

SGTM 1 A: Peacekeepers' Introduction to the United Nations System

The 1st Standardized Generic Training Module (SGTM 1) introduces peacekeepers to the United Nations system and United Nations peace operations. SGTM 1 is divided into two submodules of

- ♦ 1 A: The United Nations system — the Organization itself and the family of programmes, specialized agencies and other technical bodies.
- ♦ 1 B: United Nations peace operations — the evolution of peacekeeping.

SGTM 1 A and SGTM 1 B should be presented together and with two other modules that complete the picture of the organizational context of peacekeeping: SGTM 2 on the structure of peace operations and SGTM 3 on the legal framework of peacekeeping.

Background

The United Nations was formed in the aftermath of a bloody and devastating global war. By adopting the Charter of the United Nations, the Member States affirmed their resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Each of the principal organs of the United Nations has a role to play in furthering the goals of the Organization.

United Nations peacekeepers need to have a good understanding of the Organization, its purposes and its principles, in order to work effectively in a United Nations peacekeeping mission. They should have a clear picture of the background, functions and role of the United Nations, particularly in the peacekeeping context. They should understand the context in which peacekeeping has evolved as a pragmatic response to threats to peace and security.

Aim

The aim of SGTM 1 A is to give peacekeepers a basic knowledge of the Organization and motivate them with the global perspective and moral inspiration that informs the work of the United Nations.

Learning Outcome

On completion of module 1 A, peacekeepers should be familiar with the

- ♦ Historical background of the United Nations
- ♦ Purpose and principles of the United Nations
- ♦ Structure of the United Nations
- ♦ Responsibilities, powers and functions of the six principal United Nations organs.

Assessment Criteria

After completing this module, every peacekeeper should be able to

- ♦ Outline the historical background of the United Nations.
- ♦ List the purposes and principles of the Organization.
- ♦ List the ideals that motivated its creation.
- ♦ List the six main United Nations organs and their general functions.

Duration and Time Schedule

The syllabus of a 45-minute presentation on SGTM 1 A is outlined below. No more than 30 minutes should be used for the lecture. The remaining 15 minutes should be given to questions and general discussion. The trainer should modify the time allocated for this module according to national training requirements.

Syllabus Outline

- ◆ Structure of the presentation
- ◆ Historical background of the United Nations
- ◆ Charter of the United Nations
- ◆ Six principal United Nations organs
- ◆ United Nations system
- ◆ Summary

Notes on Methodology, Content and Teaching Materials

SGTM 1 A is best presented by a trainer who has general knowledge of United Nations peacekeeping history, purposes and principles. Official United Nations publications, documents and websites, including www.un.org, should be used as primary information sources for this module.

At the outset of the presentation, the trainer should inform trainees of the content, format and timing. Knowing what to expect, trainees can improve their ability to focus on the subject and benefit from the presentation.

References

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Structure of the Presentation

A standard presentation on the United Nations system at the basic level for peacekeepers should cover the:

- ◆ Historical background of the United Nations
- ◆ Charter of the United Nations
- ◆ Six principal United Nations organs
- ◆ United Nations system.

SLIDE 1

- ◆ **Historical background**
- ◆ **UN Charter**
- ◆ **Six main organs**
- ◆ **“UN system”**

Historical Background of the United Nations

The forerunner of the United Nations was the League of Nations, an organization conceived in similar circumstances during the First World War and established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles “to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security.” The International Labour Organization was also created under the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League. The League of Nations ceased its activities after failing to prevent the Second World War.

The name “United Nations” was coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was first used in the “Declaration by United Nations” of 1 January 1942, during the Second World War, when representatives of 26 nations pledged their Governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers.

After the Second World War, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter. Those delegates deliberated on the basis of proposals worked out by the representatives of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States at Dumbarton Oaks, United States, from August to October 1944. The representatives of the 50 countries signed the Charter on 26 June 1945. Poland, not represented at the Conference, signed it later and became one of the original 51 Member States.

