

The Structure of the United Nations - Facts and Figures

- 2.1 There are, readily available, a large number of books, manuals and pamphlets as well as information on web sites describing the structure of the United Nations. However, a brief outline will be made here for ease of access for the reader and in order to set the context for the discussion in this report.¹ Given the complexity of the organisation, however, this chapter will not be the definitive statement on the UN.

The Charter

- 2.2 The Charter of the United Nations was drawn up by representatives of the 50 states that gathered in San Francisco between April and June 1945. Fifty-one states signed the Charter and these states constituted the original organisation. The Charter is the constitution of the UN, in 19 chapters, setting out the rights and obligations of members, the principles, purposes, procedures and structure of the organisation. It is also an international treaty, a comprehensive articulation of international law, which must be signed by all member states.
- 2.3 The Charter can be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly. Amendments must be ratified by two thirds of the members of the UN, including the five permanent members of the Security Council. There have been only four articles amended to date - Articles 23, 27, 61 and 109. Two of these amendments were structural, dealing with the membership of the Security Council or ECOSOC and two

1 For much of the information used in this Chapter, the committee is particularly grateful for the *United Nations Handbook 1999*, developed by the New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade/Manatu Aorere and supplied to the committee by the New Zealand High Commission and the United Nations' own handbook, *Basic Facts About the United Nations*.

were procedural dealing with the consequent changes to the number of votes required for particular decisions within these organs.

Purposes and Principles

- 2.4 The purposes and principles of the United Nations, as set forth in the Charter, are listed in detail at paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4. In general, they are the maintenance of peace and security, friendly relations among nations on the basis of equality and self determination, international cooperation to resolve economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and adherence to and respect for human rights. To achieve this the UN relies on an acceptance by each of the sovereign equality of all its Members; that all members will fulfil their obligations in good faith, including the pledge to settle their disputes by peaceful means, to refrain from aggression and to assist the UN when asked to do so.²

Membership

- 2.5 The current membership of the United Nations is 189.³ Members are admitted to the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. Almost all the nations of the world now belong; it can be truly described as a universal organisation.
- 2.6 However, Switzerland is not yet a member of the United Nations. The Peoples' Republic of China became 'the only legitimate representatives of China' in 1971, excluding Taiwan from the UN.⁴ The two German states, which had separate membership after 1975 as the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, became one state in 1991 and now have single representation under the name Germany. Until 1991 neither of the Korean states were admitted. In 1948 the General Assembly recognised South Korea as the only legitimate government in Korea, but the Soviet Union vetoed its membership. North Vietnam sought the membership of two states for Vietnam in 1975. This was vetoed by the United States but agreed in 1977 after the official unification of the two
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2 Exhibit No. 66. *Basic Facts About the United Nations*. 1998. United Nations, New York, p. 5.

3 At the time of printing in June 2001.

4 In 1945, the Republic of China was one of the original permanent members of the Security Council. In 1949, however, after the Communists assumed power in mainland China and the nationalist government fled to Taiwan, the Taiwanese-based government, as the result of a vote in the General Assembly of 43 to 15, retained the representation of China in both the General Assembly and the Security Council. The United States moved that the question be designated as an 'important question', thereby requiring a two-thirds vote for any change in this situation to occur. In 1971, after the visit of Henry Kissinger to China, support for the entry of the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was sufficient to bring about the change. The Taiwanese delegate walked out of the General Assembly, which then voted to expel the Republic of China and admit the PRC into the UN.

parts of Vietnam. On occasions individual states have withdrawn and rejoined such as Indonesia, which withdrew from membership in 1965, but resumed in 1966.

