

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UNITED NATION

### Has the UN stopped any war?

- The UN has helped prevent many conflicts from flaring up into full-scale wars. It has also negotiated the peaceful settlement of conflicts.
- On many occasions, the UN has provided a mechanism to help defuse hostilities, for example, the Berlin crisis (1948-1949), the Cuban missile crisis (1962) and the 1973 Middle East crisis.
- UN intervention helped prevent war between the super-powers.
- The UN also played a major role in ending wars in the Congo (1964), between Iran and Iraq (1988), and in El Salvador (1992) and Guatemala (1996).
- The UN led the way to a peace that has brought sustained economic growth in Mozambique (1994); independence to Timor-Leste (2002) and in December 2005, the Organization successfully completed its peacekeeping mandate in Sierra Leone

### Other accomplishments include:

- The UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) supervised Namibia's first free and fair elections, leading to its independence.
- In Cambodia, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) monitored a ceasefire and withdrawal of foreign forces, supervised various government offices and organized a free and fair election.
- In the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) worked to protect the civilians in demilitarized zones and to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

### What happens when a country ignores the decisions of the Security Council?

When decisions of the Security Council are not complied with, the Council may take several actions to ensure their implementation. Should a country threaten or breach the peace or commit an act of aggression, it may impose *economic and trade sanctions*, or other specific measures such as *arms and travel ban and diplomatic restrictions*. It can also authorize the use of force

in certain instances. But these measures are usually a last resort, to be used only if peaceful means of settling a dispute have been exhausted.

The Security Council can authorize a coalition of Member States to use "all necessary means", including military action, to deal with a conflict as for example:

- in 1991 to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait after its invasion by Iraq;
- in 1992 to secure the environment for humanitarian relief to be delivered in Somalia;
- in 1994 to restore the democratically-elected government in Haiti;
- in 1999 to restore peace and security in East Timor.

### Does the UN have an army?

No, the United Nations has no standing international police or military force. Troops who serve in the UN peacekeeping operations are voluntarily contributed by the Member States.

### What, then, is a peacekeeping operation?

Peacekeeping has traditionally been defined as the use of multinational forces, under UN command, to help control and resolve conflicts between countries. They also provide electoral assistance and help in clearing deadly landmines. As peacekeepers maintain peace on the ground, mediators from the United Nations meet with leaders from the disputing parties or countries and try to reach a peaceful solution.

There are two types of peacekeeping operations: ***observer missions and peacekeeping forces***. Observers are not armed. Soldiers of UN peacekeeping forces carry light weapons, which they may use only in self-defense. The UN peacekeepers are easily identifiable by the UN insignia and the blue beret they wear when on duty. The blue helmet, which has become the symbol of UN peacekeepers, is carried during all operations and is worn when there is danger. Peacekeepers wear their own national uniforms.

Governments that volunteer personnel retain ultimate control over their own military forces serving under the UN flag.

### **Why does the UN have so many peacekeeping operations?**

Peacekeeping operations are created in response to serious military or humanitarian crises. In the past, peacekeepers were mainly involved in keeping peace between warring nations. But now many nations are at war with themselves. Due to civil strife and ethnic conflicts, some governments are unable to exercise authority over their own territory, causing great human suffering. In such situations, the United Nations is often asked, on the one hand, to negotiate a settlement and, on the other, to provide emergency relief to the people affected by the conflict. Working under difficult conditions, the United Nations integrates humanitarian assistance with efforts to resolve the crisis.

### **What are some recent United Nations peacekeeping operations?**

In the first 40 years of its history (1945-1985); the United Nations set up only 13 peacekeeping operations. In the 20 years since then (1986-2006), 47 peacekeeping missions were deployed.

### **United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)**

A joint African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur was authorized by the Security Council on 31 July 2007. The Council, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, authorized UNAMID to take necessary action to support the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, as well as to protect its personnel and civilians, without “prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Sudan”. The Council decided that UNAMID would start implementing its mandated tasks no later than 31 December 2007.

### **United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT)**

On 25 September 2007, the Security Council approved the establishment in Chad and the Central African Republic, in concert with the European Union,

of a multi-dimensional presence intended to help create the security conditions conducive to a voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. The Council decided that the multidimensional presence would include a United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad.

### **United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS)**

On 24 March 2005, the Security Council voted unanimously to send 10,000 troops and more than 700 civilian police to southern Sudan to support the peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which ended more than two decades of civil strife. Until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, there had been 21 years of continuous fighting over resources, power, the role of religion and self-determination in southern Sudan. Over two million people died, four million people were uprooted and some 600,000 people fled the country as refugees.

### **United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT)**

The UN was called in to East Timor (now Timor-Leste) in late 1999 to guide the Timorese towards statehood in the wake of violence and devastation that followed a UN-led consultation on integration with Indonesia. The UN established an effective administration, enabled refugees to return, helped to develop civil and social services, ensured humanitarian assistance, supported capacity-building for self-governance and helped to establish conditions for sustainable development. In 2005, the peacekeeping mission was transformed into an assistance and peacebuilding mission.

### **United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)**

The efforts of the international community to end an 11-year civil war and move the country towards peace enabled Sierra Leone since 2002 to enjoy a much improved security environment. After a decisive intervention by British troops in 2001, the UN helped disarm and demobilize some 75,000 combatants. UN peacekeepers reconstructed roads; renovated and built schools, houses of worship and clinics; and initiated agricultural projects and welfare programmes. UNAMSIL also helped Sierra Leone to ensure that the

rights of its citizens were fully protected; to bring to justice those who bore the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law through the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone; and to develop a professional and democratic police force. A new mission—the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)—was established by the Security Council to help consolidate the peace, strengthen human rights, develop the economy, improve transparency and hold elections in 2007. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, which came to a close at the end of 2005, could serve as a prototype for the UN’s new emphasis on peacebuilding.

