

CONTEMPORARY WORLD MODULE

LESSON 1: UNITED NATIONS (UN)

Definition

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization established on October 24, 1945 after World War II. Its main goal is to maintain peace and security among nations.

Headquarters

New York City, USA

Objectives of the United Nations

➤ **Maintain international peace and security**

Maintaining international peace and security is the central mission of the United Nations, accomplished through a system of collective security that prohibits the unilateral use of force. This critical mandate is coordinated globally through a series of multi-layered approaches.

Core Mechanisms

The Security Council: Bears the primary responsibility for maintaining peace. The Council can determine threats, order ceasefires, impose economic sanctions, and authorize international military action.

Peacekeeping Operations: Multi-dimensional deployments that assist countries in navigating the difficult path from conflict to peace. Peacekeepers facilitate political processes, protect civilians, and help restore the rule of law.

Preventive Diplomacy & Mediation: Diplomatic missions and special political missions led by the Secretary-General aim to prevent disputes from escalating into armed conflict.

➤ **Promote human rights**

Promoting human rights with the United Nations involves advocating for the principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). You can participate by educating your community, supporting UN Human Rights initiatives, and defending the rights to equality, justice, and dignity for all.

Actionable ways to promote human rights through the UN include:

- **Educate Yourself and Others:** Learn the 30 articles of the UDHR. Share this Illustrated Universal Declaration of Human Rights to make these rights easily digestible for people in your community.
- **Advocate for Equality:** Speak out against discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, or any other status. You can promote fundamental social and economic rights, such as equal pay for equal work and access to education, in your local area.

- **Support Human Rights Defenders:** Stand in solidarity with individuals and civil society organizations working on the front lines to protect fundamental freedoms.
- **Report and Monitor:** Familiarize yourself with the OHCHR to learn how to identify human rights violations and support reporting mechanisms for systemic abuses.
- **Participate in Campaigns:** Engage in annual events like Human Rights Day (December 10) by amplifying official UN campaigns and joining global movements for justice, peace, and sustainable development.

➤ **Encourage friendly relations among nations**

Encouraging friendly relations among nations is a core purpose of the United Nations. It is achieved through diplomacy, peaceful dispute resolution, and global cooperation in human rights, economic development, and international law.

The United Nations champions international friendship and stability through several foundational approaches:

The UN Charter: Established in 1945, the UN Charter requires member states to settle disputes peacefully, respect sovereign equality, and refrain from the threat or use of force.

Peaceful Dispute Resolution: Organizations rely heavily on the Pacific Settlement of Disputes, utilizing negotiation, mediation, and arbitration to prevent escalation into conflict.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: By promoting fundamental freedoms and equal rights globally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes a shared baseline of dignity that helps bridge cultural and political divides.

➤ **Provide humanitarian assistance**

The United Nations provides humanitarian assistance by coordinating emergency relief operations, deploying aid workers, and delivering life-saving supplies to populations affected by armed conflicts, disasters, and crises. The UN's relief network assists millions globally with food, water, medical care, and shelter.

Key UN Humanitarian Agencies

Several specialized agencies handle specific aspects of emergency response and relief:

UN OCHA: The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs brings together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent emergency response.

UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency protects and assists refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and stateless people.

WFP: The World Food Programme delivers emergency food assistance and provides crucial air transport to unreachable areas via UNHAS.

UNICEF: Focuses on children by providing emergency water, sanitation, nutrition, and education in crises.

WHO: The World Health Organization coordinates international responses to health emergencies and disease outbreaks.

➤ **Promote economic and social development**

The United Nations promotes economic and social development primarily through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is driven by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This effort focuses on eradicating poverty while improving health, education, and economic growth through 17 interconnected global objectives.

Core Pillars of Development

The UN's strategy integrates three core pillars of sustainability:

- **Economic Development:** Focuses on creating inclusive, sustainable economic growth, full employment, and decent work for all (e.g., Sustainable Development Goal 8).
- **Social Development:** Addresses human needs, including eradicating poverty (Goal 1), ending hunger (Goal 2), and ensuring good health and equity (Goal 3).
- **Environmental Protection:** Ensures that economic progress and human development do not deplete natural resources or exacerbate climate change.

Key Agencies & Platforms

ECOSOC: The central platform uniting the UN system and its specialized agencies to set global norms, review progress, and formulate policy recommendations.

UNDP: The UN Development Programme works directly with countries to expand people's choices, reduce inequalities, and build resilience.

