

The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ of the United Nations. It is composed of representatives of all Member States, each of which has one vote. Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new Members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority. Decisions on other questions are reached by a simple majority. These decisions may be adopted without a vote, or with a vote, which may be recorded, non-recorded or by roll-call.

While the decisions of the Assembly have no legally binding force for Governments, they carry the weight of world opinion on major international issues, as well as the moral authority of the world community.

The work of the United Nations year-round derives largely from the decisions of the General Assembly--that is to say, the will of the majority of the Members as expressed in resolutions adopted by the Assembly.

Functions and Powers of the General Assembly

Under the Charter, the functions and powers of the General Assembly include:

- * To consider and make recommendations on cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including disarmament and arms regulation;
- * To discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is being discussed by the Security Council, to make recommendations on it;
- * To discuss and, with the same exception, make recommendations on any question within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations;
- * To initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law; the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and international collaboration in economic, social, cultural, educational and health fields;
- * To make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation, regardless of origin, which might impair friendly relations among nations;
- * To receive and consider reports from the Security Council and other

United Nations organs;

- * To consider and approve the United Nations budget and to apportion the contributions among Members;
- * To elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council, the members of the Economic and Social Council and those members of the Trusteeship Council that are elected;
- * To elect jointly with the Security Council the Judges of the International Court of Justice; and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, to appoint the Secretary-General.

Under the "Uniting for peace" resolution adopted by the General Assembly in November 1950, the Assembly may take action if the Security Council, because of a lack of unanimity of its permanent members, fails to act in a case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression. The Assembly is empowered to consider the matter immediately with a view to making recommendations to Members for collective measures, including, in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression, the use of armed force when necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Main Committees of the General Assembly

Because of the great number of questions which the Assembly is called upon to consider (session of the Assembly, for example), the Assembly allocates most questions to its six Main Committees:

- * First Committee--Disarmament and International Security Committee
- * Second Committee--Economic and Financial Committee
- * Third Committee--Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee
- * Fourth Committee--Special Political and Decolonization Committee
- * Fifth Committee--Administrative and Budgetary Committee
- * Sixth Committee--Legal Committee