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Meaning and Importance of International Organisations and Evolution of the United Nations

International organisations are entities formed by countries worldwide to address global issues, facilitate cooperation, and promote peace and stability. They serve as platforms for member states to collaborate, exchange ideas, negotiate agreements, and collectively tackle common challenges. These organisations are multilateral entities established by sovereign nations to foster international cooperation on various issues of global significance.

Importance of International Organisations:

- Global problem-solving
- Peace and security
- Economic development
- Humanitarian assistance
- Global governance

- Diplomacy and dialogue

International organisations are essential for promoting cooperation, resolving global challenges, maintaining peace and security, facilitating economic development, delivering humanitarian aid, establishing global norms, and providing platforms for diplomatic engagement. They address the interdependent nature of today's world and promote a more collaborative and interconnected global community.

The United Nations (UN) is regarded as the most important international organisation today. It was established in 1945 through the signing of the UN Charter by 51 nations, succeeding the League of Nations. The UN aims to prevent future wars, promote peace, and facilitate cooperation among states. It has grown to include 193 member countries.

The UN is not a superstate but an organisation created by and responsive to its member states. It helps resolve conflicts peacefully, produces information and ideas about cooperation, and addresses global issues such as peacekeeping, health, and social development. The UN General Assembly allows all members one vote each, while the Security Council has five permanent members (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China) with veto powers.

Reforms are fundamental to the UN to serve the needs of a changing global environment, focusing on the organisation's structure, processes, and jurisdiction.

Exam Question

Q: What is the importance of international organisations in global politics?

A: International organisations promote cooperation among countries, help resolve global challenges peacefully, maintain peace and security, facilitate economic development, provide humanitarian assistance, establish global norms, and offer platforms for diplomatic dialogue.

United Nations Reforms after the Cold War and Jurisdiction of UN Reforms (India and UN Reforms)

After the Cold War, significant changes affected the UN and global power dynamics. The Soviet Union collapsed, the United States emerged as the strongest power, and new countries joined the UN following independence from former communist states. New challenges such as genocide, civil war, and ethnic conflict arose.

In 1992, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution addressing complaints about the organisation. In 1997, Secretary-General Kofi Annan initiated an inquiry into UN reforms. Proposed criteria for new Security Council members include major economic power, military strength, financial contributions, population size, respect for democracy and human rights, and geographic and cultural diversity.

The Security Council consists of five permanent members with veto power and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms. Reforms focus on the structure and processes of the UN, especially the Security Council's functioning.

Jurisdiction of the UN Reforms:

- Creation of a Peacebuilding Commission
- Acceptance of international responsibility to protect citizens from atrocities
- Establishment of the Human Rights Council (operational since 2006)
- Agreements to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- Condemnation of terrorism in all forms
- Creation of a Democracy Fund
- Winding up of the Trusteeship Council

India and UN Reforms: India advocates for a strengthened and reformed UN to enhance global development and cooperation. It highlights the static composition of the Security Council, which has not changed since 1965, undermining its representativeness. India supports increasing both permanent and non-permanent members, especially from developing countries, and seeks a permanent seat on the Security Council due to its population, democratic framework, peacekeeping contributions, and financial support.

India faces opposition from some countries but continues to push for a more representative and effective UN.

Exam Question

Q: What are the main reasons for the call to reform the United Nations Security Council?

A: The Security Council's composition has remained unchanged since 1965, which undermines its representativeness, especially as most UN members are developing countries. There is a need to include more permanent and non-permanent members to reflect current global realities and ensure broader political support.

Significance of the United Nations in a Unipolar World

In the post-Cold War era, the United States emerged as the sole superpower with unmatched military and economic power. This unipolar world presents challenges for the UN, as the US can sometimes ignore the organisation due to its dominance and financial contributions. The UN is headquartered in the US, which adds to Washington's influence.

Despite its imperfections and failures in preventing some wars, the UN remains indispensable for global cooperation, peacekeeping, and addressing issues like poverty, unemployment, environmental problems, and terrorism. It provides financial assistance to developing countries and serves as an international forum to resolve disputes.

Exam Question

Q: Why is the United Nations considered indispensable despite its shortcomings?

A: The UN facilitates global cooperation on critical issues, provides a platform for peaceful dispute resolution, supports development and humanitarian efforts, and helps maintain international peace and security, making it indispensable despite its imperfections.

Principal Organs of the United Nations and Key Agencies

The United Nations operates through six principal organs:

1. **General Assembly:** The main deliberative body where all 193 member states have equal representation.
2. **Security Council:** Responsible for maintaining international peace and security; consists of 15 members, including five permanent members with veto power.
3. **International Court of Justice (ICJ):** Based in The Hague, it resolves legal disputes between states and advises on international law.
4. **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):** Focuses on global economic, social, and environmental cooperation.
5. **Secretariat:** Led by the Secretary-General, it handles administrative functions and executes decisions of other organs.
6. **Trusteeship Council:** Established to oversee the transition of territories to self-governance; suspended operations in 1994.