UN ESCAP: The regional commission for Asia and the Pacific, which collaborates closely with local governments in the Philippines and surrounding regions to improve policy coherence, energy security, and resilient infrastructure.

Main Organs of the UN

General Assembly: Discusses international issues

Security Council: Maintains peace and security

International Court of Justice: Settles disputes between countries

Secretariat: Handles administration

Economic and Social Council: Promotes social and economic cooperation

Specialized Agencies

- WHO – World Health Organization
- UNESCO – Education, Science, and Culture
- UNICEF – Children’s welfare
- IMF – International Monetary Fund

Importance of the UN

The UN helps countries cooperate peacefully and solve global problems such as wars, poverty, and health crises.

LESSON 2: EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

Definition

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union composed of European countries that cooperate for peace and economic growth.

Headquarters

Brussels, Belgium

Objectives of the EU

➤ Promote free trade among member countries

The European Union promotes free trade among its member countries through the EU Single Market, which allows goods, services, capital, and people to move freely without internal borders, tariffs, or customs checks. This integrated system establishes a unified trading bloc that acts as a single entity on the global stage.

How the EU Promotes Internal Free Trade

Abolition of Tariffs: No customs duties or quantitative restrictions are applied on goods traded between EU member states.

The Four Freedoms:

- Goods: Products that meet the standards of one member state can be sold anywhere in the EU.
- Services: Businesses can provide services across borders without having to establish a physical branch in every member country.
- Capital: Investments, bank transfers, and financial transactions can occur freely across the union.
- Persons: EU citizens have the right to live, study, and work in any member country without a work permit.

Global Trade and External Agreements

Beyond the internal market, the EU promotes free trade globally by negotiating trade deals on behalf of all its members. The European Commission negotiates agreements with countries and regional blocs to remove tariffs and open up new markets for EU businesses.

- **Extensive Network:** The EU maintains dozens of individual Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with countries around the world, making it the world's largest trading bloc.
 - **Global Influence:** By operating as a unified bloc, the EU possesses significant leverage to negotiate favorable trade conditions, protect European standards (e.g., food safety and environmental laws), and advocate for fair global trade.
- **Maintain peace in Europe**

The European Union maintains peace in Europe through a multifaceted approach combining economic integration, robust defense readiness, and active global diplomacy. This strategy ensures security and stability across its 27 member states.

The EU's core mechanisms for maintaining peace include:

- **Readiness 2030 Defense Strategy:** In response to heightened geopolitical tensions, the EU is advancing its Readiness 2030 framework to improve joint defense capabilities, eliminate fragmented procurement markets, and establish a cohesive Defense Union.
- **Economic Interdependence:** By fostering a single market, the EU intricately links the economies of member states, making conflict between them economically unviable and structurally obsolete.
- **Diplomacy and Conflict Prevention:** The EU utilizes conflict early warning systems and mediation support to address structural risks of violence before they escalate. It currently deploys nearly 5,000 military and civilian personnel on global Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions.
- **European Peace Facility (EPF):** This off-budget instrument enables the EU to provide equipment, infrastructure, and military assistance to partner countries, as well as finance EU-led peace operations.

➤ Improve economic cooperation

Improving economic cooperation within the European Union centers on deepening the Single Market, boosting digital and green transitions, and strengthening international trade resilience. These initiatives focus on tearing down cross-border barriers and fostering sustainable growth across member states.

Key strategic pathways to strengthen economic collaboration across the EU include:

1. Advancing the Single Market

- **Digital Single Market (DSM):** Unifying digital regulations removes fragmented national rules on data localization, e-commerce, and cybersecurity, allowing tech companies to scale seamlessly.
- **Capital Markets Union (CMU):** Integrating national financial markets makes it easier for businesses to access funding and for cross-border investments to flow, reducing reliance on traditional bank loans.
- **Energy Union:** Expanding cross-border energy grids and infrastructure helps lower utility costs, guarantees supply security, and supports the transition to sustainable energy.

2. Supporting Businesses and Innovation

- **Cutting Red Tape:** Simplifying administrative procedures (like tax compliance and business registration) enables small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to operate across borders more easily.

- **Research and Development:** Collaborative investments in strategic technologies, critical minerals, and green infrastructure enhance long-term economic resilience.

3. Strengthening Global Partnerships

- **International Trade Deals:** Broadening free-trade agreements and strengthening economic security protections help the EU maintain a competitive edge on the global stage.
- **Global Gateway Initiative:** The EU's strategy to invest in sustainable infrastructure worldwide boosts trade links and supports economic growth with international partners like ASEAN, Africa, and Latin America.