The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, when China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and a majority of other signatories had ratified the Charter. United Nations Day is celebrated on 24 October each year.

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- ◆ **Failure of the League of Nations**
- ◆ **First use of “United Nations”**

- ♦ **Establishing the UN**
- ♦ **UN Day, 24th October**

Charter of the United Nations

The Charter is an international treaty to which our Member Nations are signatories. It is the basic or foundation document of the Organization, setting out its purposes and principles and the rights and obligations of Member States, and establishing the principal organs of the world body and their procedures. As an international treaty, the Charter codifies the major principles of international relations — from the sovereign equality of States to the prohibition of the use of force in international relations. The Preamble to the Charter expresses the ideals and common aims of all the peoples whose Governments joined together to form the United Nations.

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UN Charter: an international treaty

- ♦ **Purposes and principles of UN**
- ♦ **Rights and obligations of Member States**
- ♦ **Principal organs and their procedures**
- ♦ **Main principles of international relations**

Preamble. The Preamble to the Charter expresses the ideals and common aims of all the peoples whose Governments have joined to form the United Nations. It states:

“WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED *to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

“AND FOR THESE ENDS *to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours*, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

“HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS. *Accordingly*, our respective Governments, through the representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.”

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Preamble

- ♦ **To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war**
- ♦ **To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ...**
- ♦ **... in the dignity and worth of the human person**
- ♦ **... in the equal rights of men and women**
- ♦ **... and of nations large and small**

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Preamble (*continued*)

- ♦ **To establish conditions for maintaining justice and respect for international law**
- ♦ **To practice tolerance and live together in peace as good neighbours**
- ♦ **To unite our strength to maintain international peace and security**
- ♦ **To ensure that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest**

The purposes and principles of the United Nations are set forth in the Charter.

Purposes. One of the most important purposes of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security and to take collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. Others are to:

- ♦ Develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of all peoples.
- ♦ Cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.
- ♦ Be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining those common ends.

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Purposes

- ♦ **Maintain international peace and security**
- ♦ **Develop friendly relations among nations**
- ♦ **Cooperate in solving economic, social, cultural, humanitarian problems**
- ♦ **Harmonize actions of nations for common ends**

Principles. The sovereign equality of all its members is a fundamental principle of the United Nations. Members are to fulfil their Charter obligations in good faith and:

- ♦ Settle their international disputes by peaceful means and without endangering international peace and security, and justice.
- ♦ Refrain from the threat or use of force against any other State.
- ♦ Give the Organization every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the Charter and refrain from giving support to those States against which the Organization is taking enforcement or preventive action.
- ♦ Not intervene in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State.

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Principles

- ◆ **Sovereign equality of all members**
- ◆ **International disputes settled peacefully**
- ◆ **No threat or use of force**
- ◆ **Every assistance for action supporting Charter**
- ◆ **Non-intervention in domestic jurisdiction**

Six Principal Organs of the United Nations

The Charter authorizes the establishment of six principal organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, the Trusteeship Council and the Secretariat. In addition, there are subsidiary organs, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies related to the United Nations that together form the “United Nations system”.

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Principal organs

- ◆ **General Assembly**
- ◆ **Security Council**
- ◆ **Economic and Social Council**
- ◆ **International Court of Justice**
- ◆ **Trusteeship Council**
- ◆ **Secretariat**

General Assembly. The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ. 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. A simple majority decides other sorts of questions. The General Assembly meets annually in regular sessions. Special sessions can be convened at the request of the Security Council, of a majority of Member States or of one member if the majority of members concurs. An emergency special session may be called within 24 hours of a request by the Security Council on the vote of any 9 members of the Council or if a majority of members concurs. Because of the great number of questions that the Assembly is called upon to consider, the Assembly has established 6 subsidiary Main Committees, each of which deliberates on a specific series of items and issues:

- ◆ **FIRST COMMITTEE: Disarmament and International Security**
- ◆ **SECOND COMMITTEE: Economic and Financial**
- ◆ **THIRD COMMITTEE: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural**
- ◆ **FOURTH COMMITTEE: Special Political and Decolonization**
- ◆ **FIFTH COMMITTEE: Administrative and Budgetary**
- ◆ **SIXTH COMMITTEE: Legal.**

The Assembly allocates most questions to its Main Committees, but also meets in plenary session to address those questions that are not allocated to them.

