

# Aim #10: How does the United Nations operate & address the world's problems?

## Key United Nations Agencies

### FAO

**Food and Agriculture Organization**  
**Founded:** 1945 **Role:** Works to boost food production, improve rural standards of living, and help countries cope with food shortages.

### UNESCO

**United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization**  
**Founded:** 1946 **Role:** Promotes social, cultural, and educational projects aimed at furthering international cooperation in each of these areas.

### UNICEF

**UN Children's Fund**  
**Founded:** 1946 **Role:** Promotes child health and welfare. A driving force behind effort to immunize children against disease. Raises money directly from the public, including annual Halloween fund drive.

### UNHCR

**UN High Commissioner for Refugees**  
**Founded:** 1951 **Role:** Protects and provides food and shelter to people involuntarily forced from their homes by war, natural disaster, or political repression.

### WHO

**World Health Organization**  
**Founded:** 1948 **Role:** Conducts immunization campaigns; provides medicine, health education, and doctors to poor countries; coordinates research projects, including the search for a cure to AIDS.

### WORLD BANK

**Founded:** 1944 **Role:** Lends money to help poor countries with projects such as dams, roads, power plants, and other development projects.

Source: United Nations, World Book Encyclopedia

## EVERY DAY THE UNITED NATIONS WORKS TO TACKLE GLOBAL CHALLENGES



- Provides food to 90 million people in 75 countries
- Vaccinates 58 per cent of the world's children, saving 2.5 million lives a year
- Assists over 34 million refugees and people fleeing war, famine or persecution
- Combats climate change; works with 140 nations to prevent harmful mercury emissions
- Keeps peace with 120,000 peacekeepers in 16 operations on 4 continents
- Fights poverty, helping 370 million rural poor achieve better lives in the last 30 years
- Protects and promotes human rights on site and through some 80 treaties/declarations
- Mobilizes US\$12.5 billion in humanitarian aid to help people affected by emergencies
- Uses diplomacy to prevent conflict; assists some 50 countries a year with elections
- Promotes maternal health, saving the lives of 30 million women a year

## Mini Lecture

- The successor organization to the League of Nations, the **United Nations (UN)**, began as the group of nations allied against the Axis powers in WWII.
- Although negotiations were ongoing concerning the organization among Britain, USSR, and the US throughout the War, an agreement was mostly reached at their meeting in Yalta in February 1945. In San Francisco in June 1945, the UN Charter was adopted.
- The **UN General Assembly** is where all the member nations have equal representation (1 vote) and where a number of the general duties of the organization are fulfilled.
- One of these duties is choosing nonpermanent members of the powerful **Security Council**, one of the important arms of the organization when it comes to preserving international peace. It has five permanent members- China, France, Russia, Britain, US. The number of nonpermanent members began at six and increased to 10 today.
- It is within the Security Council that serious issues that could lead to war have been addressed. But the fact that each permanent member has the power to veto any resolution of the council rendered the Security Council ineffective.
- The Security Council also operates peacekeeping missions. **Peacekeepers** are military or policing units drawn from around the world and sent to areas of conflict. Many have helped prevent violence, but other have been notable failures (i.e. Yugoslavia 1995)
- The UN plays many other roles to aid countries in need. These include economic aid & relief, medical aid, refugee assistance, humanitarian aid, fighting poverty, and combating climate change.
- The actions of the Nazis made defending **human rights** a global issue. The rights were listed & defined in **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** & the job of the U.N. was to stand up for them.



## THE WORLD OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN comprises 191 member nations. Headquartered in New York City, it was founded in 1945, after World War II. The UN encompasses a vast bureaucracy responsible for solving global economic, political, and social problems. Here are some of its most important bodies and the agencies they oversee.

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY

All 191 nations in the UN have an equal vote in the General Assembly. Election of Security Council members and recommendations on issues of peace and security require a two-thirds majority vote; all other issues need just a simple majority.

### SECURITY COUNCIL

Responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council is the only UN body with authority to take action in these areas. It has 15 members, including five permanent members (U.S., Britain, France, Russia, and China) with veto power, and 10 rotating members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.

[How does UN Work?](#)

## Review Questions:

1. What are the main bodies of the U.N.?
2. What are the main goals of the U.N.?
3. How does the U.N. function?
4. Why is the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights important?

**Enduring Issue:** Cooperation

## What is the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights? Why was the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights written?

**Directions:** Read the excerpt below and respond to the questions.

### What is the United Nations?

The United Nations (UN) is an **intergovernmental organization** to promote international **cooperation** established in 1945 after World War II in order to prevent another such conflict. The UN was a replacement for the **League of Nations**, an organization that also attempted to promote cooperation among nations after World War I. In 1948, the UN General Assembly **drafted** [wrote] the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is important because for the first time, there is a document that defines the meaning of the "fundamental freedoms" and "human rights" and declares that these rights should be universally protected. While the UN Declaration defines human rights, it is not a treaty, which means it is not legally binding. Nations can choose to protect or not protect human rights.



Eleanor Roosevelt and United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Spanish text.

1. What is the United Nations? Why was it formed after 1945?
2. Which organizations preceded the United Nations? Using your prior knowledge, why was this organization dismantled?
3. What major events and atrocities of World War II may have prompted nations to consider guidelines for protecting human rights?
4. What is the difference between a declaration and a treaty?

**Directions:** Watch this [Ted-Ed video, "What are the universal human rights?"](#) explaining UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Then, respond to the questions below.

Human rights are rights **inherent** (natural or fundamental) to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally **entitled** (allowed) to our human rights without discrimination.

1. Who wrote the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
2. What are some examples of human rights described in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
3. *Pause the video at 2:33.* The video asks, "If these human rights principles are so well-developed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, then why are human rights abused and ignored time and time again all over the world?" Make a prediction: Why might there still be human rights abuses even though we have the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
4. The video lists two reasons why we continue to see human rights abuses. Fill in the blanks below:  
It is difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ these rights.  
It is difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ transgressors (someone who violates a law or moral code).
5. The main bodies within the UN in charge of protecting human rights mostly monitor (watch to see if human rights are being violated) and investigate (study the impacts and extent) of violations. What *can't* the main bodies in the UN do?
6. The video explains "not all human rights instruments are powerless." What are examples of organizations that can enforce laws or hear cases?

Article	Describe a historical or contemporary example of this article of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights being violated.
<b>Article 4.</b> No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.	
<b>Article 5.</b> No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.	
<b>Article 9.</b> No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.	
<b>Article 13.</b> (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.	
<b>Article 18.</b> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.	
<b>Article 26.</b> (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.	