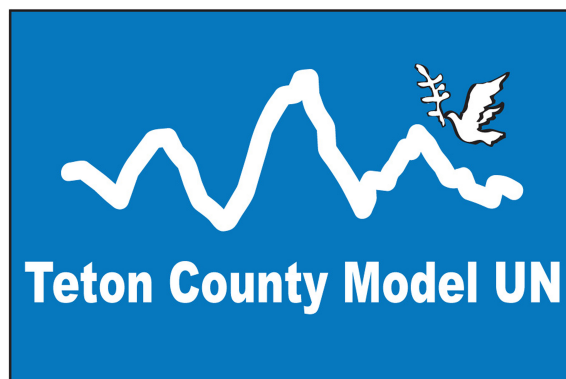


TCMUN PREP SUGGESTIONS



Lesson 2: History and Structure of the United Nations

Goal: To teach the history, structure and goals of the United Nations (UN) and to provide students a greater understanding of and context for the organization they will be simulating during TCMUN. A more in-depth version of this information is also available [here](#).

Introduction: Watch UN History Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cqW8-ongtY>

Content: An overview of the structure and history of the UN.

Brief History of the UN: The UN is an international organization that was formed in 1945 to unite the nations of the world and to build peace and security in the wake of WW II. It was founded to replace the League of Nations, an international organization established to promote world peace and disarmament after WW I. The League failed mainly because the United States never joined and it was ineffective in preventing WW II.

The main goals of the UN are:

- To keep peace throughout the world;
- To develop friendly relations among nations;
- To help nations work together to improve the lives of the poor; to conquer hunger, disease, and illiteracy; and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms;
- To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve these goals.

The UN:

- Is comprised of 193 Member States. Currently, the Holy See and the State of Palestine are not full members of the UN. Rather, they are permanent observers and have access to most UN meetings and documents, but are not recognized as full Member States.
- Has six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.
- Has an annual budget of over \$5 billion paid for by Member States. A country's ability to pay, national income, and population determines the amount it is required to contribute.
- Is comprised of five main bodies.

Main UN Bodies: [See Visual #1](#)

- **The General Assembly (GA)** is comprised of all the UN Member States. Each Member State, regardless of geographic area or population, has one vote. There are several GA committees: the First Committee, which deals with disarmament and security; the Second Committee, which deals with economic and financial matters; and the Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian, and cultural questions. No GA measures are legally binding except those relating to internal financial and administrative affairs of the UN.
- **The Security Council (SC)** is comprised of five permanent members and ten non-permanent members. The five permanent Member States, or P5, are the victors of WWII: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The P5 have extraordinary power; any of them can veto any Security Council measure. The GA elects the non-permanent members for two-year terms; geographical representation is a selection criteria. The SC's main goal is to maintain international peace and security. It is the only UN body that may authorize military action and that has the power to create legally binding resolutions on international peace and security.
- **The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** is comprised of 54 members elected by the GA for three-year terms. It coordinates economic, social, and other related work of the UN.
- **The International Court of Justice (ICJ)** is based in The Hague, Netherlands. Its 15 members are judges from different countries elected by the GA and SC. The Court settles legal disputes between nations.
- **The Secretariat** is made up of international civil servants recruited from Member States to implement day-to-day UN programs around the world. In recruiting this staff, attention is paid to geographic representation and a Member State's level of budgetary contribution. The head of the Secretariat is the Secretary-General (currently Ban Ki-Moon of South Korea who will serve until December 31st, 2016), who is elected by the GA on the basis of recommendations from the SC. As international civil servants, Secretariat staff members, including the Secretary-General, "answer to the UN alone for their activities, and take an oath not to seek or receive instructions from any government or outside authority." ([http://un.org/en/mainbodies/secretariat/.](http://un.org/en/mainbodies/secretariat/))

In addition to the main bodies, the UN is made up of agencies that work towards the UN's goals. Some include:

- The Human Rights Council (HRC)
- The World Health Organization (WHO)
- The World Food Program (WFP)
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

When participating in a Model UN conference, students will be assigned to a UN body, such as the SC, GA, GA committees, or another UN agency such as the WHO or UNESCO.

