

The Establishment of the United Nations: A Study of its formation and its Contribution

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Abstract—The United Nations (UN) is the world's largest and most prominent international organization. Established in 1945, the UN aims to foster global peace, security, cooperation, and development. With 193 member states, it plays a central role in addressing the world's most pressing challenges—from conflict and climate change to poverty and human rights.

Historical Background

The UN was created in the aftermath of World War II, following the failure of the League of Nations to prevent global conflict. On 24 October 1945, the UN Charter came into force after being ratified by the majority of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Founding Members:

The original 51 member states included major Allied powers like the USA, USSR (now Russia), UK, France, and China.

24 October is now celebrated annually as United Nations Day.

Index Terms—United Nations (UN), international organization, 193-member, United Nations Day.

I. INTRODUCTION

“The United Nations was not created to take humanity to heaven, but to save it from hell.”— Dag Hammarskjöld

(The UN Secretary-General from 1953 to 1961)

The United Nations Organisation is an international organisation including almost all sovereign States in the world. It was established to maintain world peace and secure the economic, social and political conditions under which this can be maintained.

CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS

1. Fear of Death and Destruction:

War is a horrible thing. The 20th century had seen two World Wars. World War II (1939–45) was more terrible than all the Wars of the past. It left 50 million people dead. The Wars left a legacy of misery and depression in nearly every country. Many cities and towns were razed to the ground. Countless industrial estates and business centres were destroyed by the bombs.

2. The most terrifying Weapons:

The worst aspect of the situation is that there are no winners in a nuclear war. A nuclear war would be an ‘omnicide’ (death for all). It has been rightly described as *Mutually Assured Destruction* (MAD).

3. Failure of the League of Nations:

The League of Nations (1920–1939) was born in the tragedy of the First World War. The League had begun its work well and had rendered valuable service during the first ten years of its existence. However, the League failed when it had to deal with acts of aggression in 1930s. In September 1939 the Second World War broke out and the hopes that the League would be able to preserve peace were completely shattered.

4. Building a Durable Structure of Peace and Security in the World:

Besides widespread destruction, the wars aroused suspicions and encouraged arms race. The world leaders were desirous of a world free from aggression. They strove to build a durable structure of peace and security in the minds and hearts of the people across the world. *The long drawn-out deliberations led to the establishment of the United Nations.*

II. MILESTONES IN THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations Organisation officially came into existence on 24 October 1945. But attempts at establishing an effective international organisation to ensure world peace and cooperation had begun much earlier, during the end of World War II.

THE LONDON DECLARATION

In June 1941 the representatives of Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa met in London and decided for the first time to establish an international organisation to maintain international peace and security. This decision came to be known as the London Declaration.

THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

In August 1941 the British Prime Minister Mr. Churchill and the US President Mr. Roosevelt met on board a British warship, somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. Their declaration came to be known as the Atlantic Charter. The signatories to the Charter were required to observe the following principles:

1. They would respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
 2. They would peacefully settle all disputes without resorting to war.
 3. They would encourage cooperation among nations with a view to ensure economic progress and social security.
- In order to achieve the desired peace, the nations must reduce armaments and their armed forces.

THE WASHINGTON DECLARATION, 1942

The name 'United Nations' was devised by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was first used when on 1st January, 1942 the representatives of 26 nations signed the 'United Nations Declaration' at Washington. The signatories to this Declaration promised to continue war against the enemy collectively and not to make separately any settlement with the enemy.

THE MOSCOW DECLARATION, 1943

In October 1943 a Conference of the Foreign Ministers of Britain, America, Russia and China was held at Moscow. A joint communique was issued in November, 1943. The leaders agreed to set up a general world organisation after the war. This organisation would be based on the principle of "sovereign equality" of all peace-loving states, large or small. Thus the first formal decision to establish the United Nations was taken at Moscow in 1943.

DUMBARTON OAKS CONFERENCE, 1944

The representatives of Britain, America, Russia and China met from 21 August to 24 September, 1944 at an estate known as Dumbarton Oaks, near Washington. In this Conference draft of the UN Charter was formulated.

