

ISEA 25: International Organizations

Lecture Compilation

Unit 1: ISEA 25 International Organizations

Unit 2: Types and Classification of International Organizations

Unit 1: ISEA 25 International Organizations

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Learning Objectives

After this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain what international organizations are and why they exist.
2. Identify the different types of international organizations.
3. Describe the role of international organizations in the world.
4. Think critically about global problems and how organizations respond to them.

What is International Organization?

International = between or among nations (across borders)

Organization = a structured group working toward a goal

Definition of International Organizations

Archer (2001): "A formal, continuous structure established by agreement between members from two or more sovereign states with the aim of pursuing the common interest of the membership."

Mingst (2026): An institution with members from at least three states, conducting activities in multiple states, united by a formal agreement.

What is Purpose of International Organizations

Why do international organizations exist?

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION exist in order to...

- Foster cooperation among countries
- Help members achieve shared goals
- Address common problems no single state can solve alone (e.g., pandemics, climate change, poverty)
- Make cooperation regular and organized ("institutionalized")

What is the Roles and Functions of International Organizations (Karns & Mingst, 2010)

Forum — provide a venue where states meet, talk, and negotiate

Information — gather, analyze, and share data (e.g., WHO health data)

Norm-setting — create shared rules, standards, and principles

Rule-making — help draft agreements and international law

Operations/Service — deliver real services like aid, loans, and peacekeeping

Dispute resolution — help settle conflicts peacefully (PCA)

Why do the countries still need International Organization?

Because some problems cross borders and need collective action:

Examples:

- Pandemics (WHO)
- Climate change
- Terrorism & transnational crime
- Global economic crises

Two Main Categories of International Organizations

1. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

An intergovernmental organization (IGO) is an institution with at least three member states, engaging in activities across multiple countries and bound by a formal agreement (Britannica, 2026). They are established through intergovernmental agreements, with states as their members.

- Members are sovereign states (governments)
- Created through a treaty or formal agreement
- Controlled by member states
- Examples: UN, WHO, IMF, WTO, ASEAN

Two Main Categories of International Organizations

2. International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)

An INGO is an organization made up of associations, individuals, and other non-state actors that operates across borders on international issues (PolSci Institute, 2026). Unlike IGOs, INGOs are not created by state treaties and are independent of government control (NGOfeed, 2024).

- Members are private groups, associations, or individuals
- Not created by a government treaty
- Independent of government control
- Work on global issues like human rights, environment, and humanitarian aid
- Examples: Red Cross, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Institute of International Rural Reconstruction.

Two Main Categories of International Organizations

	IGO Intergovernmental Org.	INGO Intl. Non-Gov. Org.
Members	Sovereign states	Private groups, individuals
Created by	Treaty / agreement	Private initiative
Control	By member states	Independent of govt.
Legal status	Own legal personality	No treaty personality
Examples	UN, WHO, IMF, WTO, ASEAN	Red Cross, Amnesty Intl., Greenpeace

How Is an International Governmental Organization Established?

Establishing an International Organization

A simplified process:

1. Identify a common problem or goal
2. States negotiate
3. Draft a founding instrument
4. Sign/adopt the instrument
5. Ratification or approval by states
6. Entry into force
7. Establish organs and procedures
8. Organization begins operations

Example: United Nations

UN Charter signed: June 26, 1945

Charter entered into force: October 24, 1945

International Organizations vs. International Institutions

International Organization — the "who"

- A concrete body with a physical presence — offices, staff, members, address
- Created by a treaty, with a formal structure
- Example: United Nations, WHO, ASEAN

International Institution — the "what/how"

- A set of rules, norms, and principles that guide how states behave
- Often has no physical structure
- Example: diplomacy, sovereignty, international law

Global Governance vs. World Government

World Government —

One central authority that would rule over ALL countries, with power to make and enforce laws on everyone

- There is no government for the world (Weiss & Thakur, United Nations Intellectual History Project).

does NOT exist

Global Governance — this is what we actually have

- "Governing, without sovereign authority, relationships that transcend national frontiers. Global governance is doing internationally what governments do at home" (Finkelstein, 1995).
- As there is no global government, global governance typically involves a range of actors including states, as well as regional and international organizations (WHO, 2015).