Peacekeeping is considered among “Special Political” issues and is deliberated in the Fourth Committee. The Assembly has also established other subsidiary bodies that study and report on

specific issues, such as peacekeeping, disarmament, human rights and development. The body that studies peacekeeping issues in considerable detail is called the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

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General Assembly

- ◆ **Main deliberative organ**
- ◆ **All Member States**
- ◆ **One vote per State**
- ◆ **Fourth Committee: “Special Political” issues**
- ◆ **Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations**

Security Council. The Charter gives the Security Council primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Council has 15 members: 5 permanent members (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States) and 10 members elected by the General Assembly for 2-year terms. Each member has 1 vote. Decisions on substantive matters require 9 votes, including the concurring votes of all 5 permanent members — that is the rule of “Great Power unanimity”, often referred to as the “veto” power. Under the Charter, all Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.

When the Council receives a complaint concerning a threat to peace, its first action is usually to recommend to the parties to try to reach agreement by peaceful means; it may also establish principles or guidelines for a peaceful settlement. When a dispute leads to conflict, the Council’s first concern is to bring the hostilities to an end as soon as possible. To that end, the Council may demand an immediate ceasefire to prevent wider hostilities, a pullback of military forces or disengagement, a zone of separation or demilitarized zone, or any other appropriate arrangement. It may also authorize the deployment of a United Nations peace operation to help reduce tensions in troubled areas, keep opposing forces apart and create conditions of calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought. The Council may also decide on enforcement measures, economic sanctions (such as trade, oil and weapons embargoes) or collective military action to suppress acts of aggression.

Under the Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are to:

- ◆ Maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations.
- ◆ Investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction.
- ◆ Recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment to resolve disputes.
- ◆ Assist in the establishment of a system to regulate armaments.
- ◆ Determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken to restore international peace and security.
- ◆ Call on Member States to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression.
- ◆ Take any action deemed necessary, including the use of military force, to restore international peace and security.

- ◆ Encourage the pacific settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements or by regional organizations and agencies.
- ◆ Exercise the trusteeship functions of the United Nations in “strategic areas”.
- ◆ Recommend the admission of new Member States.
- ◆ Recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and, together with the Assembly, to elect the judges of the International Court of Justice.

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Security Council

- ◆ **Maintains international peace and security**
- ◆ **5 permanent members: China, France, Russia, UK, US**
- ◆ **10 rotating members, elected for 2-year terms**

Economic and Social Council. The Charter established the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to coordinate the economic, social, developmental and related work of the wider United Nations system, including the funds, programmes specialized agencies and technical institutions. Some of the functions and powers of the Economic and Social Council are to:

- ◆ Serve as the main forum for discussing global economic and social issues and formulating policy recommendations for Member States and the United Nations system.
- ◆ Make or initiate studies and reports and make recommendations on international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters.
- ◆ Promote respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- ◆ Assist in preparing and organizing major international conferences on topics and challenges in the economic, social, cultural and developmental arena and to help coordinate implementation of the outcome of those conferences.
- ◆ Coordinate the activities of United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies.

The Council has 54 members who serve a 3-year term and have 1 vote each. A simple majority decides questions put to a vote. Every year one third of the membership, or 18 new members, are elected. The Council meets annually for 5 weeks, alternating between New York and Geneva. The year-round work of the Council is conducted in its subsidiary and related bodies.