YALTA CONFERENCE, 1945

Early in 1945 the defeat of Germany was in sight. Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt held a Conference at Yalta, in Russia, from 4th February to 11th February 1945. It was decided to open to all peace-loving States the membership of the United Nations.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE AND THE BIRTH OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Deliberations began at San Francisco in April 1945 to finalize the UN Charter. The Conference was attended by the representatives of 50 countries. The UN Charter was signed by the fifty participating nations on 26 June, the last day of the Conference. Poland was allowed to sign on 15th October, 1945—thus raising the number of original members to fifty-one. It was required that the UN would be established after the Charter was ratified by the Five Big Powers (Britain, America, Russia, France and China) and a majority of the remaining 46 original members.

THE UNITED NATIONS

It was the hope of the Founding Fathers of the United Nations that with the goodwill and cooperation of all the Member-States, it would be able to function effectively.

MEMBERSHIP

The United Nations started functioning with 51 nations as the Original members. By the end of October 2006 the total membership had increased to 192. Switzerland and East Timor joined the United Nations as 190th and 191st Members in September 2002. Switzerland had so far hesitated to become a member, fearing that its traditional neutrality would be compromised by this act.

The U.N. Charter makes provision for the admission of new members. The membership is open to all peace-loving States which accept the obligations contained in the U.N. Charter. Admissions are made by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. The Charter also makes provisions for the suspension and expulsion of members by the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Security Council.

Headquarters: The United Nations has its headquarters in New York City, USA. The European Office of the U.N. is in Geneva.

Flag: The flag is light blue in colour and portrayed in white in its centre is the U.N. Emblem, a polar map of the world embraced by twin olive branches.

Official Languages: The official languages of the U.N. are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Any speech made in any of these languages is immediately translated into other five languages.

Finance: The United Nations is financed by the contributions from Member-States. They contribute to the expenses of the budget and to the Working Capital Fund on a scale determined by the General Assembly each year on the recommendation of its Committee on Contributions.

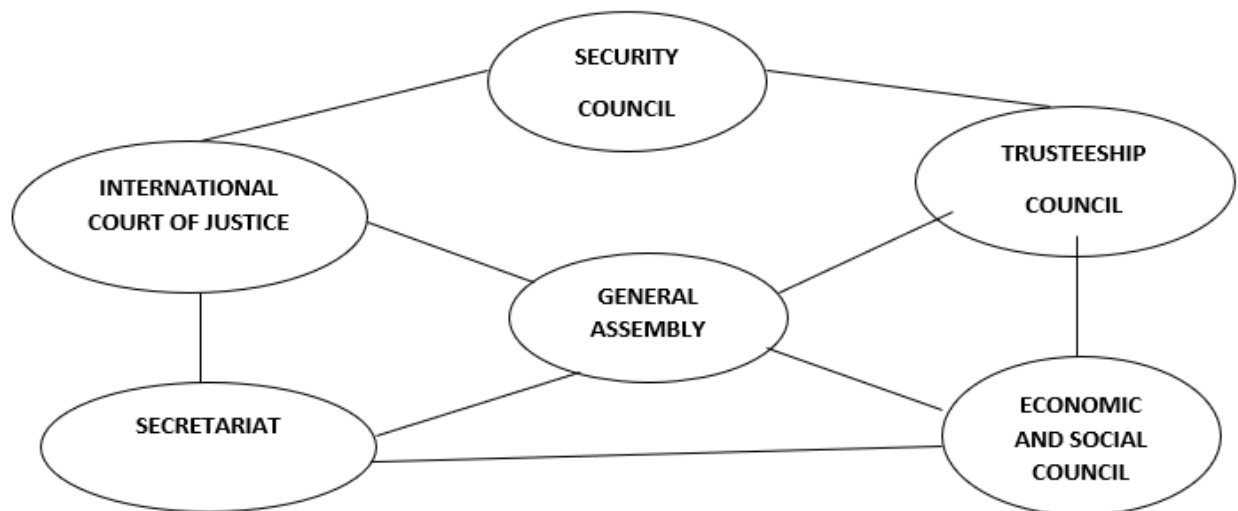
THE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Preamble and Article 1 of the Charter lay down the objectives and purposes of the United Nations. They are as follows:

1. To save succeeding generations from the "scourge of War".
2. To maintain international peace and security and to take effective measures for removal of threats to the peace.
3. To develop friendly relations among nations and to achieve international cooperation in solving problems of economic, social and cultural character.
4. To establish conditions under which justice and respect for **international law**

PRINCIPAL ORGANS

- Security Council
- Trusteeship Council
- General Assembly
- International Court Of Justice
- Secretariat
- Economic And Social Justice



PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (Charter)
The objectives and purposes tell us about the UN principles also. However, some of the principles need to be mentioned separately. They are as under:

1. All states are "sovereign" and "equal".
2. The Member-States should fulfil their obligations faithfully. In other words, they should settle their disputes by peaceful means and should not interfere in the domestic or internal affairs of any state.
3. All members should give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes.

