United Nations Organisation

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Why is in news? How the United Nations (UN) has evolved? Discuss the achievements and the failure of the UN.

The United Nations (UN) is an **intergovernmental organization** was established with the purpose of **promoting international cooperation and maintaining peace and security** among its member states.

It is the **world's largest international organization**.

The UN is **headquartered in New York City** (in the United States, but with certain extraterritorial privileges), and the organization has other offices in Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna, and The Hague, where the International Court of Justice is headquartered.

Objectives of the UN:

To develop friendly relations among nations

To promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

To achieve international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems

To serve as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.

Birth of the UN:

Following the devastation of both World War I and World War II, global powers were grappling with the need for a more effective international organization to prevent future conflicts.

The **League of Nations**, **established in 1919** after World War I, laid the foundation for the UN's creation but faltered during World War II.

In August 1941, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and UK PM Winston Churchill issued the **Atlantic Charter**, an affirmation that paved the way for the UN. It articulated shared principles for a better world.

The term **'UN' was first coined by President Roosevelt in 1941** to identify the Allied nations against the axis powers.

On **January 1, 1942**, representatives of 26 Allied nations gathered in Washington DC to **sign the Declaration of the UN,** outlining the war objectives of the Allied powers. India, under British colonial rule, was among these nations.

In 1945, the UN was founded after the signing of the UN Charter by 51 countries on June 26th. The UN officially came into existence on **October 24, 1945**, **after the ratification of the UN Charter** by the majority of its founding members.

The first meeting of the UN General Assembly was held in London in January 1946. The Assembly is the main policymaking and representative body of the UN.

In 1947, the UN **established the International Court of Justice**, which is the principal judicial organ of the UN.

In 1948, the UN **adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which outlines fundamental human rights that should be protected around the world.

Over the years, the UN has **grown to include 193 member** states and has played a key role in many global issues, including peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and human rights.

Organizational structure:

The United Nations (UN) has **six principal organs**.

Five of them — the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the Secretariat — are based at UN Headquarters in New York.

The sixth, the **International Court of Justice**, is located at **The Hague** in the Netherlands.

The **Secretary-General of the United Nations** is the chief administrative officer of the United Nations and head of the United Nations Secretariat, one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.

The Secretary General is **appointed by the General Assembly** upon the recommendation of the Security Council after a period of 5 years.

Achievements of the UN:

Peace and Security: Prevented conflicts, mediated peace agreements, and conducted peacekeeping missions in places like Bosnia and Kosovo. Some of **UN Peacekeeping's successful operations** so far: Cambodia (1992-1993), Mozambique (1992-1994), El Salvador (1991-1995) and Guatemala (1997-1997).

Humanitarian Aid: Provided vital aid through agencies like WFP and UNICEF, offering food, shelter, and healthcare during crises. For instance, it has been instrumental in **providing aid to the Rohingya refugees** who fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

Human Rights: Established the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and monitors violations globally through mechanisms like the Human Rights Council.

Promotion of democracy: Democracy is a core value of the United Nations. The UN supports democracy by promoting human rights, development, and peace and security. Ex: UN played a crucial role in resolving the conflict in **Cambodia in the 1990s**, which resulted in free and fair elections, and the establishment of a democratic government.

Health: Led efforts against diseases like smallpox and HIV/AIDS through WHO, addressing current threats like COVID-19.

Refugee Support: UNHCR aids refugees and internally displaced persons while advocating for their rights.

Environmental Advocacy: Raised awareness about climate change, negotiated the Paris Agreement, and promotes sustainability via UNEP.

Development support: The UN has played a vital role in **promoting economic and social development** in many countries through its specialized agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, and WHO. These agencies have helped in reducing poverty, promoting education, and improving healthcare in many countries.

Failures and Criticisms of the UN:

Inability to prevent some conflicts: Despite its efforts to maintain international peace and security, the UN has been unable to prevent some significant conflicts, such as the Rwandan genocide, the Bosnian War, and the ongoing Syrian civil war.

Limited effectiveness: The UN has been criticized for its ineffectiveness in addressing global issues such as climate change, poverty, and inequality. This is **attributed to its complex bureaucratic structures** and decision-making processes.

Funding challenges: It relies on funding from member states, which sometimes creates uncertainties. Some rich member states have been accused of not meeting their financial obligations, resulting in inadequate funding for programmes and activities.

Conflicts and disputes: The UN is often called upon to mediate and resolve conflicts between or within countries. However, its ability to do so is often hampered by the lack of cooperation from some member states or by the complexity of the issues at hand.

Limited authority: The UN is **not a world government and has limited authority over its member states**. As a result, it is often difficult for the UN to enforce its decisions or hold member states accountable for their actions.

Political influence: The UN's decision-making processes can be **influenced by political considerations**, which can lead to divisions and gridlock within the organization.

Poverty and Inequality: Despite efforts to address poverty and inequality, progress has been **slow, and many people around the world continue to live in extreme poverty** and face discrimination and marginalization.

Peacekeeping Challenges: Faced issues like misconduct allegations and difficulties in halting violence in missions like South Sudan.

Veto Powers: Criticized for Security Council veto powers that hinder action and maintain power imbalances.

Enforcement Limits: Reliant on member states for enforcement, leading to limited action in cases of non-compliance, as seen in the Iraq War.

Lack of Representation: Critiqued for **underrepresenting Global South countries** in key decision-making bodies.

Neoliberal Influence: Accused of promoting neoliberal economic policies, which can exacerbate inequalities, through associated organizations like the World Bank and IMF.

India's Contribution towards the UN:

India has been an **active member of the UN since its inception**. In 1946, India became the first country to raise the issues of racism and apartheid in South Africa in the UN forum.

India played an **important part in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948**.

The **first woman president of the UNGA** was an Indian, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, in 1953.

India has contributed immensely to **UN Peacekeeping Missions in various parts of the world**. India has sent her peacekeeping troops to Korea, Egypt, Congo, Haiti, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, Lebanon, South Sudan, etc.

India has been **regularly one of the largest contributor of troops** to the missions.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of non-violence resonate deeply with the UN's principles. In 2007, the UN declared Gandhi's birth anniversary of **October 2 as the 'International Day of Non-violence'**.

In 2014, the UNGA declared that 21st June would be observed as International Yoga Day.

<u>Conclusion:</u>

The UN, born out of the ashes of conflict, has played a significant role in shaping the world's course over the past 75 years.

Its journey has been marked by both notable achievements and formidable challenges.

As it enters a new decade with a renewed commitment to global betterment, the UN continues to evolve as a pivotal force in promoting international cooperation and addressing humanity's most pressing issues.