to discuss them to some degree in order to offer some appreciation for the enormous scale of activities undertaken by the UN. Other entities will be discussed in later chapters in the book. At times people question the relevance of the UN, but this attitude reveals a general ignorance of the tremendous work the UN carries out on a daily basis around the world on issues of humanitarian assistance and economic and technical development, as well as educational issues ranging from the environment to population, human rights, and the role of women. A handful of bodies in the UN system are discussed below.

The World Bank (which includes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development [IBRD] and the International Development Association [IDA]) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created in 1944, prior to the UN’s inception, as a part of what is known as the Bretton Woods system, named after the location where the first organizational meetings took place. They are considered a part of the UN system as “specialized agencies,” but the UN has no decisionmaking authority over the Bank or the Fund, which are governed by representatives of their Member States. The World Bank, headquartered in Washington, D.C., has 184 member countries, which are responsible for how the institution is financed and how the money is spent. The IBRD raises almost all its money (\$23 billion in 2002) in the world’s financial markets. It issues bonds to raise funds and passes on the interest rates to its borrowers. The policies of the two loaning institutions have often come under criticism as conflicting with the humanitarian goals of the broader UN system, particularly regarding debt payments by developing countries and

structural adjustment requirements on the budgetary structures of developing countries in order to qualify for loans. However, both institutions have made important development loans sought after by the developing world and have recently tried to make policy changes in debt forgiveness and the way in which loans affect the poor.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), created in 1946 by the UN General Assembly at first to meet the emergency needs of children in post-war Europe, now serves children all over the world. Considered a "fund" and not a specialized agency, it is supported by voluntary contributions from governmental and nongovernmental sources and its own fundraising activities. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965, UNICEF provides healthcare and nutrition for children (and mothers) and funds water supply and sanitation projects that affect children. Emergency relief for children during crises caused by civil wars or natural disasters takes about 20 percent of the budget. UNICEF is governed by its thirty-six-member executive board, composed of government representatives elected in rotation for three years by ECOSOC.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established in 1965, has some 130 offices around the world in developing countries and coordinates the development activity of the UN. The thirty-six-nation executive board sets the policy for the programs, which are funded by voluntary contributions and other sources amounting to about \$2 billion per year. Each year UNDP publishes the *Human Development Report*, which provides both a narrative and a statistical assessment of development around the world and ranks nations using UNDP's Human Development Index on their capacity to provide not only income for their citizens but also education, health, sanitation, and so forth. Nations like Norway tend to rank highest in providing the best conditions at home, with life expectancy in the eighties and low infant mortality rates, while countries like Sierra Leone tend to rank at the bottom, with life expectancy in the thirties and very high rates of infant mortality. The huge gap between rich and poor is a constant issue within the UN, but efforts to address the problem have not been adequate. Still, UNDP does what it can to close the development gap or keep it from getting worse.

The World Health Organization (WHO), established in 1948, is governed by a thirty-one-nation executive board. All members of the UN are also members of WHO, which is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Its primary purpose is to promote global health and it has been very successful in working with UNICEF and national governments to eradicate smallpox and polio. It has also worked hard to control malaria and other diseases of the poorer countries such as river blindness in West Africa. WHO also coordinates the UN's program on HIV/AIDS. Its annual budget is supported through voluntary contributions. While WHO has undertaken some specific health issue campaigns, its central strategy is based on primary healthcare, including health education, food supply and nutrition, safe water, sanitation, immuniza-

