"The United Nations: What It Is and Does"
Learning in Retirement, Carleton University
Dr. Marcel Jesenský, Fall 2018 – Session I
Etiquette

General Assembly of the United Nations

The “World’s Parliament”
The Assembly at Work
The Assembly’s Authority
Changing Majorities, Changing Priorities
Perpetual peace and order

Erasmus, Duc de Sully, Grotius, Rousseau, Kant

The League of Nations (20 Jan 1919)

Principal organs:
- the Assembly (all members)
- the Council (permanent and non-permanent)
- the Secretariat
- the Perm. Court of Int’l Justice (The Hague)
The first meeting of the Council (14 November 1920)
The United Nations System

**UN PRINCIPAL ORGANS**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**
- Subsidiary Organs
  - Main Committees
  - Disarmament Commission
  - Human Rights Council
  - International Law Commission
  - Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)
  - Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

**SECURITY COUNCIL**
- Subsidiary Organs
  - Counter-Terrorism Committee
  - International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**
- Functional Commissions
  - Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
  - Narcotic Drugs
  - Population and Development
  - Science and Technology for Development
  - Social Development
  - Statistics
  - Status of Women
  - United Nations Forum on Forests
- Regional Commissions*
  - Economic and Social Commission for Africa (ECA)
  - Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
  - Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
  - Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
  - Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)
- Other Bodies
  - Committee for Development Policy
  - Committee of Experts on Public Administration
  - Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
  - Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
  - UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
  - Inter-Agency Group of Experts on Geographical Names

**SECRETARIAT**
- Operational Organs
  - UNDP United Nations Development Programme
  - UNCDF United Nations Capital Development Fund
  - UNV United Nations Volunteers
  - UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
  - UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
  - UN-Habitat United Nations Human Settlements Programme
  - UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
  - UN Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- Research and Training
  - UNIDIR United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
  - UNITAR United Nations Institute for Training and Research
  - UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

**INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE**
- Subsidiary Organs
  - Executive Office of the Secretary-General
  - Department of Economic and Social Affairs
  - Department of Field Support
  - Department of General Assembly and Conference Management
  - Department of Management
  - Department of Political Affairs
  - Department of Public Information
  - Department of Peacekeeping Operations
  - Department of Safety and Security
  - OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
  - ODA Office for Disarmament Affairs
  - OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Offices and Units
  - OIOS Office of Internal Oversight Services
  - OLA Office of Legal Affairs
  - OSA Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
  - PISO Peacebuilding Support Office
  - SRSG/GACF Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
  - SRSG/SVC Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
  - SRSG/VAC Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
  - UNISDR United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Related Organizations
  - CTBTO Preparatory Commission
  - Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
  - IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency
  - ICC International Criminal Court
  - IOM International Organization for Migration
  - ISA International Seabed Authority
  - ITLOS International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
  - OPCW Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
  - WTO World Trade Organization

**TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL**
- Specialized Agencies
  - FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
  - ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization
  - IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development
  - ILO International Labour Organization
  - IMF International Monetary Fund
  - IMO International Maritime Organization
  - ITU International Telecommunication Union
  - UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
  - UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization
  - UNWTO World Tourism Organization
  - UPU Universal Postal Union
  - WHO World Health Organization
  - WIPO World Intellectual Property Organization
  - WTO World Meteorological Organization
- Related Organizations
  - IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
  - IDA International Development Association
  - IFC International Finance Corporation

**Notes:**
1. Members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
2. UN Office for Partnerships (UNOPS) is the UN’s focal point vis-a-vis the United Nations Foundation, Inc.
4. WTO has no reporting obligation to the GA, but contributes on an ad hoc basis to GA and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) work on, inter alia, finance and development issues.
5. Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations whose work is coordinated through ECOSOC (intergovernmental level) and the General Assembly (intergovernmental level).
6. The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994, as on 1 November 1994 Palau, the last United Nations Trust Territory, became independent.
7. International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) are not specialized agencies in accordance with Articles 57 and 63 of the Charter, but are part of the World Bank Group.
8. The secretariats of these organs are part of the UN Secretariat.
9. The Secretariat also includes the following offices: The Ethics Office, United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, Office of Administration of Justice and the Office on Sport for Development and Peace.

This Chart is a reflection of the functional organization of the United Nations System and for informational purposes only. It does not include all offices or entities of the United Nations System.
F. D. Roosevelt
United Nations
“Four Policemen”
Atlantic Charter (14 August 1941)
Declaration by United Nations (1 January 1942)
San Francisco Conference (April - June 1945)
- 51 original members

- The first General Assembly, London (10 Jan 1946)

- “principal organs”

- deliberations and oversight

- heated debates
About the General Assembly

The General Assembly is one of the six main organs of the United Nations, the only one in which all Member States have equal representation: one nation, one vote. All 193 Member States of the United Nations (see map) are represented in this unique forum to discuss and work together on a wide array of international issues covered by the UN Charter, such as development, peace and security, international law, etc. In September, all the Members meet in the General Assembly Hall in New York for the annual General Assembly session.

Learn more about the General Assembly >>

Main Committees
CHAPTER IV: THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

COMPOSITION

Article 9
1 The General Assembly shall consist of all the Members of the United Nations.
2 Each Member shall have not more than five representatives in the General Assembly.

FUNCTIONS and POWERS

Article 10
The General Assembly may discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and, except as provided in Article 12, may make recommendations to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council or to both on any such questions or matters.

Article 11
1 The General Assembly may consider the general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council or to both.
2 The General Assembly may discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security brought before it by any Member of the United Nations, or by the Security Council, or by a state which is not a Member of the United Nations in accordance with Article 35, paragraph 2, and, except as provided in Article 12, may make recommendations with regard to any such questions to the state or states concerned or to the Security Council or to both. Any such question on which action is necessary shall be referred to the Security Council by the General Assembly either before or after discussion.
3 The General Assembly may call the attention of the Security Council to situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security.
Basic Character

- Multilateral and parliamentary

- The Charter

- “sovereign equality”

- Relations (“masses” and “aristocracy”)

   ![Image of two individuals walking side by side](image-url)
The Assembly at Work

- regular, resumed, special, emergency

- “any question” (agenda, list)

- General Debate

- Rules of procedures, decisions
Emergency special sessions

Under the resolution 377A(V), "Uniting for peace", adopted by the General Assembly on 3 November 1950, an "emergency special session" can be convened within 24 hours:

"Resolves that if the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security. If not in session at the time, the General Assembly may meet in emergency special session within twenty-four hours of the request therefor. Such emergency special session shall be called if requested by the Security Council on the vote of any seven members, or by a majority of the Members of the United Nations".
The Assembly’s Authority

- The legislature

- Elections (SC), nominations, credentials

- “Uniting for Peace”

- Its centrality (UN, GA/SC)
Changing Majorities, Priorities

- diversity
- regional balance
- blocs
- “Rest versus West” (?)
Notable resolutions (A/RES/72/...)

- Palestine Partition (A/RES/181 (II))

- Universal Declaration of H. R. (A/RES/217 (III))

- Decolonization (A/RES/1514 (XV))

- A/RES/72/263A-C (Budget 2018-2019)