Actors in Global Governance

1. States (Countries)

- Still the main players, with the most power and sovereignty
- They sign treaties and enforce agreements

2. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

- Created by states — e.g., UN, WHO, IMF, ASEAN
- Provide a forum for countries to talk and cooperate

Actors in Global Governance

3. International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)

- Private groups working on global issues — e.g., Red Cross, Amnesty International, Greenpeace
- Provide expertise, deliver aid, and monitor agreements

4. Other Actors

- Multinational companies operating across many countries
- Expert groups and panels that provide advice and knowledge

Key Takeaways

- International organizations help countries work together to solve shared problems.
- There are two types: IGOs (made up of states, like the UN) and INGOs (private groups, like the Red Cross).
- An organization is a "who" (an actual body); an institution is a "what" (rules and norms).
- There is no world government — but global governance lets countries manage global problems together.
- The main actors are states, IGOs, and INGOs.

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Unit 2: Types and Classification of International Organizations

II

ISEA 25: International Organizations

TYPES AND CLASSIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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LESSON OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- 1 Identify the common structure of International Governmental Organizations (IGOs).
- 2 Explain the major types and classifications of international organizations.
- 3 Differentiate IGOs based on their structure, scope, and functions.

Question

What is the importance of a logo in an international organization?"

A logo serves as the ultimate visual anchor for its global identity, mission, and values. It transcends language barriers to create immediate recognition and trust across diverse cultures.

A

Common Structure of International and Regional Governmental Organizations

What is inside an IGO that makes it a real organization?

COMMON STRUCTURE OF AN IGO

I INTRODUCTION

IGOs are organizations created by sovereign states through treaties or agreements to pursue common goals. They may be:

Global / International

e.g., United Nations (UN), WHO

Regional

e.g., ASEAN, African Union (AU), OAS

Important: There is no single structure followed by every IGO. The exact organs, powers, and leadership depend on the organization's founding treaty.

II COMMON FEATURES OF AN IGO

1 Member States

The countries that created and belong to the organization. UN → worldwide; ASEAN → Southeast Asia.

2 Headquarters

Organization	Headquarters
UN	New York, USA
ASEAN	Jakarta, Indonesia
WHO	Geneva, Switzerland

3 Official Languages

Used for documents, meetings, and communication.

UN: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish

ASEAN: English

III REPRESENTATION OF MEMBER STATES

1 PERMANENT MISSION

A country's diplomatic office to an international organization.

Embassy: Country → Country

Mission: Country → Organization

2 PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

The diplomat who represents a country to the organization.

Often titled: *Ambassador and Permanent Representative*

Remember:

Permanent Representative → represents a country

Secretary-General → works for / heads the Secretariat

Example: Ambassador & Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations

IV PLENARY ASSEMBLY / GENERAL BODY

The main representative body where all member states meet to discuss major issues.

FUNCTIONS

- Set broad policies
- Debate issues
- Approve budgets
- Adopt resolutions
- Elect officials

EXAMPLE

UN → General Assembly

ASEAN → ASEAN Summit

V EXECUTIVE COUNCIL / GOVERNING BODY

A smaller body that handles more specific or continuing decisions.

FUNCTIONS:

- Coordinate activities
- Supervise implementation
- Handle urgent matters
- Make delegated decisions

EXAMPLES:

UN → Security Council

AU → Executive Council

Not every IGO has an executive council with the same name or powers.

VI SECRETARIAT

The **permanent administrative arm** of the organization.

FUNCTIONS:

- Organize meetings

- Prepare reports
- Conduct research
- Coordinate programs
- Implement decisions
- Day-to-day admin

EXAMPLES:

UN → UN Secretariat

ASEAN → ASEAN Secretariat

OAS → General Secretariat

Note: The Secretariat supports the organization but does not make policy decisions — that is the role of members through the plenary or council.

VII HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

There is **NO universal title** or structure for the leader of an IGO.

COMMON TITLES:

- Secretary-General
- Director-General
- Chairperson
- President

EXAMPLES:

United Nations Sec-Gen — A. Guterres

ASEAN Sec-Gen — Kao Kim Hourn

African Union Chairperson — AU Commission

IMPORTANT: The Secretary-General is generally the head of the Secretariat, not necessarily the supreme authority over the entire organization.

VIII ROTATING CHAIRMANSHP

Some organizations have a **rotating chairmanship** instead of one permanent political leader.