- 2.7 With the end of the Cold War, many new states have sought and gained membership of the United Nations, acknowledging the importance of the organisation in confirming a state's national sovereignty. Twenty-nine states have been added in the last ten years, membership rising from 160 in 1990 to 189 in 2000. In 1991, the USSR became the Russian Federation and retained its permanent seat on the Security Council. With the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, automatic retention of membership by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was not agreed to in 1992. It resumed membership in 2000.
- 2.8 Some non-state players have status. The Holy See has observer status. Palestine also has observer status as well as the right to participate in general debate before the General Assembly, but it has no right to vote.
- 2.9 Unofficially, member states divide into five regional groupings - African states, Asian states, Eastern European states, Latin American and Caribbean states, and Western European and other states. The United States does not belong to any of the regional groupings, but is an observer to the Western European and Other Group and is considered to be a member of this group for electoral purposes.⁵

Security Council

Functions

- 2.10 While not strictly analogous, the Security Council has a role not dissimilar to the executive branch of government. It has limited membership. Its decisions, taken in accordance with the powers given it under the Charter, are legally binding. The five permanent members have a veto power. It meets almost continuously and some sessions are held in public.
- 2.11 Its primary function is to maintain international peace and security and this function is both preventive and reactive, that is, it can examine situations that threaten peace and security and it can order ceasefires, impose sanctions or take military action against an aggressor. It governs the peacekeeping role of the United Nations and it is responsible for the regulation of armaments. Procedurally, the Council is responsible for

5 New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade/Manatu Aorere. *United Nations Handbook 1999*. Wellington, p. 19.

recommending to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and the admission of new members. Together with the General Assembly, it elects judges to the International Court of Justice.

Membership

2.12 Currently,⁶ the Council has 15 members, five of them permanent members and 10 elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. Elections are conducted each year in the General Assembly for half of the non-permanent members. The five permanent members are China, France, the Russian Federation,⁷ the United Kingdom and the United States. In the election of the non-permanent members, the General Assembly must seek to preserve an equitable geographic distribution on the Council as well as consider the contribution of the proposed member to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Table 2.1 Membership and Presidency of the Security Council in 2001

Month	Presidency	Membership Term Ends
January	Singapore	31 December 2002
February	Tunisia	31 December 2001
March	Ukraine	21 December 2001
April	United Kingdom	Permanent member
May	United States	Permanent member
June	Bangladesh	31 December 2001
July	China	Permanent member
August	Colombia	31 December 2002
September	France	Permanent member
October	Ireland	31 December 2002
November	Jamaica	31 December 2001
December	Mali	31 December 2001
	Mauritius	31 December 2002
	Norway	31 December 2002
	Russian Federation	Permanent member

2.13 Since 1963, the geographic distribution of the non-permanent members has been according to the following formula: five from 101 African and

6 In 1965 the Charter was amended to increase the membership of the Security Council from 11 to 15, the five permanent members remained unchanged, but the non-permanent members increased from 6 to 10. The number of votes for an affirmative decision was increased at that time from seven to nine.

7 As of 24 December 1991, the Russian Federation continued the membership of the Soviet Union in all United Nations organs.

Asian states, one from 21 Eastern European states, two from 33 Latin American and Caribbean states and two from 26 Western European and Other states. The countries that have served most frequently as non-permanent members of the security council are: Japan (8), Brazil (8), Argentina (7), India (6), Canada (6), Egypt (5), Pakistan (5), Poland (5), Colombia (5), Italy (5) and the Netherlands (5). For the purpose of elections, Australia is in the Western European and Other Group (WEOG). Australia has sat on the Security Council four times. In the WEOG, only Canada (6) and Italy (5) and the Netherlands (5) have served more often.

- 2.14 There is a rotating Presidency for the Security Council, decided on the basis of English alphabetical order of names of member states. The position is held for one month at a time.

Consideration of Issues

- 2.15 Any member of the United Nations (Article 35) or the Secretary General (Article 99) can call for a meeting of the Council to consider a matter of concern. Once a dispute is placed before the Council, there is usually an adjournment during which delegations:
- negotiate and draft resolutions, sometimes a number of competing resolutions, foreshadowing what action the Council might take;
 - negotiate and seek to mobilise support for particular courses of action; and
 - amend resolutions to meet the requirements or objections of potential supporters and to avoid the use of the veto power by one of the permanent members.

When the Council resumes its meeting it debates the resolution or resolutions that are before it and takes a vote on it (them). The negotiating period might be a matter of hours or a matter of weeks, depending on the urgency or complexity of the matter and the ease of gaining agreement.