4. Cohesion and Regional Development

- **Regional Policies:** The EU targets disparities between member states by funding structural projects in less developed regions to boost employment, education, and overall economic coherence.
- **Create common laws and policies**

EU laws and policies are primarily created by the European Commission, which proposes legislation, and then negotiated and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.

The legislative process and major common policies are structured as follows:

How EU Laws are Created

- **Right of Initiative:** Only the European Commission can propose draft EU laws.
- **The Ordinary Legislative Procedure:** This is the most common method. The European Parliament (representing citizens) and the Council of the EU (representing member state governments) must both agree on the proposal for it to become law.

Types of Legislation:

- **Regulations:** Binding laws that apply automatically and uniformly across all member states on a set date.
- **Directives:** Set goals that all member states must achieve, but each country creates its own national laws to determine how to reach those goals.

Major Common EU Policies

The EU manages common policies in several key areas. Some are exclusive to the EU, while others are shared with member states.

- **The Single Market & Trade:** Policies that ensure the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital. The EU also shares a common commercial policy for international trade agreements.

- **Environmental & Climate Policy:** Aggressive shared policies on climate change, renewable energy, and environmental protection under the European Green Deal.
- **Competition Policy:** Strict rules to prevent monopolies and ensure fair competition among businesses within the EU.
- **Agriculture and Fisheries:** Shared management of farming subsidies (Common Agricultural Policy) and fishing quotas.

Features of the EU

- Common currency called Euro
- Free movement of people and goods
- Common parliament and policies

Advantages of the EU

- Easier travel within Europe
- Better economic opportunities
- Strong political cooperation

Challenges of the EU

- Economic inequality
- Immigration concerns
- Brexit

LESSON 3: FREEDOMS OF THE AIR

Definition

Freedoms of the Air are international aviation rights that allow airlines to use another country's airspace.

These freedoms support international transportation and global travel.

Main Freedoms of the Air

- **First Freedom:** Right to fly over another country without landing
- **Second Freedom:** Right to land for technical purposes
- **Third Freedom:** Right to carry passengers from home country to another country
- **Fourth Freedom:** Right to carry passengers back to home country

- **Fifth Freedom:** Right to carry passengers between two foreign countries

IMPORTANCE

- Promotes international tourism
- Supports global business
- Improves transportation systems

LESSON 4: WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

Definition

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an international organization that regulates global trade among nations.

Established

January 1, 1995

Headquarters

Geneva, Switzerland

Objectives of the WTO

- **Promote free and fair trade**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) promotes free and fair global trade by negotiating multilateral agreements, reducing tariffs and trade barriers, and enforcing a structured dispute settlement system to prevent protectionism. It operates on core principles of non-discrimination to ensure a predictable and level playing field for all member nations.

Key Mechanisms to Promote Trade

- **Trade Negotiations:** Members convene regularly to establish or update global trade rules, covering everything from agriculture and services to intellectual property.
- **Dispute Resolution:** Provides an established framework for countries to resolve trade conflicts impartially, ensuring agreements are honored and retaliation is mitigated.
- **Policy Monitoring:** Regular reviews of member countries' trade policies help identify unfair subsidies or illegal dumping, ensuring transparency and fair competition.
- **Capacity Building:** Technical assistance and training programs are provided to help developing economies integrate smoothly into the global trading system.

Core Principles

The WTO's framework relies on fundamental doctrines designed to balance free trade with fair practices:

- **Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN):** Requires members to treat all other members equally, preventing countries from arbitrarily favoring specific trading partners over others.
- **National Treatment:** Ensures that imported and locally produced goods are treated equally once they enter the domestic market.
- **Fair Competition:** Rules governing subsidies and "dumping" allow governments to impose additional import duties to compensate for damages caused by unfair foreign market tactics.
- **Reduce trade barriers**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) reduces global trade barriers primarily through negotiated, consensus-driven agreements that lower tariffs, eliminate quotas, and streamline customs. Members commit to the principle of non-discrimination, ensuring stable, predictable, and transparent trading environments while resolving disputes through formal adjudication.

