

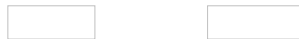


## (U) The United Nations at Sixty-One

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(U) October 24th - the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in 1945 - is a day to recognize the multitude of ways in which the UN touches the lives of people everywhere.

(U) In 1945, representatives of 50 countries convened in San Francisco to draw up the founding charter of the United Nations. It formally came into existence as an organization on October 24th, when the charter was ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and a majority of other signatories to the charter; the original UN membership numbered 51 states. **Reflecting the priorities of the post-World War II period, this new multilateral organization was created with the sole purpose to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."** Growing in both size and mission in succeeding years, the UN now counts 192 member states and contributes to improving the lives of people around the world in all capacities.



(U) The UN has involved itself with some of the most momentous events of the last half-century, such as the end of World War II, the birth of Israel, the Korean War, the Persian Gulf War, and conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. As one of the most visible components of the UN, much attention has focused on the UN's efforts in peacekeeping operations to end some of the world's most intractable conflicts.

(U) Since 1945, UN peacekeepers have undertaken 61 field missions and participated in the implementation of 172 peaceful settlements that have ended regional conflicts and enabled people in more than 45 countries to take part in free and fair elections. There are currently about 92,000 personnel serving on 18 UN peacekeeping operations across four continents.

(U) **Yet, while the UN is commonly associated with issues of peace and security, the vast majority of its resources are devoted to economic and social development**, such as protecting human rights, advancing international law, and working towards eliminating poverty. The UN family of organizations provides a wide range of technical and practical assistance:

- Children in need around the world count on life-saving support and nourishment provided by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Every time a letter is mailed across an international boundary, it is the work of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) that enables its delivery.
- The coordination and improvement of global telecommunication networks and services are managed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).
- Works of art or invention are protected under rules and protected through the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).



(U) The UN as an institution has evolved over time in response to changing priorities and dynamics in the global community. Cold War realities shifted the focus of the UN, resulting in the growing activity of the UN General Assembly (to circumvent a Cold War-deadlocked UNSC). In addition, the role of the UN Secretary General has expanded to beyond that of merely facilitating relations between member nations, and growing membership has brought new challenges and perspectives to the UN.

(U) The UN was created among great expectations and has continuously faced criticism for not living up to them. ***UN reform has been a recurring issue almost as long as that body has been in existence.*** Currently, far-reaching reform efforts aimed at strengthening the organization have caused sharp disagreement over what kind of reform is needed and what the purpose of the UN should be.

(U) Although critics maintain that current reform has not been swift or radical enough, the UN can nevertheless look back on 61 years of addressing the most important global questions and critical needs facing humanity.

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