- 2.16 Each member of the Security Council has one vote. Decisions on procedural matters require an affirmative vote of 9 of the 15 members. Decisions on substantive matters, including amendments to the Charter, require 9 of the 15, but must include all votes of the five permanent members. If a permanent member does not wish to block a measure, they can abstain from voting, thereby not exercising a veto power.
- 2.17 Only the Security Council makes legally binding rulings; all other organs of the UN make recommendations only to member states. The Charter obliges member states who have signed it to comply with decisions of the Council.

Committees/Peace Operations

2.18 The Security Council is supported by and supervises a series of committees. There are:

- The Military Staff Committee, established under Article 47 of the Charter, comprised of the Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members of the Security Council. It advises and assists the Council with all questions relating to the military requirements for maintaining peace and security, the employment and command of all forces placed at its disposal, the regulation of armaments and possible disarmament.
- Two standing committees which consider procedural matters:
 - ⇒ Committee of Experts on Rules of Procedure (studies and advises on rules of procedure and other technical matters)
 - ⇒ Committee on Admission of New Members
- Ad hoc committees, established as needed, comprise all Council members and meet in closed session:
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee on Council meeting away from Headquarters
 - ⇒ Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission established by Security Council resolution 692 (1991)
- Nine ad hoc sanctions committees:
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) concerning the situation between Iraq and Kuwait
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 748 (1992) concerning the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 864 (1993) concerning the situation in Angola
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 918 (1994) concerning Rwanda
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 985 (1995) concerning Liberia
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1160 (1998) concerning the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
 - ⇒ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Afghanistan

- The Security Council also supervises all peacekeeping operations. There are 15 current operations.⁸

International Tribunals

- 2.19 In 1993 and 1994, in the absence on any permanent, international, judicial procedure to deal with offences against international humanitarian law, the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, established two tribunals.
- 2.20 The first, on the basis of SC Res 808 (1993) and SC Res 827 (1993), established and adopted the statute of an international tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991. The General Assembly elected 11 judges to the Tribunal in 1997. They come from Italy, Morocco, Australia, France, the UK, the USA (President), Zambia, Colombia, Egypt, Portugal, Jamaica, Guyana (Vice-President), Malaysia and China.
- 2.21 The second, on the basis of SC Res 955 (1994), established and adopted the statute for the international tribunal for the prosecution of persons committing genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law during 1994 in the territory of Rwanda. The General Assembly has elected nine judges to the tribunal on Rwanda. They come from Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Senegal, Norway (Vice-President), the Russian Federation, South Africa (President), Tanzania and Jamaica and St Kitts.

General Assembly

Function

- 2.22 If we maintain the analogy that the Security Council has some of the elements of the executive branch of government, then the General Assembly would be analogous to the legislature. It is a meeting place, a forum to discuss any world problems common to its members and within the Charter. However, it is a 'parliament' with limited powers. Its decisions are advisory only; it makes recommendations to governments, but it must rely on the weight of world opinion to influence the actions of member governments or the Security Council.

⁸ Peacekeeping operations will be covered in detail in Chapter 3.

- 2.23 In addition to its role of debating issues of world importance, the General Assembly has certain procedural functions:
- To receive and consider reports from the other organs of the UN;
 - To consider and approve the regular budget of the UN;
 - To apportion expenses among the member states;
 - To elect the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council, the 54 members of the Economic and Social Council and some members of the Trusteeship Council;
 - Together with the Security Council, to elect members of the International Court of Justice; and
 - On the recommendation of the Security Council, to appoint the Secretary-General.

Membership

- 2.24 All members of the United Nations are represented in the General Assembly. It has grown from an initial membership in 1945 of 51 to 189 members in January 2001. It is in the General Assembly that the sovereign equality of states is demonstrated; each member of the assembly has one vote. On matters defined as 'important questions', a two-thirds majority is required to pass recommendations or resolutions. On ordinary questions a simple majority is all that is required.

Sessions

- 2.25 The General Assembly meets once a year at UN headquarters in New York. This regular session begins on the first Tuesday following 1 September and lasts until mid-December. Special sessions may be convened at the request of the Security Council or at the request of a majority of UN members. At the beginning of each session, the General Assembly votes for a President. It is a position that rotates through the regional groupings - African and Asian; Eastern European; Latin American and Caribbean; and the Western European and Other Group.

