UN BODIES

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly (GA) was created in 1945. It is the main, and largest, body of the United Nations. Each of the 192 United Nations Member States holds a seat in the GA. The GA acts as the chief deliberative at the UN and handles a wide variety of international issues and well as issues like UN policy making.

The UN charter makes allowances for the General Assembly to take on the following responsibilities:

- Make recommendations on general issues of cooperation in relation to maintaining peace and security in the international community (this includes disarmament);
- Discuss and make recommendations on any issue relating to international peace and security (unless the issue is currently being discussed by the Security Council);
- Discuss and make recommendations on issues within the boundaries of the charter or issues affecting the function of any organ of the UN (unless the issue is currently being discussed elsewhere within the UN);
- Conduct studies and "make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international cooperation in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields";
- Make suggestions of peaceful resolutions to issues or situations that may deteriorate friendly relations between nations;
- Discuss and approve the UN budget and handle financial assessments of Member States;
- Elect nations to the rotating seats on the Security Council and elect members to other UN councils and organs and appoint the Secretary-General (recommended by the Security Council).

Under resolution 377 (V), the General Assembly may also act on an issue threatening international peace and security when the Security Council fails to take action due to a veto vote from a permanent member.

In the GA, each member has one vote. On important issues (like recommendations on international peace and security and election of rotating members of the Security Council), a two-thirds majority is required. Other votes only require a simple majority.

For more information on the General Assembly, visit http://un.org/ga/

Taken directly from http://un.org/ga/about/background.shtml

SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council is made up of 15 seats: five permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and ten non-permanent rotating members that serve two-year terms. The non-permanent seats are distributed by regions. There are three African nations, two Latin American/Caribbean nations, two Asian nations, two Western European nations, and one Eastern European nation. The Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security.

According to the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is responsible for:

- Maintaining international peace and security as laid out in the principles and purposes of the UN;
- Investigating situations or disputes that might threaten international peace or security;
- Recommending ways to settle such situations and disputes;
- Forming plans for a system to regulate armaments;
- Determining when a threat to international peace and security takes places and recommending action that should be taken to resolve it;
- Implementing economic sanctions (and other solutions to the threat of international peace and security that do not involve force) through Members;
- Taking military action when necessary to resolve threats to international peace and security;
- Recommending admission of new Members;
- Implementing UN trusteeship functions;
- Recommending the Secretary-General appointment to the General Assembly, and, along with the GA, electing International Court of Justice Judges.

When an issue threatening international peace and security is brought before the Council, the Council generally first recommends that the parties attempt to resolve the conflict using peaceful solutions. In certain cases, the Council will conduct an investigation and act as mediator or will appoint representatives (or have the Secretary-General appoint representatives) to do so.

When a situation erupts into fighting, the Council works to bring it to an end as soon as possible. The Council achieves this through means including cease-fire directives, collective military action, and sanctions.

Each member of the Council has one vote. Procedural matters require an affirmative vote from at least nine of the 15 members. Substantive matters require nine votes as well, but they also require that the permanent five members not exercise their veto power, which causes the matter to automatically fail, by voting no.

For more information on the Security Council, visit http://un.org/Docs/sc/

Taken directly from http://un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_background.html

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is chiefly responsible for coordinating and discussing international economic and social matters. ECOSOC "also receives reports from 11 UN funds and programs."

According to the United Nations Charter, ECOSOC has the following responsibilities:

- Promote full employment, social and economic progress, and higher standards of living;
- Recognize resolutions to international health, economic, and social problems;
- Facilitate "international cultural and educational cooperation;"
- Promote international respect for elemental freedoms and human rights.

ECOSOC may also instigate reports and studies, and prepare for and assist in preparations for major international conferences (and follow-ups to these conferences) related to economic and social issues.

For more information on ECOSOC, visit http://www.un.org/ecosoc/

Taken directly from http://www.un.org/ecosoc/about/

TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

The Trusteeship Council was established to supervise the administration of Trust Territories under the care of the Trusteeship System, which was established to encourage the advancement of citizens of Trust Territories and work towards the independence of Trust Territories.

Under the United Nations Charter, the Trusteeship Council is responsible for discussing and examining reports from "the Administering Authority on the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the peoples of Trust Territories and, in consultation with the Administering Authority, to examine petitions from and undertake periodic and other special missions to Trust Territories."

The Council consists of China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council).

The Council was suspended on 1 November 1994 when the goals of the Council were fulfilled because all Trust Territories had attained independence as separate States or joined other independent states.

For more information about the Trusteeship Council, visit http://un.org/documents/tc.htm

Taken directly from http://un.org/documents/tc.htm

SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is the bureaucracy of the United Nations. It is made up of staff working across the world to carry out the daily responsibilities of the United Nations, including mediating international disputes, administering peacekeeping operations, surveying social and economic problems and trends, informing world media about UN work, translating documents and speeches, and organizing international conferences on worldwide issues.

The Secretariat is made up of around 8,900 staff members around the world, with the Secretary-General at its head, and works under a budget from about 170 countries.

For more information on the Secretariat, visit http://un.org/documents/st.htm

Taken directly from http://un.org/documents/st.htm

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the main judicial body of the United Nations. The Court is located in the Netherlands (it is the only principal organ of the UN that is not located in New York).

The Court is charged with settling legal disputes submitted to it and advising on legal questions submitted by authorized UN organs and agencies.

The Court has 15 judges that serve nine-year terms. They are elected by the GA and the Security Council.

For more information on the ICJ, visit http://www.icj-cij.org/homepage/index.php?lang=en

Taken directly from http://www.icj-cij.org/court/index.php?p1=1