

President's powers are limited, but able officials have done a good deal through their personal influence to smooth the work of a session and maintain the interests of the Organization against the sectional pressures of the membership. At the side of the new President sits the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Under-Secretary General for Assembly Affairs who, in his capacity as Secretary of the General Assembly, acts as would a parliamentary clerk to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Following the election of Vice-Presidents and committee chairmen (the next items on the agenda), the Secretary-General proceeds to "notify" the General Assembly of "any matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security which are being dealt with by the Security Council". After the adoption of the agenda itself, there follows the general debate. This "debate" often lasts more than three weeks, and is the occasion for nearly all member states to present the principle policy objectives of their governments in the form of a "tour d'horizon" of significant world affairs. The general debate is followed by reports from the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These are followed in turn by the elections of members to various UN councils, boards and commissions whenever such elections are due.

All the remaining agenda items are related to specific issues. Some have become very familiar over the years, and are carried over from one session to the next. Others evidence the UN's continuing concern for tackling current problems and are added to the agenda at the request of the Secretary-General, a principal organ of the UN, or a member state.

SECURITY COUNCIL

The Security Council is the main UN organ responsible for enforcement of peace and security. It is composed of 15 members; five of them are permanent members each with a veto power. The ten non-permanent members are elected for a term of two years and, according to the Charter, the criteria for election are based on "due regard being specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution".

Canada was a member of the Security Council in 1948-49, 1958-59 and 1967-68. Canada was elected once again to the Council for 1977 and 1978 at the elections held during the thirty-first UN General Assembly. The membership picture for 1978 was as follows:

1978

Permanent members

China
France
United Kingdom
USA
USSR

Africa

Gabon
Mauritius
Nigeria

Asia

India
Kuwait