

The United Nations family

The United Nations family has six main organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. All act in concert with dozens of related specialized agencies, funds and programs in order to develop an increasingly co-ordinated but diversified action plan in the spheres of peace and security, humanitarian assistance, human rights, and economic and social development.

The United Nations family also includes 16 organizations, each operating in its own particular field of expertise (e.g., health, funding, agriculture, civil aviation, telecommunications). These specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Bank, along with the six main UN organs, make up what is called the United Nations system. A brief description of the roles and functions of these 16 organizations can be found in Section 9 of the guide.

General Assembly

All member states have seats in the General Assembly. The Assembly can discuss all matters within the scope of the UN Charter. Its recommendations carry moral weight as an expression of world opinion; however, the General Assembly cannot compel action by any nation. Decisions on important questions—peace and security, admission or expulsion of members, budgetary matters—need a

two-thirds majority. For other issues, only a simple majority is required.

The regular session of the General Assembly begins each year in mid-September and continues until mid-December. Special or emergency sessions are sometimes convened when circumstances warrant. When the Assembly is not in session, its business is conducted within special organs and committees.

The General Assembly receives reports from all other UN organs, appoints the Secretary-General and members of other UN bodies, approves the budget, and directs the work of the Secretariat.

The General Assembly has six main committees:

- Disarmament and Related International Security Questions (First Committee);
- Economic and Financial (Second Committee);
- Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (Third Committee);
- Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee);



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