EXAMPLE: ASEAN

Secretary-General → heads the Secretariat

ASEAN Chair → member state holding the rotating chairmanship

ASEAN Summit → highest political body

THEREFORE, ASEAN does NOT have one person who functions as a national-style “president.” Leadership rotates among member states.

IX DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decisions are usually made through **discussion, negotiation, and voting** among member states.

KEY POINTS:

- Each member state usually has one vote.
- Decisions may need simple majority, qualified majority, or consensus.
- Reflects the principle of sovereign equality.

ASEAN generally decides by consensus — meaning all member states must agree. This ensures every member has a say.

X FUNDING AND BUDGET

IGOs are funded by **contributions from member states**, based on an agreed formula or scale.

KEY POINTS:

- Contributions may be based on economic size or ability to pay.
- Some also receive voluntary contributions, grants, or partnerships.
- Budgets are approved periodically by the governing body.

Sustainable funding is essential for the organization to carry out its programs and achieve its goals.

XI SUBSIDIARY AND SPECIALIZED BODY

Created by an IGO to carry out **specific functions** or provide expert services. Also known as specialized agencies and programs.

EXAMPLES:

WHO — A UN specialized agency for international public health.

UNESCO — Promotes education, science, culture, and communication.

IAEA — Promotes peaceful use of nuclear energy.

These bodies bring specialized knowledge and capacity that strengthen the work of the main organization.

XII JUDICIAL BODY

An organ that **interprets laws, settles disputes, and ensures compliance** with the organization's legal framework.

EXAMPLES:

ICJ — The principal judicial organ of the UN; settles disputes between states.

WTO Dispute Body — Resolves trade disputes between member states.

ECJ — Ensures EU law is applied consistently among members.

Judicial bodies uphold the rule of law and promote justice, accountability, and stability in international relations.

B

The Evolving Landscape of Regional Concepts

How does regional cooperation take shape?

REGIONALISM

Top-down regional integration

- Initiated mainly by states and economic elites
- Governments create policies, agreements, and institutions
- Businesses and political leaders help shape regional goals
- Usually involves formal treaties and organizations
- Goals: trade liberalization, political stability, security cooperation, economic development

REAL EXAMPLE: ASEAN

- Governments created ASEAN through the Bangkok Declaration (1967)
- Member states establish regional policies and institutions
- Cooperation evolves as regional interests change

KEY IDEA: Leaders and governments drive regional cooperation from the top.

REGIONALIZATION

Bottom-up regional integration

- Integration develops through everyday interactions
- Driven by local communities, businesses, civil society, universities, and migrant communities
- Connections grow organically, not imposed by governments
- Can create stronger social, economic, and cultural ties
- May eventually develop into formal regional networks

REAL EXAMPLE: ASEAN

- Cross-border trade among small businesses
- Tourism and migration connect Southeast Asian societies
- Students join regional exchange programs
- Popular culture spreads across borders

KEY IDEA: People and communities build regional connections from the bottom up.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Working together without necessarily integrating

- Countries in the same region work together for mutual benefit
- Does not necessarily require common institutions

- Countries can share information, exchange experiences, conduct joint projects, and coordinate policies
- Flexible and open-ended
- Goals can change as regional circumstances change

EXAMPLES

- Joint disaster-response efforts
- Cooperation against transnational crime
- Health cooperation during pandemics
- Environmental and climate initiatives

KEY IDEA: “We work together, but remain largely independent.”

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Moving toward deeper unity

- Sovereign states voluntarily create common institutions
- Reduces barriers between member states
- Encourages movement of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas
- Can involve economic, political, legal, and social integration
- Levels: Free Trade Area → Customs Union → Common Market → Economic Union

REAL EXAMPLE: EUROPEAN UNION

- Common institutions
- Single market
- Free movement of people, goods, services, and capital
- EU law applies in areas covered by EU treaties

KEY IDEA: Countries move from simply cooperating toward sharing rules and institutions.

SUPRANATIONALISM

Power delegated above the national level

- States voluntarily delegate some authority to common institutions
- States give up a portion of their sovereignty for mutual benefit
- Decisions can have authority beyond individual national governments
- Members agree to follow common rules and decisions
- Goes beyond ordinary cooperation between governments

REAL EXAMPLE: EUROPEAN UNION

- EU members accept common EU rules in areas covered by EU law
- EU institutions can make decisions that affect member states
- Eurozone states share control of monetary policy with the European Central Bank

KEY IDEA: “We voluntarily share some authority with a higher regional institution.”

