Introduction to the United Nations & the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals

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(with credit for some of the materials in this presentation to Cecilia O’Dwyer, IBVM & the RUN dropbox archives...)
The United Nations (UN)

- International organization of 193 sovereign states founded in June 1945 (ratified Oct. 24, 1945) to ensure that there would never be another world war
- Maintains international peace and security
- Promotes social progress, better living standards, human rights and freedoms
Purposes of the United Nations

1. “To maintain international peace and security, . . . take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace . . .”

2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace. (Rule of Law)

3. “To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting . . . human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

4. To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.
UN Headquarters / Locations

Also locations in:

- Geneva, Switzerland (1966)
- Vienna, Austria (1979)
- Nairobi, Kenya (1996)

United Nations Headquarters Complex in New York City (1948)
With over 44,000 staff Members (60% of whom work in the field), the United Nations is truly a Global Organization. However, UNHQ in New York City is an excellent location with vibrant energy - the birthplace...?
What types of groups do the work of the United Nations??
Permanent Missions to the United Nations

- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative
- Deputy Permanent Representative
- Counsellor
- First Secretary
- Second Secretary
- Third Secretary
- Attaché

Addresses:
https://visit.un.org/sites/visit.un.org/files/Missions_Contacts_0.pdf
How does the UN work?

The areas outlined below are commonly called the six principal organs of the United Nations, and constitute how the UN organizes its work.

Note: International Trusteeship System completed its task and no longer meets regularly.

Principal organs of the UN:

- General Assembly
- Economic & Social Council
- Security Council
- Secretariat
- Int. Court of Justice
- Trusteeship Council
- Functional and Regional Commissions
- (NGOs) Non Governmental Organizations
- Six Committees
How does the UN work, cont’d.

🎉 The General Assembly: The GA Deals with issues of military conflicts, arms race, sustainable development, human rights, status of children, women and youth – and makes recommendations to the Security Council. At the General Assembly, which kicks off each year in mid-September, all 193 member nations are represented.

🎉 The Secretariat: Headed by the Secretary General (currently Antonio Gutierrez), the Secretariat prepares information on various problems so that governments can study them and make recommendations, organizes international conferences, and helps to carry out the decisions of the UN.

The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking & representative organ of the United Nations. It meets under its president or Secretary-General in regular yearly sessions, the main part of which lasts from September to December and resumes in January until all issues are addressed.
UN General Assembly Committees

First Committee (Disarmament & International Security)
Second Committee (Economic & Financial)
Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian & Cultural)
Fourth Committee (Special Political & Decolonization)
Fifth Committee (Administrative & Budgetary)
Sixth Committee (Legal)
How does the UN work, cont’d.

The UN Security Council:

- Investigates any dispute that might lead to international conflict
- Recommends methods and terms of settlement
- Recommends actions against any threats or acts of aggression
- Contains 15 members. Five of these are permanent members with veto power: China, France, Russia, UK & US

The UN Security Council also works closely with the International Court of Justice, located in the Netherlands at The Hague
As we recognize & celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the UN, reform of the Security Council is the most urgent needed structural change, according to many members of civil society. The five Permanent members of the UN Security Council, who hold veto power, are collectively known as the P5: China, France, Russia, UK & US.
ECOSOC, or the Economic and Social Council, coordinates the economic and social work of the United Nations, which includes financing for development. It carries out its work through the following Functional Commissions that meet annually:

- Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Narcotic Drugs
- Population and Development
- Science and Technology for Development
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Status of Women
- Sustainable Development
- United Nations on Forests

Over 3,000 non-governmental organizations work through ECOSOC to give feedback and policy suggestions.
The **United Nations member states** are the 193 sovereign **states** that are **members** of the **United Nations** (UN) and have equal representation in the UN General Assembly.

**Membership of the principal United Nations Organs**

**General Assembly:** All 193  
**Secretariat:** Staff from over 180 countries  
**Security Council:** 15 members  
**Economic and Social Council:** 54 members  
**International Court of Justice:** 15 members  
**Trusteeship council:** 5 Permanent members of Security Council

**Permanent Observers:**
- Non – member States  
- Intergovernmental organizations  
- Other Entities
SO, WHY SHOULD People BE INTERESTED IN THE UN?

(What are the many ways in which the UN might affect your constituents daily lives??)

Maintaining peace and security: 17 peacekeeping operations by 113,000 men and women from 118 countries

Creating peace: bring conflicts to an end – El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Cambodia . . . 40 % decline in conflict since 1990

75 Parties have ratified, of 197 Parties to the Convention have ratified it thus far....

Providing food to the neediest humans around the world (WHO, FAO, WFP, UNICEF, UNFP, etc.)

The UN has also played a key role in the following areas:

Promoting Human Rights
International Air Travel - Global Communications - Health Issues - International Aid
Reducing Child Mortality - Improving Literacy - Transitions to Democracy

https://www.un.org/un70/en/content/70ways

BOOKLET: 60 Ways the United Nations Makes a Difference
http://win.janegoodall.it/varhtml/news/UN60Anni.pdf
Global Poverty Map

Percentage of Country Population on Under $2 Per Day

Source: United Nations
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2000–2015: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Similar to a Strategic Plan, the MDGs were implemented in 129 countries to reduce poverty, promote good governance, address crises, and preserve the environment:

1. To eradicate **extreme poverty** and **hunger**
2. To achieve **universal primary education**
3. To promote **gender equality** and empower women
4. To reduce **child mortality**
5. To improve **maternal health**
6. To combat **HIV/AIDS, malaria**, and other diseases
7. To ensure **environmental sustainability**
8. To develop a **global partnership** for development

Achievements were impressive in some areas, yet spotty in others due to a variety of reasons including lack of grassroots input (especially from the Global South) and a lack of funding.
The Post-2015 development agenda and SDG process was an outcome from the Rio+20 conference (June 2012).

Many discussions, proposals, and meetings were held to develop the Post-2015 agenda:

Meeting of High-level Political Forum (July 2014)
Proposed Sustainable Development Goals, formulated by the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (August 2014)
Report of Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (November 2014)
Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda (December 2014)

“Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was adopted by all 193 nation-states (September 2015).
.... the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can provide a framework for change