Key Mechanisms for Reducing Barriers

- **Progressive Tariff Reduction:** Members participate in negotiating "rounds" to progressively cut duties (taxes) on goods, making imports cheaper and reducing the cost of living.
- **Eliminating Quantitative Restrictions:** The WTO discourages the use of import quotas and bans, which historically created red tape and market distortions.
- **Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA):** Accelerates the movement, release, and clearance of goods across borders, reducing transit times and logistics costs.
- **Services Liberalization:** Addresses non-tariff barriers in the service sector by improving regulatory transparency and market access.

Guiding Principles

- **Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) Treatment:** WTO members must treat all other members equally, meaning a trade advantage granted to one country must be extended to all.
- **National Treatment:** Imported and locally produced goods must be treated equally once they have entered the market.
- **Special and Differential Treatment:** The WTO provides developing and least-developed nations with longer timeframes to implement commitments and offers support to build trade capacity.

➤ **Resolve trade disputes**

Trade disputes are resolved at the World Trade Organization (WTO) through the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), which ensures member countries adhere to negotiated trade agreements. The process relies on clear, rules-based adjudication to prevent conflicts and keep global trade flowing predictably.

The WTO dispute resolution process follows three main stages:

1. Consultations

- What happens: The complaining member submits a formal request to consult with the responding member to find a mutually agreed solution.
- Timeframe: Up to 60 days.
- Outcome: If consultations fail, the complainant can request the DSB to establish an independent panel.

2. Panel Adjudication

- What happens: The DSB appoints 3 to 5 independent experts to review the case, examine written submissions, and hold hearings.
- Timeframe: Approximately 6 months.
- Outcome: The panel issues an interim and final report with its findings and recommendations, which are then formally adopted by the DSB unless a party decides to appeal.

3. Appellate Review & Implementation

- What happens: Either side can appeal the panel's legal findings (e.g., interpretation of WTO agreements) to the Appellate Body.
- Timeframe: 60 to 90 days.
- Outcome: The losing party must bring its laws or practices into conformity with WTO rules. If the defending party fails to comply, the complaining party may seek authorization to implement retaliatory trade measures (such as counter-tariffs).

➤ **Encourage economic development**

The World Trade Organization (WTO) encourages economic development by establishing predictable global trade rules, dismantling market barriers, and integrating developing nations into the global economy. Its primary development mechanisms include:

- **Special and Differential Treatment (SDT):** The WTO allows developing and least-developed countries (LDCs) extra time to implement complex trade agreements and grants them exemptions to help build their domestic capacities.
- **Aid for Trade:** The WTO collaborates with international agencies to coordinate financial and technical assistance, helping developing countries build the vital infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and workforce skills needed to compete globally.
- **Market Access:** Through multilateral negotiations, the WTO works to lower tariffs and eliminate trade-distorting subsidies, helping smaller economies secure a larger, fairer share of international trade.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The WTO actively aligns its trade policies with the UN's 2030 Agenda to promote poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and job creation

Functions of the WTO

Negotiates trade agreements

Settles trade conflicts

Reviews trade policies

Assists developing countries

Importance of the WTO

The WTO helps maintain smooth international trade and supports economic cooperation among countries.

LESSON 5: WORLD ORGANIZATIONS

Definition

World organizations are international groups formed to address global concerns and strengthen cooperation among nations.

Examples of World Organizations

Organization Main Function

- WHO - Global health and disease prevention
The World Health Organization (WHO) is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. Its main function is to lead global efforts in expanding universal healthcare, direct the world's response to health emergencies, and promote general human well-being.
- IMF - Financial stability
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) works to achieve global macroeconomic and financial stability. It fulfills this main mission through three primary functions: Surveillance (monitoring the global economy), Lending (providing financial support to crisis-hit countries), and Capacity Development (technical assistance and training).
- World Bank - Economic development
The World Bank's main function is to reduce global poverty and promote sustainable economic growth in developing countries. It achieves this by providing governments with three core services:
 - Financial Assistance: Providing low-interest loans, grants, and credits to fund capital projects like infrastructure, education, and healthcare.
 - Policy Advice: Assisting nations with economic reforms to improve public services and attract private investment.
 - Technical Assistance: Offering specialized knowledge, research, and project implementation support
- ASEAN - Regional cooperation in Southeast Asia
The main function of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in Southeast Asia while promoting regional peace and stability.
- NATO - Defense and military alliance
NATO's primary function is to serve as a transatlantic political and military alliance that safeguards the freedom and security of its member countries. It links North America and Europe to protect against military threats and promote democratic values through collective defense and crisis management.

Importance of World Organizations

- Promote peace and cooperation
- Solve international problems
- Support economic development
- Encourage international agreements