Committees/Commissions/Working Groups

- 2.26 The number of matters to be discussed by the General Assembly is so great that most questions are dealt with in committees in the first instance and are brought before the General Assembly for a vote at the end of the session. Resolutions, negotiated and drafted in the specialist committees,

are voted on in plenary sessions only. There are six main deliberative committees:

- First Committee (Disarmament and International Security);
- Second Committee (Economic and Financial);
- Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural);
- Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonisation);
- Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary); and
- Sixth Committee (Legal)

- 2.27 In addition, there are two procedural committees, one that governs the agenda for the Assembly and the other that examines the credentials of representatives. Members for these committees are appointed at the beginning of each session.
- 2.28 There are also two standing committees that deal with continuing issues during and between regular sessions. They are the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Committee on Contributions.
- 2.29 The ACABQ has a membership of 16 appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee. The members are selected on the basis of geographical representation, as well as personal qualifications and experience. They serve for three years, retire by rotation, and are eligible for reappointment. In terms of the UNs financial accountability, this is an important committee. It examines all of UNs budgets and accounts and reports on them directly to the General Assembly.
- 2.30 The Committee on Contributions establishes and monitors the formula by which the cost of the UN is apportioned to member states. It assesses the amounts required from new members, it considers appeals from existing members for a change to their assessments and it advises the General Assembly on cases of arrears. It numbers 18 members, appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee. The criteria for appointment and the duration is the same as for the ACABQ.
- 2.31 Numerous other committees (over 30) support the work of the General Assembly. They cover areas as diverse as: UN conferences and sources of information, relations with the host country (USA), Palestine, the peaceful uses of outer space, a scientific committee on the effects of atomic radiation, and the preparatory commission for the International Criminal Court and the Conference on Disarmament.

- 2.32 As an example, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) was established in 1978. It is the single, global, disarmament, negotiating forum. It works towards complete disarmament under effective international control. There are 66 member states in the CD. It meets annually in Geneva for sessions divided into 10, seven and seven weeks. It divides its work into ten areas, covering such matters as nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, conventional weapons, reductions in military budgets etc. It was the CD that negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention (1992) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1996).

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

- 2.33 The Economic and Social Council is both a forum for discussion and a coordinating agency for work on the economic and social issues that affect states. Like all organs of the UN, it represents governments and it reports to the General Assembly. It was hoped that cooperation in these 'non political' fields would engender greater cooperation in the political arena.⁹ ECOSOC covers a wide range of activities: economic progress, employment, health and education, scientific development, environmental protection, cultural cooperation, control of international crime and drug trafficking, civil aviation and the protection and promotion of human rights.

Sessions

- 2.34 ECOSOC holds one substantive session per year, between May and July, alternately in New York or Geneva.

Membership

- 2.35 It is one of the largest and most significant organs within the United Nations. It has 54 members selected on the basis of the geographic regions: African states (14), Asian states (11), Eastern European states (6), Latin American and Caribbean states (10), and Western European and

9 Interestingly, the Australian delegate to the League of Nations, Stanley Bruce, had suggested this in a report from the Bruce Commission in late 1939. It recommended the expansion of the existing economic and social activities of the [League] and the establishment of a high-powered council within the League to organise this work. The recommendation lapsed with the demise of the League during World War II. But the Council was revived when discussion on the establishment of the United Nations was discussed after the war. Quoted from Luard, Evan. *The United Nations: How it Works and What it Does*. 1994. St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 62.

Other states (13). Members serve for three-year terms. Each member has one vote and resolutions are passed by a simple majority.

Structure

2.36 The broad range of matters that interest ECOSOC is formally dealt with by nine **functional** commissions:

- Commission on Human Rights;
- Commission on Social Development;
- Commission on Population and Development;
- Commission on the Status of Women;
- Commission on Narcotic Drugs;
- Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice;
- Commission on Science and Technology for Development;
- Commission on Sustainable Development; and
- The Statistical Commission.

2.37 There are also five **regional** commissions:

- Africa;
- Asia and the Pacific;
- Europe;
- Latin America and the Caribbean; and
- Western Asia.