The Council consults with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations on programme and policy issues. Over 2,000 such organizations have consultative status with the Council, whereby the Council recognizes the value of their special experience or technical knowledge. Over the years they have become partners who help the United Nations to achieve its objectives.

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Economic and Social Council

- ◆ **Central forum for discussing global economic, social and developmental issues**
- ◆ **Initiates studies, reports and recommendations on economic, social, cultural, educational and health matters**
- ◆ **Promotes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms**
- ◆ **Has 54 members serving 3-year terms, elected by General Assembly**
- ◆ **Consults non-governmental and civil society organizations**

International Court of Justice. The International Court of Justice, also called the “World Court”, is the principal judicial organ of the system. It settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions on legal issues to the United Nations system. The Statute of the Court, its constituting document, is an integral part of the United Nations Charter. The Court is open to all States that are parties to its Statute, which includes all United Nations members. Only States, not individuals, can be parties in contentious cases before the Court and submit disputes to it. The Court is not open to private persons and entities or international organizations.

The General Assembly and the Security Council can ask the Court for an advisory opinion on any legal question. Other organs and organizations of the United Nations, when authorized by the Assembly, can ask for opinions on legal questions within the scope of their activities.

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“World Court”

- ◆ **Open to all States party to its Statute**
- ◆ **Legal disputes only between States**
- ◆ **Advisory opinions for UN system**

Trusteeship Council. The Charter established the Trusteeship Council in 1945 to provide supervision for 11 Trust Territories placed under the administration of certain Member States, and to ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the Territories for self-government or independence. The Charter authorized the Trusteeship Council to examine and discuss reports from the Administering Authority on the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the peoples of Trust Territories; to examine petitions from the Territories; and to undertake special missions to the Territories.

By 1994, all Trust Territories had attained self-government or independence, either as separate States or by joining neighbouring independent countries. The last to do so was the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Palau), which became the 185th Member State in 1994. Its work completed, the Trusteeship Council — consisting of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council — amended its rules of procedure to meet when occasion may require.

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Trusteeship Council

- ◆ **Supervise administration of 11 Trust Territories**
- ◆ **All Territories now independent, Council suspended**

The Secretariat. The Secretariat is the administrative organ of the United Nations, staffed by international civil servants working in duty stations around the world. The Secretariat carries out the diverse day-to-day work of the Organization. It services the other principal organs and administers the programmes and implements the policies laid down by them. At its head is the Secretary-General, who is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year, renewable term.

The Secretariat's duties range from administering peacekeeping operations to mediating international disputes, from surveying economic and social trends and problems to preparing studies on human rights and sustainable development. As international civil servants, staff members and the Secretary-General answer to the Organization alone in the performance of their work and are guided by the purposes and principles laid out in the Charter. Staff members take an oath not to seek or receive instructions from any Government or outside authority. Under the Charter, each Member State undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and to refrain from seeking to influence them improperly.

The Secretariat is divided into several major units, each of which is headed by an Under-Secretary-General or an official of equivalent rank.

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photo of UN Headquarters, NY

United Nations System

The Secretary-General. The Charter describes the Secretary-General as the “chief administrative officer” of the Organization, who shall perform “such other functions as are entrusted” to him or her by the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and other organs. The Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to “bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security”. Those guidelines define the powers of the office and grant it considerable scope for action.

The Secretary-General must take careful account of the concerns of Member States and, at the same time, uphold the values and moral authority of the United Nations. The Secretary-General must speak and act for peace, even at the risk of challenging or disagreeing with those same Member States. Such a creative tension accompanies the Secretary-General's day-to-day work which includes attendance at sessions of United Nations bodies, consultations with world leaders, government officials and others, and worldwide travel that keeps him or her in touch with the peoples of Member States and informed about the vast array of issues on the Organization's agenda. Each year, the Secretary-General reports to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization, appraises its activities and outlines priorities.