INTERGOVERNMENTALISM

States remain the primary decision-makers

- National governments remain sovereign
- Cooperation occurs through governments
- Decisions are generally based on negotiation and consensus
- No higher authority automatically overrides member states
- States retain control over their domestic affairs

REAL EXAMPLE: ASEAN

- The ASEAN Way: consultation, consensus, respect for sovereignty, non-interference
- ASEAN decisions generally require agreement, not imposition by a supranational authority

KEY IDEA: “Governments cooperate, but sovereignty stays with the states.”

OPEN REGIONALISM

Regional cooperation that supports global trade

- Promotes regional economic cooperation
- Avoids creating unnecessary barriers against outsiders
- Regional cooperation should complement global trade
- Encourages wider participation
- Focuses on outward-looking economic relations

REAL EXAMPLE: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

- 21 member economies
- Promotes free and open trade
- Encourages cooperation across the Asia-Pacific
- Does not function as a closed trading bloc

KEY IDEA: “Build regional ties without closing the door to the rest of the world.”

OLD vs NEW REGIONALISM

OLD REGIONALISM

Main period: 1940s – 1980s (Cold War era)

- State-centered
- Strongly influenced by Cold War politics
- Security and political interests were important
- Often inward-looking and protectionist
- Regional blocs could exclude outsiders

Examples: European Economic Community (EEC), Comecon

NEW REGIONALISM

Main period: 1990s – Present (post-Cold War & globalization)

- More open and outward-looking
- Shaped by globalization and interdependence
- Goes beyond economics (environment, security, culture)
- Involves states and non-state actors
- Complements global institutions and global trade

Example: Today's ASEAN — cooperates on trade, climate, health, security, and culture

KEY IDEA: Old regionalism = security & blocs. New regionalism connects regional cooperation with globalization.

REGIONALISM CONCEPTS AT A GLANCE

Concept	Main Direction	Main Actors	One-Sentence Memory Guide
Regionalism	Top-down	States & elites	Governments start it.
Regionalization	Bottom-up	People, businesses, civil society	People build it.
Regional Cooperation	Collaborative	Governments	Countries work together.
Regional Integration	Deeper unity	States & common institutions	Countries become more connected.
Supranationalism	Authority above states	Supranational institutions	Countries share authority.
Intergovernmentalism	State-centered	National governments	Governments keep authority.
Open Regionalism	Outward-looking	States / economies	Regions stay open to the world.
Old Regionalism	Inward-looking	States	Cold War + protection + blocs.
New Regionalism	Open & multidimensional	States + non-state actors	Globalization + openness + many actors.



Classification of International Governmental Organizations

How can we sort IGOs into types?

HOW CAN IGOs BE CLASSIFIED?

IGOs can be classified in different ways — by where they operate, what they do, and how broadly they operate.

WHERE?

Geographic Scope

Global Whole world

Continental Whole continent

Regional Major geographic region

Subregional Smaller part of a region

WHAT?

Function & Specialization

Functional Specific function, problem, or common interest

Specialized Specific technical or professional field

HOW BROAD?

Geographic Reach

Transregional Crosses multiple regions

Important: These categories can overlap. An IGO may fit more than one classification depending on the basis used.

GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS

Global organizations are IGOs whose membership and activities cover the international community as a whole. They are not limited to a particular continent or region.

UNITED NATIONS (UN)

Established: 24 October 1945

Founding treaty: UN Charter, signed 26 June 1945, entered into force 24 October 1945.

Members: 51 original → 193 today

Why established: After World War II, to prevent another world war and build lasting peace and cooperation.

Main goals:

- Maintain international peace and security
- Prevent and resolve conflicts

- Develop friendly relations among nations
- Promote human rights
- Encourage international cooperation
- Coordinate action on global problems

KEY IDEA: Global organizations serve the whole international community, not just one region.

CONTINENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

DEFINITION

Continental organizations are IGOs whose membership is mainly composed of countries belonging to one continent or a major continental area. Their objectives usually address issues affecting the continent as a whole.