2.38 These commissions examine economic and social development in the regions and coordinate UN responses on a regional basis. The focus of any of the commissions, whether trade, transport, agriculture, health, education, environment etc, is determined by the circumstances of the region. ECOSOC receives specialist reports from all of these committees and commissions within the UN. Drafts of resolutions decided in the subsidiary bodies are considered in the plenary sessions of ECOSOC and reported to the General Assembly.

2.39 There are also four standing committees, largely procedural, and a number of expert bodies. At the request of the General Assembly, ECOSOC is conducting a review of its functions and structures.

2.40 There are two other sets of organisations, which relate to the UN and to the economic and social work of ECOSOC. Broadly they can be defined as

i) the Funds and Programs of the United Nations, and ii) the Specialised Agencies.

Funds and Programmes

2.41 The funds and programs are those organisations set up by resolution of the General Assembly. They report to ECOSOC and through it to the General Assembly, membership is generally decided by ECOSOC or the General Assembly, they are governed by executive boards, and funding is mostly by voluntary contributions. They include: the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP).

Specialised Agencies

2.42 In addition, ECOSOC has a coordinating role in the work of the specialised agencies. The Specialised Agencies are quite separate and autonomous from the UN. They are established by inter-governmental agreements. Often their existence precedes the establishment of the UN. They are brought into a relationship with the UN by Articles 57 and 63, and therefore some coordination of their activities may occur through ECOSOC. They include such organisations as:¹⁰ the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Trusteeship Council

2.43 The Trusteeship Council played an important role in the process of decolonisation after the Second World War. It considered reports from administering authorities of trust territories, inspected the territories periodically and examined disputes or complaints. When the last trust

10 For a comprehensive list see Appendix F. More detailed information on the structure and function of these organisations can be obtained either from the UN web site or the individual web sites for the organisations themselves.

territory, Palau, became an independent member of the UN in 1994, the work of the Trusteeship Council was completed. As part of the reform of the UN, a new role for the Council is being considered.

International Court of Justice

- 2.44 The International Court of Justice was established as one of the primary organs of the UN, its purpose and structure defined in the Charter. It is both the arbiter of and the source of advice on international law for the United Nations.
- 2.45 Its arbitration function is to settle disputes between states, and only states - individuals may not bring cases to the Court. However, acceptance of the jurisdiction of the court in any dispute is voluntary for the states concerned. Under Article 94, the Security Council can decide on 'measures to be taken to give effect to the judgement' of the Court. It has never done so.
- 2.46 It also gives advisory opinions on international law. However, the law that it interprets is not confined to the Charter or particularly to UN conventions. International law predates the establishment of the UN and the Court can, and does, give opinions on international customary law and on conventions and treaties outside of the UN system; on the general principles of law recognised by nations.
- 2.47 To a large extent and by comparison with domestic jurisdictions, international law is embryonic. It has been described as incomplete (for example, there are few rules relating to economic relations between states), disputed (for example, the criteria for recognising a new state or intervening in civil wars are not agreed) and uncertain (questions such as hot pursuit or anticipatory self-defence, while agreed, are vaguely defined). However, progressive codification of international law has been attempted since the League of Nations set up the Permanent International Court. This codification continues under the International Law Commission (ILC). The challenge for the United Nations in the new millennium is to overcome the deficiencies as outlined in this paragraph.
- 2.48 The International Court of Justice was established by Chapter XIV articles 92-96 of the Charter of the United Nations. Its operation is governed by its own Statute, which is an annex to the Charter. It is based in The Hague. It consists of 15 judges, elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council, voting independently. Judges are chosen on the basis of their qualifications, not their nationality. No two judges can be from the same country. The spread of judges is not based on regions but on the need to

represent the major judicial systems of the world. Judges serve a nine-year term and may be re-elected. Five judges retire every three years. They may not engage in any other occupation during their term of office.

- 2.49 The current composition of the ICJ is as follows: President Gilbert Guillaume (France); Vice-President Shi Jiuyong (China); Shigeru Oda (Japan); Mohammed Bedjaoui (Algeria); Raymond Ranjeva (Madagascar); Géza Herczegh (Hungary); Carl-August Fleischhauer (Germany); Abdul G Koroma (Sierra Leone); Vladlen S Vereshchetin (Russian Federation); Rosalyn Higgins (United Kingdom); Gonzalo Para-Aranguren (Venezuela); Peiter H Kooijmans (Netherlands); Francisco Rezek (Brazil); Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh (Jordan); Thomas Buergenthal (United States of America).