4. The Organisation should ensure that States which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these principles.

PRINCIPAL ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The principal organs of the United Nations are: General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice and a Secretariat.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Composition: All the members of the United Nations are members of the General Assembly. The Assembly must meet once a year in September. In addition, the special sessions may be convened by the Secretary-General at the request of the Security Council or of a majority of the members of the United Nations. *It is a kind of Parliament of Nations. Each Member shall have not more than five representatives in the General Assembly. However, each State has one vote.*

How Decisions are Taken?

The decisions on important questions shall be made by a two-thirds majority. These questions include: the election of the non-permanent members of the Security Council, the admission of new Members to the United Nations, the suspension and expulsion of Members, budgetary questions and recommendations regarding the maintenance of international peace and security.

Decisions on other matters are made by a majority of the members present and voting.

The Functions: The functions of the Assembly may be studied under the following headings:

1. **Deliberative Functions:** The assembly may discuss any question relating to peace and security. It has the power to make recommendations for the purpose of (a) promoting international cooperation in the political field, and (b) promoting international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational and health fields.
2. **Supervisory Functions:** The General Assembly regulates the working of other Organs and Agencies of the United Nations. It receives and considers reports from the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations. The Secretary-General is required to make an annual report to the General Assembly on the work of the United Nations.
3. **Financial Functions:** The General Assembly considers and approves the budget of the United Nations. The expenses of the UN are borne by the Members as apportioned by the General Assembly.
4. **Electoral Functions:** The Assembly elects the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of the Economic and Social Council. It appoints the Secretary-General upon the recommendations of the Security Council. The members of the International Court of Justice are

elected by the General Assembly and by the Security Council.

5. **Amending the UN Charter:** The Assembly has the power to amend the Charter. Amendments adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the Assembly (not merely of those present and voting) need to be ratified by two-thirds of the Member-States, including all the permanent members of the Security Council.

6. **Functions under 'Uniting for Peace Resolution':** With the adoption of 'Uniting for Peace Resolution' in 1950 the position of the Assembly has been considerably strengthened. If the Security Council is unable to reach a decision, because of lack of unanimity among the permanent members, the General Assembly can deal with the problem. It can make recommendations for collective measures including the use of armed forces in case of aggression or breach of peace.

III. THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Composition: Security Council is often described as the '*Enforcement or Executive Wing*' of the United Nations. It has the basic responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security. The Council consists of fifteen members, five being permanent members representing the '*Big Five*' — China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States of America. The ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly by two-thirds majority for a two-year term. A retiring member is not eligible for immediate re-election.

How Decisions are Taken — Veto Power: Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions on procedural matters are made by an affirmative vote of nine members. Decisions on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members, including the concurring votes of the permanent members. *A Negative Vote by a Permanent Member is called Veto.* This means that the Council is powerless to act in the face of a Veto by any of permanent members. But abstention from voting by a permanent member does not amount to a negative vote (Veto).

The meetings of the Security Council are held once a month. However, in emergencies, the meetings can be held whenever they are needed.

Powers and Functions: The Charter casts upon the Security Council the primary responsibility for the

maintenance of international peace and security. The Council is vested with the following powers and functions:

✓ Investigatory Role: The Security Council will ask the parties to a dispute to seek a solution by negotiation, mediation, arbitration or other peaceful means, such as a judicial settlement.

4. Measures not Involving the Use of Armed Force: When none of the peaceful means succeeds, the Council may decide what other measures are to be employed. These may include

(a) complete or partial interruption of economic relations,

(b) interruption of rail, sea, air, postal and other means of communication, and

(c) the severance of diplomatic relations. The Security Council urges the Member-States to apply these sanctions against an aggressor.