tion, disease prevention, and the provision of essential drugs. Because of overlapping goals, WHO works closely with other UN bodies such as UNICEF (as mentioned), the Refugee Agency, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), and others to coordinate their activities.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the Refugee Agency, was founded in 1950 by the General Assembly originally to help with the 1.2 million refugees left homeless after World War II as well as other refugee issues. The 1951 Refugee Convention acts as the key legal document defining who is a refugee, the rights of a refugee, and the legal obligations of states. The purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being and care for the needs of refugees around the world, who currently amount to nearly 20 million people in 120 countries. UNHCR works to guarantee the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge with the option to return home voluntarily or resettle in another country. During its more than fifty years in operation, UNHCR has helped over 50 million people. Legally a refugee is defined as someone who has had to leave his or her own country to find refuge. This definition does not account for the many others who are displaced within their own countries but nevertheless left homeless. UNHCR, with no mandate to help internally displaced persons (IDPs), does assist several million, but not all of the 20–25 million estimated to be displaced. To be able to assist IDPs, UNHCR must be requested to do so by the UN and must have consent of the country involved. UNHCR is headquartered in Geneva and is governed by a forty-six-nation executive committee. It depends entirely on voluntary contributions from governments, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), a relatively new entity in the UN family, was established in 1995 as a permanent body to oversee international trade, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was serviced only by an ad hoc secretariat. The WTO, headquartered in Geneva in a large new building constructed specifically for the organization, is not considered a UN agency but undertakes cooperative arrangements and practices with the UN. It administers the twenty-eight agreements on international trade and is considered the watchdog in this arena. Trade disputes among the members are adjudicated under its dispute settlement “court.” Currently, the WTO has 146 members, with some additional countries having observer status. Members of the GATT in 1995 automatically became members of the WTO. Recent new members are China, which joined in 2001, and Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), which joined in 2002. Interestingly, while countries like Sierra Leone and Armenia are members, the Russian Federation has only observer status as of 2004. The Ministerial Conference, where policy decisions are made, meets every two years; the 2003 meeting took place in Cancún, Mexico. The 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle, Washington, was the scene

of mass demonstrations that erupted into violence when protesters of WTO trade policies and the effects of globalization took to the streets.

These brief descriptions represent only a few of the many organizations affiliated with the UN family. The following list names the funds, programs, agencies, and other organizations of the UN system, most of which have websites or can be searched through the UN's home page at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

*Funds, Programs, and Other Bodies*

- UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- UN Development Programme (UNDP)
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
- UN Population Fund (UNFPA)
- UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)
- UN University (UNU)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)
- UN Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)
- UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
- UN Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UNSTRAW)
- UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
- UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
- UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- International Criminal Court (ICC)

*Specialized Agencies and Organizations*

- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Bank
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)



United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)  
 International Seabed Authority  
 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)  
 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

## Conclusion

The picture painted here is of a vast system with six principal organs at its center and a myriad of other loosely coordinated entities at the periphery. There is a great deal of overlap and duplication, but this is not necessarily bad in a world where so much needs to be done and the tasks are so complex. In some ways, almost every activity is connected to and dependent on others. Greater coordination and efficiency would be welcome, but the larger issue is more a lack of resources to implement the huge tasks assigned to the UN system. The UN regular budget for one year is now about \$1.25 billion. That sum appears meager when compared to the U.S. Defense Department's annual budget of some \$365 billion. Yet the United Nations is expected to address most of the world's problems. Inevitably, there are expectations placed on the UN that it cannot fulfill. The tendency is to claim that the UN is not doing enough. However, the UN does not have any resources of its own and cannot raise taxes or take out loans. It is completely dependent on the support of Member States and in some cases donors to carry out its missions. The UN can only become what its Member States want it to become.

Nevertheless, the UN has continued to grow and adapt as the world environment changes. The globe has been gradually carved into independent states, each with responsibilities within its boundaries and interests in the global community. But states are becoming more and more interdependent and global problems like the spread of disease will continue to require global solutions by a collective state system willing to address these challenges and supply the resources needed.

## Notes

1. *Basic Facts About the United Nations* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1998), pp. 276–278.

2. Rosalyn Higgins, *Problems and Process: International Law and How We Use It* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 187–188.


3. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

4. Inis L. Claude Jr., *Swords Into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization*, 4th ed. (New York: Random House, 1984); see chap. 7, "The Problem of Voting," pp. 118–140.

5. The one exception to the use of consensus in the General Assembly is in establishing the budget, which is discussed in greater length by Jeffrey Laurenti in Chapter 9.

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