Secretariat

- 2.50 The Secretariat is the civil service that administratively supports the United Nations. The Secretary-General is the head of the Secretariat and the chief administrative officer of the United Nations. Since its inception there have been seven Secretaries-General of the UN.
- Trygve Lie, Norway, 2 February 1946
 - Dag Hammarskjöld, Sweden, 10 April 1953¹¹
 - U Thant, Burma, 3 November 1961
 - Kurt Waldheim, Austria, 22 December 1971
 - Javier Perez de Cuellar, Peru, 15 December 1981
 - Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Egypt, 1 January 1992
 - Kofi Annan, Ghana, 1 January 1997
- 2.51 While the Secretary-General is the chief administrative officer of the UN, he also plays a significant diplomatic role. He speaks on behalf of the international community in support of the aims and values of the Charter for the preservation of peace and security. He has considerable power to bring disputes that threaten peace and security to the attention of the Security Council. He travels widely and consults with world leaders, and in this way, becomes a force for mediation.
- 2.52 The Secretariat over which the Secretary-General presides is divided into 17 offices or departments in order to carry out its work. Some are policy

11 Died in office 18 September 1961.

organs, some are designed to support administratively the meeting programs of various UN agencies and some have internal auditing functions. There are analogies that might be drawn with domestic civil services in this structure. The departments are:

- The Office of the Secretary-General (OSG)
- The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)
- The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)
- The Department of Political Affairs (DPA)
- The Department of Disarmament Affairs (DDA)
- The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)
- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
- The Department of General Assembly and Conference Services (DGAACS)
- The Department of Public Information (DPI)
- The Department of Management (DM)
- The Office of the Iraq Programme (OIP)
- The Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD)
- The Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP)
- UN Office at Geneva (UNOG)
- UN Office at Vienna (UNOV)
- UN Office at Nairobi (UNON)

Numbers

- 2.53 Contrary to popular conception and by comparison with other organisations, the United Nations runs on a very limited budget with a very lean staffing complement.
- 2.54 The United Nations headquarters in New York, the offices and departments listed above at paragraph 2.52, is staffed by 4,500 civil servants. Overall, in New York, Geneva and Vienna, the secretariat staff is 8,700. There are 52,100 employees world-wide. This number includes the secretariat staff in New York as well as the all the programs, funds and

other specialised agencies. It comprises professional and administrative support staff. These are 'permanent' staff.¹² The number does not include the contractors, including peacekeepers, used for specific projects.

- 2.55 The United Nations believes that this is a much leaner staffing than exists in any national civil service. Various comparisons have been made. Disneyland and Disneyworld employ a similar number of people. McDonalds employs three times as many staff as the UN. The Austrian capital of Vienna has more public employees than the UN. The Swedish Capital of Stockholm has 60,000 municipal employees.¹³ The Australian Commonwealth Public Service employs 244,000 people. The State of NSW employs 465,000. The city of Melbourne employs 194,000.¹⁴

Cost

- 2.56 Salaries for professional staff are based on US federal civil service employees with an adjustment for the cost of living in New York. The UN salaries are significantly lower (by as much as 50 per cent) than those paid to employees in other multilateral organisations such as at the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or the World Bank. They are as much as 30 per cent lower than US private sector salaries. Pay is regulated by the International Civil Service Commission, which reports to the General Assembly. Additional benefits are strictly limited. Salaries are not tax free; staff assessments, the UN equivalent of tax, range from 28 to 34 per cent of gross salary. No tax rebates are available to staff. Some grants are made for a portion of education expenses for internationally recruited staff. There is no free parking.¹⁵ Employees are not permitted to accept supplementary payments or subsidies from their governments.
- 2.57 The cost of the whole UN system is \$US10 billion per annum. This amount comprises the Regular Budget, the Peacekeeping budget and the budget for the international tribunals (Yugoslavia and Rwanda). A formula for assessments is applied for each of these 'mandatory'

12 Permanency has been a feature of the UN system, but the organisation like many others, is moving to contract arrangements for its professional staff. Notes from discussions with UN Secretariat staff, October 2000.