Key UN Agencies:

- **International Monetary Fund (IMF):** Oversees international financial institutions and regulations.
- **World Bank:** Established in 1944 to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries.
- **World Trade Organization (WTO):** Established in 1995 to regulate international trade.
- **International Labour Organization (ILO):** Founded in 1919 to promote social justice and labour rights.
- **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):** Established in 1957 to promote peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF):** Focuses on child welfare and rights.
- **World Health Organization (WHO):** Works to improve global public health.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are key NGOs advocating for human rights and international justice.

Exam Question

Q: Name the six principal organs of the United Nations and briefly describe their functions.

A: The six principal organs are: General Assembly (deliberative body with equal representation), Security Council (maintains peace and security), International Court of Justice (resolves legal disputes), Economic and Social Council (promotes economic and social cooperation), Secretariat (administrative functions), and Trusteeship Council (oversaw transition of territories, now suspended).

Solved Examples

Example: Though the UN has failed in preventing wars and related miseries, nations prefer its constitution. What makes the UN an indispensable organisation?

Solution:

1. The UN helps countries cooperate to address global challenges, including peacekeeping and humanitarian issues.
2. It produces information and ideas about international cooperation, essential for interdependence and globalisation.
3. The UN facilitates worldwide cooperation on poverty, unemployment, environmental problems, and terrorism.
4. It provides financial assistance to developing and underdeveloped countries.
5. The UN serves as an international forum to resolve disputes among countries.
6. Its various agencies work for global development in different sectors.
7. All these factors make the UN an indispensable organisation.

Practice Set

Easy

- What is the main purpose of international organisations?
- Name the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.
- When was the United Nations established?

Moderate

- Explain the significance of the UN General Assembly.
- What are the main criteria proposed for new permanent members of the Security Council?
- Describe the role of the International Court of Justice.

Challenging

- Discuss the reasons behind the call for reforms in the United Nations Security Council.
- Analyze the impact of the unipolar world on the functioning of the United Nations.
- Evaluate India's position and contributions towards UN reforms.

Answer Key

Easy:

1. To address global issues, promote cooperation, peace, and stability.
2. United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China.
3. 1945.

Moderate:

1. The General Assembly is the main deliberative body where all member states have equal representation and discuss global issues.
2. Major economic power, military strength, financial contributions, population size, respect for democracy and human rights, and geographic and cultural diversity.

3. The ICJ resolves legal disputes between states and advises on international law.

Challenging:

1. The Security Council's composition is outdated, lacks representation of developing countries, and needs expansion to reflect current global realities.
2. The unipolar world, dominated by the US, challenges the UN's authority and effectiveness, but the UN remains essential for global cooperation.
3. India advocates for UN reforms to make it more representative and effective, seeking permanent Security Council membership based on its population, democracy, peacekeeping, and financial contributions.

Quick Reference

- **UN Charter:** The constitution of the United Nations.
- **Peacekeeping Operations:** UN missions to restore peace and security.
- **Veto Power:** The right of the five permanent Security Council members to block decisions.
- **Secretary-General:** The chief administrative officer and representative of the UN.
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** Global development targets agreed upon by the UN.

Glossary

- **International Organisation:** An entity formed by countries to address global issues collectively.
- **Security Council:** UN organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
- **General Assembly:** UN organ where all member states have equal representation.
- **Veto:** The power to reject a decision, held by the five permanent Security Council members.
- **Peacebuilding Commission:** UN body created to support peace efforts in conflict-affected countries.

- **Human Rights Council:** UN body focused on promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.
- **Non-Governmental Organization (NGO):** Independent organisations that work on various social and political issues.

Chronology of International Organisations and Key Events

Year	Event	Significance
1919	Establishment of International Labour Organization (ILO)	Promoted workers' rights and social justice globally.
1941	Atlantic Charter signed by USA and UK	Outlined goals for post-war world cooperation.
1942	Declaration by United Nations signed	Formal cooperation against Axis powers during WWII.
1943	Tehran Conference	Allied leaders planned post-war Europe.
1945 (Feb)	Yalta Conference	Big Three leaders planned post-war order.
1945 (June)	UN Charter signed by 50 nations	Official creation of the United Nations.
1945 (Oct)	United Nations officially founded	Marked the beginning of the UN's work.
1946	Establishment of UNICEF	Focused on child welfare and rights.
1948	Establishment of World Health Organization (WHO)	Promoted global public health.