[The Charter of the United Nations](#) details the structure and purpose of the UN. It was signed on June 26th, 1945 in San Francisco and came into force on October 24th, 1945. This is why October 24th is celebrated annually as UN Day.

[The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) came into force in 1948. This Declaration set forth basic political, economic, and social rights for all human beings regardless of race, gender, religion, or any other distinction. One of the key drafters and supporters of this Declaration was Eleanor Roosevelt.

[The Millennium Development Goals](#) were created in 1990; the UN is currently working toward these goals with hopes of achieving them by the end of 2015. They are to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Achieve universal primary education;
- Promote gender equality and empower women;
- Reduce child mortality;
- Improve maternal health;
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
- Ensure environmental sustainability;
- Develop a global partnership for development.

As demonstrated above, the UN is comprised of many bodies and works towards many different goals. However, its ability to act depends on its Member States. It cannot act independently and its effectiveness is therefore based on the sum cooperation and leadership of its 193 Member States.

Important Vocabulary:

Member State: denotes a country that has ratified the Charter of the UN, and is approved to join by the General Assembly and Security Council. Currently, there are 193 Member States. The UN was originally comprised of 51 founding members. Since the UN's founding, 80 former colonies have gained independence. Through this process of [decolonization](#), countries that gained autonomy have been recognized by the UN, explaining the increase in Member States over the years. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR also contributed to the addition of Member States. 14 independent states were formed from the former Soviet Republics and were all admitted to the UN. For more information on UN expansionism, visit [this page](#) and [view map](#).

Sovereignty: is a nation state's independence and autonomy; it is a key issue in the UN's work. The UN must balance its commitment not to encroach on Member States' sovereignty with its goals of upholding global peace, human rights, and security. Increasingly, the UN has forgone national sovereignty in order to prevent massive human rights violations and other atrocities (see Responsibility to Protect). Thus, a "government that does not protect its people from ethnic cleansing, of the kind that occurred in Kosovo or Rwanda, or from the mass starvation as found in Niger, would be considered a government that has forfeited its right to avoid intervention," and has surrendered its sovereignty (<http://www.gwu.edu/~ccps/etzioni/documents/A347b-FromRighttoResponsibility.pdf>).

Collective Security: is the idea that the security of one Member State is the security of all, and that the UN as a whole can work together to resolve a conflict between two nations, sometimes by force; it was utilized mainly in the Cold War era. A collective security agreement says that participating nations will take joint military action against a nation that attacks any one of them. [NATO](#) is an example of this. Since the collapse of Communism, the UN has started to move beyond this more traditional method of peace keeping to also embrace a more interventionist approach (see Responsibility to Protect).

Responsibility to Protect (R2P): is a UN initiative established in 2005. It asserts that sovereignty is not a right, but a responsibility, and was formed after the realization that the UN and world leaders had not adequately addressed some of the biggest human rights violations. R2P stipulates that:

- The State carries the primary responsibility for the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.
- The international community has a duty to assist States in fulfilling this responsibility.
- The international community should use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State fails to protect its populations or is in fact the perpetrator of crimes, the international community must be prepared to take stronger

measures, including the collective use of force through the UN Security Council.

Bloc: A bloc is a group of countries that unite for common action. In the UN, groups of countries in the same region will vote as a bloc when they feel an issue affects them as a region. For a description of every bloc and group, visit [Eye on the UN](#) and [see visual #2](#).

Assessment: Quiz for Prep Suggestion #2

Resources:

Main UN Website: <http://www.un.org/en/>

UN History: <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/history/>

Links to many resources: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/pathfind/orgint/0101.htm>

Timeline of the UN: <http://www.xtimeline.com/timeline/United-Nations--Its-History-and-Milestones>

Works Cited:

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Promote Tolerance: United Nations. 27 December 2007. ThinkQuest. 11 July 2012.

The United Nations System. 2009. UN Youth, Aotearoa New Zealand. 11 July 2012.