13 United Nations. 'Who works at the UN?', posted June 1999. www.un.org/geninfo/ir/ch2/ch2.htm, visited 22 May 2001.

14 Figures are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Wage and Salary Earners Australia, September Quarter 2000. The Commonwealth figures include officers in statutory authorities but not members of the armed services. It is not clear what the ABS has included in state and local government figures. See Australian Bureau of Statistics. 'Welcome to AusStats!', posted 18 May 2001. www.abs.gov.au/ausstats, visited 22 May 2001.

15 This is apparently a significant issue in New York.

contributions. Many of the specialised agencies, the funds and programs are paid for out of voluntary contributions from member states.

- 2.58 The administrative cost of running the secretariat of the United Nations in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi is \$US1.25 billion per annum. This budget has been frozen since 1994. This is the Regular Budget of the United Nations and it is paid for by the membership dues or assessments from the member states. What each countries' contributions will be are assessed by the Committee on Contributions on the basis of a formula, agreed by member states, which takes account of the share of the world economy of each country, its population and its ability to pay. The scale of assessments is reviewed every three years on the basis of national income statistics. As with individual taxation, the scale is progressive with richer countries paying more than poorer countries.
- 2.59 There is a cap or maximum amount (22 per cent) that any country can be charged. This was 25 per cent until 23 December 2000. The United States, previously assessed at 25 per cent, has therefore had its payments reduced to 22 per cent.¹⁶ Below is a sample only of the scale of assessments. Tables in the rest of this chapter are based on contributions and arrears calculated on the old scale of assessments. This information was supplied to the committee during its visit to the UN in October 2000. While the new scale of assessments has made some differences, particularly to the assessment for the United States' assessment, the reduction or increase for most states is not very great.

Table 2.2 UN Scale of Assessments for the Regular Budget

Country	1999	2001
United States	25.000	22
Japan	19.984	19.629
Germany	9.808	9.825
France	6.540	6.503
United Kingdom	5.090	5.568
Canada	2.754	2.573
The Netherlands	1.631	1.748
The Russian Federation	1.487	1.2
Australia	1.482	1.636
China	0.973	1.541

Source *United Nations Handbook, 1999 and UN website*

16 The cap is of benefit to the United States only. Without the cap, the United States would be assessed at 29 per cent, which is the US share of the world economy. The reduction in the cap was insisted upon by the US Congress as a condition of their paying, over a three-year period, \$926 million in arrears. If the individual countries of the European Union pooled their assessments, they contribute 36 percent to the UN budget.

2.60 In terms of the actual amounts of dollars paid to the UN, the top ten contributors to the Regular Budget are as follows:

Table 2.3 Top 10 Member States in Assessment for the Regular Budget, August 2000

Member	Scale of Assessment	Amount \$US millions
United States of America	25.00	300.4
Japan	19.98	216.4
Germany	9.08	103.7
France	6.54	68.8
Italy	5.43	57.1
United Kingdom	5.09	53.5
Canada	2.75	28.7
Spain	2.58	27.2
The Netherlands	1.63	17.1
Australia	1.48	15.6

Source *Exhibit No 44, Status of Contributions to the Regular Budget, International Tribunals and Peacekeeping Operations.*

2.61 However, expressed as a per capita contribution the top ten contributors to the regular budget of the UN would be:

Table 2.4 Top 10 per capita Contributors to the UN Regular Budget 1998

Country	Per capita contribution \$US
Liechtestein	1.77
Luxembourg	1.76
Japan	1.52
Norway	1.48
Denmark	1.39
Sweden	1.33
Iceland	1.28
Germany	1.26
Austria	1.25
France	1.19

Source *United Nations Web Site.*

- 2.62 Peacekeeping contributions are paid for on the basis of a slightly different scale of assessments. They are not subject to the same penalties as are applied under Article 19 to non payment to the regular budget. The following are the highest contributor to the peacekeeping budget.