The Secretary-General is best known to the general public for using his or her stature and impartiality — “good offices” — both publicly and in private, to bring attention to the challenges facing the world, such as reducing poverty, dealing with the AIDS pandemic, the protection of children in situations of conflict, and others. The Secretary-General must also use his or her good offices to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading, and to promote the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

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The Secretary-General
◆ **Chief administrative officer**

- ◆ Alerts Security Council to threats
- ◆ Reports to General Assembly
- ◆ Advances purposes of UN Charter

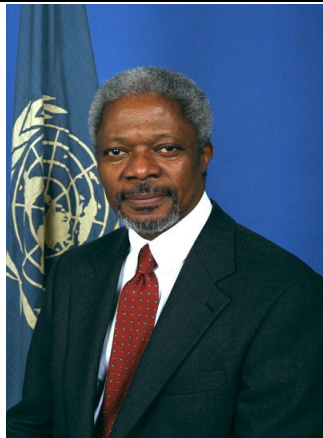
Kofi Annan of Ghana is the Organization’s seventh Secretary-General and the first to be elected from the ranks of the staff. He began his first term on 1 January 1997 and was re-elected in 2001 for a second term that will end in December 2006.

The previous Secretaries-General are (in reverse chronological order):

- ◆ Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Egypt) January ’92 – December ’96
- ◆ Javier Perez de Cuellar (Peru) January ’82 – December ’91
- ◆ Kurt Waldheim (Austria) January ’72 – December ’81
- ◆ U Thant (Myanmar) November ’61 – December ’71
- ◆ Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden) April ’53 – September ’61
- ◆ Trygve Lie (Norway) February ’46 – November ’52.

The 2001 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the United Nations and to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Nobel Committee cited the Organization’s efforts to bring about a “more peaceful world” and credited Secretary-General Annan with “bringing new life to the Organization.” In response, the Secretary-General stated, “It honours the United Nations but also challenges us to do more and do better, not to rest on our laurels ... it is a great responsibility at such a difficult moment but reinforces us in pursuing the search for peace.”

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Kofi Annan (Ghanaian), seventh UN Secretary-General
First term 1997-2001, second term 2000-2006

United Nations programmes, agencies and technical bodies. The wider United Nations system consists of a large family of funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other technical bodies who work in their areas of expertise. The system encompasses the range of human activities, from providing humanitarian and development assistance to Member States, to defining a legal regime for the use of the world’s seas and ocean resources, to regulating the use

of outer space and establishing an international system for the allocation of radio bandwidths, among others.

Peacekeepers may work with some of those bodies in connection with the peace operation. The more common ones are:

- ◆ OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) provides assistance to and extends international protection to the world's refugee populations. UNHCR seeks to ensure that they receive basic care, asylum and favourable legal status in their asylum country. UNHCR is headquartered in Geneva.
- ◆ UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF) helps developing countries, at their request, to improve the quality of life for their children, through low-cost, community-based services in maternal and child health, nutrition, sanitation and education, as well as emergency relief. UNICEF headquarters are in New York.
- ◆ UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) is the world's largest channel for multilateral technical and developmental assistance to developing countries. UNDP supports several thousand projects in some 150 countries. UNDP administers some of the smaller, technical funds and programmes of the United Nations system, such as the UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM). UNDP headquarters are in New York.
- ◆ WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP) is the world's largest international food aid organization, responsible for handling annually around 3 million metric tons of food aid. In 2003, WFP fed 104 million people in 81 countries. WFP has a mandate to combat world hunger and provide emergency food aid to people in need, who include refugees, internally displaced persons and the poor. WFP is headquartered at Rome, Italy.

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- ◆ **UNHCR — Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**
- ◆ **UNICEF — United Nations Children's Fund**
- ◆ **UNDP — United Nations Development Programme**
- ◆ **WFP — World Food Programme**

Summary

One of the chief purposes of the United Nations is “to maintain international peace and security and, to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats”.

Peacekeeping missions are an effective instrument toward that end.

Peacekeepers need to appreciate the historical background of the United Nations, its purposes and principles, its structure and organs and their general functions, including those of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General.