### **What else does the UN do for peace?**

The UN’s work for peace does not end with the successful conclusion of a peacekeeping mission. In the aftermath of a conflict, the UN helps displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes. It clears mines, repairs roads and bridges and provides economic and technical help to rebuild the economy. It also monitors elections and closely follows how a country respects the human rights of its citizens. This process, also known as peacebuilding, has helped over 60 countries to build democratic institutions.

### **Battling Landmines**

Since the 1980s, the United Nations has been addressing the problems posed by the millions of deadly landmines scattered in over 60 countries. Each year thousands of people - most of them children, women and the elderly - are maimed or killed by these “silent killers”. Meanwhile, new landmines continue to be deployed in various countries around the world. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) acts as the focal point for mine action and coordinates all mine-related activities of UN agencies, funds and programmes. The work focuses on mine action clearance, mine awareness and risk-reduction education, victim assistance and stockpile destruction.

### ▪ **Disarmament**

#### **Ensuring world safety by reducing nuclear weapons**

General and complete disarmament — or gradual elimination of weapons of mass destruction — is one of the goals set by the United Nations. Its immediate objectives are to eliminate the danger of war, particularly nuclear war, and to implement measures to halt and reverse the arms race.

#### **Some UN actions for disarmament**

- The Partial Test-Ban Treaty, 1963, prohibits nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water.
- The Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1968, prohibits the spread of nuclear weapons from nuclear to non-nuclear countries.
- The Chemical Weapons Convention, 1992, prohibits use, manufacturing and stockpiling of such weapons.
- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, 1996, bans all underground nuclear-test explosions.
- The Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, 1997, prohibits the use, stock-piling, production and transfer of such mines.

## ▪ The Millennium Development Goals

### What are the Millennium Development Goals?

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the Member States of the United Nations agreed on eight goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that call for national action, and international cooperation, to provide access to food, education, healthcare and economic opportunities for children, women and men everywhere.

In 2005, world leaders gathered at UN Headquarters in New York for the General Assembly High-Level Summit, at which they spoke about the progress they had made nationally in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. United Nations Member States have vowed to work together to reduce poverty and eliminate hunger in developing countries, and to achieve the targets set out in the MDGs by 2015

### Millennium Development Goals

**Goal 1:** *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*

**Goal 2:** *Achieve universal primary education*

**Goal 3:** *Promote gender equality and empower women*

**Goal 4:** *Reduce child mortality*

**Goal 5:** *Improve maternal health*

**Goal 6:** *Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*

**Goal 7:** *Ensure environmental sustainability*

**Goal 8:** *Develop a global partnership for development*

## Some UN actions to protect the environment

- The Kyoto Protocol to the Convention on Climate Change (1997) aims to slow global warming. It became a legally binding treaty in 2004. It requires countries to cut harmful greenhouse gasses by 5.2% by 2012.
- The Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (1994) calls on countries to take special action in the interest of 40 small island developing States to promote their social and economic development. Many of these small islands have very limited resources and have been unable to reap the benefits of globalization.
- The Convention to Combat Desertification (1994) seeks to resolve problems of over cultivation, deforestation, overgrazing and poor irrigation. One quarter of the Earth's land is threatened by desertification. The livelihoods of over one billion people in more than 100 countries are jeopardized, as farming and grazing land become less productive.
- The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) seeks to protect and conserve the wide variety of animal and plant life that is essential for human survival.

## Water

In many countries, people have limited access to safe drinking water. As a result, at least 4 million children die every year in developing countries from water-borne diseases.

In 1980, the United Nations launched an international campaign to bring safe drinking water to everyone by the year 2000. This campaign has already brought safe drinking water to over 1.3 billion people worldwide. Another 1.9 billion people have been helped with sanitation facilities.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **What is meant by human rights?**

Human rights are those rights which are essential for us to live as human beings. Without human rights, we cannot fully develop and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talent and our spirituality.

The United Nations set a common standard on human rights for all nations when, in 1948, it adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By this Declaration, Governments accepted the obligation to ensure that all human beings, rich and poor, strong and weak, male and female, of all races and religions, are treated equally. The Declaration is not part of binding international law, but due to widespread acceptance by countries in the world, it has gained great moral weight.

The UN has also adopted many international human rights treaties, legally binding nations to guarantee their citizens' social, economic and political rights. The most important of these treaties are two International Covenants — one on economic, social and cultural rights and the other on civil and political rights. These treaties, together with Optional Protocols, are known as the International Bill of Human Rights.

- All people have the right to: life, liberty and security; freedom of expression; freedom from slavery; fair trial; equal treatment before the law; freedom of movement; a nationality; contract a marriage and found a family; work; equal pay for equal work.

### **The UN fights apartheid:**

A crime against humanity Apartheid, in the Afrikaans language of South Africa, means separateness. South Africa, though 80 per cent of its people are black, had long been ruled by the country's tiny white minority. They imposed the policy of apartheid, racially segregating the country and depriving the black population of the very basic human rights. The United Nations, condemning apartheid as a "crime against humanity", carried out a sustained campaign against this policy for more than three decades. Apartheid finally ended in April 1994 after the United Nations assisted in and supervised the holding of the country's first free and multiracial election. Nelson Mandela, speaking before the United Nations (left), who was jailed for decades by the apartheid regime, became the first President of a new, racially-integrated South Africa