

History of the United Nations

The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was first used in the "Declaration by United Nations" of January 1, 1942, during the Second World War, when representatives of 26 nations pledged their Governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers.

States first established international organizations to cooperate on specific matters. The International Telecommunication Union was founded in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union, and the Universal Postal Union was established in 1874. Both are now United Nations specialized agencies.

In 1899, the International Peace Conference was held in The Hague to elaborate instruments for settling crises peacefully, preventing wars and codifying rules of warfare. It adopted the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes and established the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which began work in 1902.

Before the United Nations was the League of Nations, an organization conceived in similar circumstances during the first World War, and established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles "to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security." The International Labour Organization was also created under the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League. The League of Nations ceased its activities after failing to prevent the Second World War.

In 1945, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter. Those delegates deliberated on the basis of proposals worked out by the representatives of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States at Dumbarton Oaks, United States in August-October 1944. The Charter was signed on June 26 1945 by the representatives of the 50 countries. Poland, which was not represented at the Conference, signed it later and became one of the original 51 Member States.

The United Nations officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, when the Charter had been ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and by a majority of other signatories. The principles of the UN as explained in the Charter are to save future generations from war, reaffirm human rights, and establish equal rights for all persons. In addition it also aims to promote justice, freedom, and social progress for the peoples of all of its member states.

The charter established five parts of the United Nations:

1. **General Assembly**-discuss and decide on issues of international peace and security.
2. **Security Council**-Five of these are permanent (USA, USSR/RUSSIA, GREAT BRITIAN, CHINA, FRANCE). Permanent members appoint another six members who are non-permanent members, who are elected for 2 years terms. Security Council is given the primary task by the United Nations of maintaining peace and security at an international level. May recommend force if disputes cannot be resolved peacefully.
3. **Economic and Social Council**-promote and improve the economic and social well-being of those living in the member states. Areas this council covers: health, education, economic, social and cultural issues and the promotion of the position of women in the world.
4. **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**- the main judicial body of the United Nations. Helps resolve disputes between nations that involve international law.
5. **Secretariat**-comprises of a Secretary-General and it is the body that runs the United Nations. The expectations are to work around the world to carry out UN policies and programs, help mediate international disputes, study economic and social trends, and observe human rights.

United Nations Day is celebrated on October 24 each year.