1 African Union (AU)

Established: 9 July 2002

Members: 55 African states

Objectives:

- Promote African unity
- Maintain peace and security
- Advance development

2 European Union (EU)

Established: 1 November 1993

Members: 27 European states

Objectives:

- Political & economic integration
- Single internal market
- Common policies

3 Organization of American States (OAS)

Established: 30 April 1948

Members: 35 states of the Americas

Objectives:

- Promote democracy
- Defend human rights
- Strengthen peace

4 Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

Established: 1 January 2015

Members: 5 — Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia

Objectives:

- Common economic space
- Free movement of goods & labor
- Coordinate economic policy

KEY IDEA: Continental organizations address challenges affecting an entire continent.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

DEFINITION

Regional organizations are IGOs formed by countries within a specific geographic region that share common interests or concerns. The region is generally smaller than a continent.

1 ASEAN

Established: 8 August 1967

Members: 11 — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam

Objectives:

- Economic growth & integration
- Regional peace and stability

2 League of Arab States

Established: 22 March 1945

Members: 22 Arab states

Objectives:

- Strengthen relations among members
- Coordinate policies
- Protect sovereignty

3 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Established: 15 June 2001

Members: 10 — incl. China, India, Russia, Pakistan, Iran

Objectives:

- Regional peace and security
- Counter terrorism
- Economic cooperation

KEY IDEA: Regional organizations serve a specific region smaller than a continent.

SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

DEFINITION

Subregional organizations are IGOs covering a smaller geographic area within a larger region or continent. They usually involve neighboring countries with particularly close economic, political, cultural, or security interests.

1 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

Established: 25 May 1981

Members: 6 — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE

Objectives:

- Coordination & integration among members
- Strengthen economic cooperation
- Regional stability & security

2 Mekong River Commission (MRC)

Established: 5 April 1995

Members: 4 — Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam

Objectives:

- Sustainable development of the Mekong Basin
- Manage shared water resources
- Protect the river ecosystem

KEY IDEA: Subregional organizations serve a smaller cluster of neighboring countries.

FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

DEFINITION

Functional organizations are IGOs established mainly to address a particular function, problem, or area of international cooperation. Their classification is based on what they do, rather than where their members are located.

1 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Established: 4 April 1949

Members: 32 member states

Objectives:

- Provide collective defense
- Maintain peace in the North Atlantic
- Deter and defend against threats

2 Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

Established: 14 September 1960

Members: 12 member states

Objectives:

- Coordinate petroleum policies
- Stabilize international oil markets
- Ensure steady supply of petroleum

KEY IDEA: Functional = organized around a particular function or problem.

SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

DEFINITION

Specialized organizations are IGOs with a specific technical, professional, or sectoral mandate. Many well-known examples are UN specialized agencies, which have their own membership, governing bodies, and budgets while cooperating with the UN.

1 World Health Organization (WHO)

Established: 7 April 1948

Members: 194 member states

Objectives:

- Promote health for all people
- Coordinate responses to health emergencies
- Set international health standards

2 International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Established: 17 May 1865

Members: 194 member states

Objectives:

- Coordinate global telecommunications
- Develop technical standards
- Manage radio spectrum & satellite orbits

KEY IDEA: Specialized = experts and governments cooperating in one specific field.

TRANSREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

DEFINITION

Transregional organizations are IGOs whose membership or activities cross conventional regional or continental boundaries. Instead of being limited to one region, they bring together countries from different regions of the world.

1 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

Established: 1989

Members: 21 member economies across Asia, the Americas, and Oceania

Objectives:

- Promote free and open trade
- Encourage economic cooperation across the Asia-Pacific

2 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Established: 1969

Members: 57 states across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East

Objectives:

- Cooperation among Muslim-majority and Muslim-community states

- Promote shared interests

KEY IDEA: Transregional organizations connect countries from different regions of the world.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Every IGO shares a basic structure

Member states, a plenary assembly, an executive council, and a secretariat — though exact organs vary by treaty.

Regional concepts differ

Regionalism is top-down; regionalization is bottom-up; integration and supranationalism go deeper than simple cooperation.

IGOs are classified by scope, function, and reach

Global, continental, regional, subregional (scope); functional, specialized (function); transregional (reach).

Categories can overlap

One organization may belong to several classifications at once.

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