Table 2.5 Top 10 Member States in Assessment for the Peacekeeping Budget, August 2000

Member	Amount \$US million
United States of America	615.9
Japan	403.3
Germany	193.8
France	156.0
Italy	106.9
United Kingdom	121.4
Canada	53.8
Spain	50.9
The Netherlands	32.1
Australia	29.2

Source *Exhibit No 44, Status of Contributions to the Regular Budget, International Tribunals and Peacekeeping Operations.*

The Problem of Arrears

- 2.63 The United Nations has always had budgetary problems as it has relied on member states to pay dues and these have not always been paid or paid on time. However, in recent years, the financial crisis has been exacerbated by increasing demands, especially for peacekeeping operations, and decreasing revenues. The number of peacekeeping missions increased in the post Cold War period. There were 13 peacekeeping missions between 1945 and 1990, and 41 missions from 1990 to 1999. Moreover the number of refugees and displaced persons has risen exponentially, from 8 million in the 1970s to 22 million in 1999.
- 2.64 The arrears have occurred in all budget areas, the Regular Budget, the Peacekeeping Budget and the budget for the international tribunals. According to the UN, in September 2000, member states owed over \$US3 billion to the organisation - \$US2.5 billion for peacekeeping, \$US533 million to the Regular Budget and \$US54 million for the International Tribunals. Payments to the Regular Budget appear to be more consistent than to the Peacekeeping Budget, perhaps because of the threat of Article 19. Under Article 19 of the UN Charter, if at the beginning of the year, a

country owes the same as or more than its total gross assessments for the previous two years, it automatically loses its right to vote in the General Assembly.

- 2.65 Of the total amount owing, United States owes 81 per cent of all arrears to the Regular Budget and 58 per cent of all arrears to the Peacekeeping Budget. The US debt is \$US1.9 billion - made up of \$US430 million to the Regular Budget and \$US1.5 billion to peacekeeping and the international tribunals.
- 2.66 Other countries that owe significant amounts to the Regular Budget are Brazil which owes 8 per cent or \$US41 million and Argentina which owes 4 per cent or \$US20 million. Of the other 175 contributors to the regular budget, 53 owe another \$US40 million.

Table 2.6 Table of Arrears in the Regular Budget, 2000 (\$US)

	2000	Percentage
United States	432,000,000	81
Brazil	41,000,000	8
Argentina	20,000,000	4
53 of 173 other Member States	40,000,000	7
TOTAL	533,000,000	100

Source Exhibit No 34, *The Financial Situation of the United Nations, 30 September 2000*.

- 2.67 On the peacekeeping budget, the following table of arrears applied at 30 September 2000:

Table 2.7 Table of Arrears in the Peacekeeping Budget, 1998-2000 (\$US)

	1998	1999	2000	Percentage 2000
United States	1,073,000,000	1,101,000,000	1,446,000,000	58
Japan	107,000,000	114,000,000	301,000,000	12
Ukraine	210,000,000	210,000,000	191,000,000	8
France	36,000,000	29,000,000	94,000,000	4
Italy	22,000,000	27,000,000	76,000,000	3
Russian Federation	125,000,000	106,000,000	66,000,000	2
Other Member States	229,000,000	244,000,000	333,000,000	13
TOTAL	1,802,000,000	1,831,000,000	2,507,000,000	100

Source Exhibit No 34, *The Financial Situation of the United Nations, 30 September 2000*.

Table 2.8 Table of Arrears in the Budget for International Tribunals, 2000 (\$US)

	2000	Percentage
United States	12,022,205	21.9
Japan	16,614,122	30.3
France	11,687,914	21.3
Brazil	1,425,520	2.6
Italy	4,630,256	8.4
Argentina	1,068,858	1.9
116 others Member States	5,524,122	10.1
TOTAL	54,896,279	100.0

Source Exhibit No 34, *The Financial Situation of the United Nations, 30 September 2000.*

2.68 The failure of the United States to pay its dues or to pay in full, either to the Regular Budget or to the Peacekeeping Budget, has had a crippling effect on the UN budget. The implications of the financial crisis for the operations of the UN will be considered in the following chapters - 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The work that is being done to reform the system is considered at chapters 9 and 10.