5. Military Action:

If above measures have proved to be inadequate, the Security Council may resort to military action. Such action may include operations by air, sea or land forces supplied by Member-Nations.

5. Trusteeship Functions:

The Security Council performed functions relating to political, economic and social matters of the Trust Territories. Since the Trusteeship Council was suspended in 1994, the trusteeship functions became irrelevant.

6. Admission of New Members:

New members are admitted by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

7. Electoral Functions:

The Security Council

(a) participates in the election of the Judges of the International Court of Justice,

(b) the UN Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council, and

(c) it may ask the International Court of Justice for advisory opinion on any legal matter.

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. All members of

the United Nations are *ipso facto* parties to the Statute of the Court. Any other State may become a party to the Statute on conditions to be determined by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

Composition:

The Court consists of 15 judges. The Security Council and the General Assembly each separately choose fifteen Judges. Of these, those 15 persons who are chosen by a majority vote in both bodies are elected the judges of the Court. No two judges can be nationals of same State. If two persons of the same nationality are chosen, only the elder becomes a member of the Court. The Court elects its President and Vice-President for a three-year term. After their term expires, the reconstituted Court has power to appoint its Registrar.

The judges are elected for a nine-year term. However, they are eligible for re-election.

The Court is permanently in session at The Hague in The Netherlands, but it may sit elsewhere also.

Powers and Functions:

For a sitting of the Court the quorum of judges is nine, but a smaller Court may sit to hear certain classes of cases.

Compulsory Jurisdiction:

The Court possesses compulsory jurisdiction in two ways. First, a large number of treaties provide that disputes arising under them would be submitted to the Court. Secondly, the jurisdiction extends to (a) disputes pertaining to the interpretation of international law, and (b) reparation, i.e., compensation to be made for the breach of an international obligation.

Voluntary Jurisdiction:

Its jurisdiction covers all cases which the parties refer to it. One party alone may refer the dispute to the Court.

Advisory Opinions:

The General Assembly or the Security Council may request the Court to give an advisory opinion on any legal question. Other organs of the United Nations and specialized agencies may also request advisory opinions on legal questions.

Codification of International Law:

The Court has played an important role in the codification of international law. It required a thorough examination of International Conventions,

International Customs, judicial decisions and general principles of law.

5. Evolving Procedures of Peaceful Settlement of Disputes:

At any stage of the dispute, the Court may recommend appropriate procedures or methods of settlement. It may also recommend terms of settlement.

The decisions of the Court are made by majority of the judges present.

Enforcement of the Judgements:

The Court has been able to resolve most of the disputes which came up before it. The disputes related to matters such as these: fishing rights, compensation to be paid in cases of aerial incidents and asylum (protection) given by government to foreigners who left their country. Each member of the United Nations has an obligation to comply with the decisions of the Court in any case to which it is a party. If any party fails to fulfil its obligation, the other party may have recourse to the Security Council. The Council decides upon measures to be taken to give effect to the judgement.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Economic and Social Council consists of 54 members elected by the General Assembly. They are elected for a three-year term. If the object of the Security Council is to free the world from 'Fear', the object of the Economic and Social Council is to free it from 'Want'.

The Economic and Social Council initiates studies and reports on all matters within its concern — economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters.

TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

The Trusteeship Council was created to supervise the administration of 11 Trust Territories, which were not fully self-governing. It was required to take adequate steps to prepare them for self-government and independence.

All these territories have become independent or joined independent countries. The Trusteeship Council was suspended in 1994 with the independence of Palau, the last UN Trust Territory.

THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat comprises a Secretary-General and such other staff as the United Nations may require. The

Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a term of 5 years. He can be re-elected at the end of the period. He is the Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations. Mr. Kofi Annan became UN Secretary-General on 1 January, 1997. He was re-elected to this office for another five-year term beginning on 1 January, 2002. The United Nations and the UN Secretary-General shared the Centenary Nobel Peace Prize for working “for a better organised and more peaceful world in 2001.” Ban-Ki-moon is the 8th Secretary-General of the United Nations. He assumed office on 1 January, 2007.

The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of peace and security. He is required to submit an annual report to the General Assembly on the work of the United Nations. The Staff of the Secretariat is appointed by the Secretary-General under regulations established by the General Assembly.

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