



## **FACT SHEET:** **WHAT the UNITED NATIONS DOES and WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP**

### **WHAT THE UNITED NATIONS DOES**

The United Nations is an organization of 193 sovereign States. These states have voluntarily joined the UN to coordinate efforts for a safer world for this and future generations, promote friendship among all nations and support economic and social progress.

Cooperating in these efforts are specialized agencies, programmes, funds, special committees, subcommittees and other bodies, known together as the UN System. The Organization works on a broad range of fundamental issues, from sustainable development, environment and refugee protection, disaster relief, counter terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, to promoting democracy, human rights, gender equality and the advancement of women, governance, economic and social development and international health, clearing landmines, expanding food production, and more.



Learn more: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

#### **Learn about the UN:**

- ✓ Take a guided tour of UN Headquarters in New York or UN Offices in Geneva or Vienna. Learn more at: <http://visit.un.org>
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### **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**



"The currents of change are transforming our human and physical geography. They are driving not just incremental but exponential change. They are deeply connected and increasingly complex. To ensure that our generation and future generations benefit from the opportunities presented by this changing reality and are able to mitigate increased risks, the global community will need to work together in unprecedented ways".  
Learn more: [www.un.org/sg](http://www.un.org/sg)

## Peacekeeping

In 2011, over two dozen United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions worked to provide security and stability, facilitate political processes, protect civilians, help refugees return, support elections, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants, and promote human rights and the rule of law.

UN Peacekeeping began in 1948 when the Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to the Middle East. Since then, 66 peacekeeping operations have been deployed by the UN, 53 of them since 1988.

By January 2012, UN Peacekeeping operations had more than 119,000 military, police and civilian staff serving in 15 UN peacekeeping operations and one special mission, UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

The nature of conflicts has changed over the years. UN Peacekeeping, originally developed as a means of dealing with inter-State conflict, is increasingly being applied to intra-State conflicts and civil wars. Today, peacekeeping operations are multidimensional and are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians; assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections; protect and promote human rights; and assist in restoring the rule of law.

Learn more: [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/)



## Setting standards

### Standing up for Human Rights

The United Nations sets international standards for the rights of minorities, women and children; monitors abuses; and generates international pressure on governments to improve their human rights records. Since the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Organization has helped to enact dozens of comprehensive agreements on political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, such as:

- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Learn more: [www.un.org/en/rights/](http://www.un.org/en/rights/)

Learn more about UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: [www.ohchr.org/](http://www.ohchr.org/)

## Promoting Women's Rights



One of the United Nations' long-term goals is to improve the condition of women. The UN made history as UN Women, the new UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, officially began its work in 2011. UN Women emerged from an agreement by UN Member States – backed by strong advocacy from the global women's movement - recognizing that more must be done so that all women can claim equal rights and opportunities.

Learn more: [www.unwomen.org/](http://www.unwomen.org/)

## Combating Terrorism

The United Nations has put in place the legal framework to combat international terrorism. Global conventions negotiated under UN auspices include treaties against hostage-taking, airplane hijacking and terrorism financing.

Learn more: [www.un.org/terrorism/](http://www.un.org/terrorism/)

Learn more about the UN Office on Drug and Crime: <http://www.unodc.org/>

## Protecting the Environment

The United Nations brings governments together to work on climate change, air and water pollution, depletion of natural resources, and many other environmental concerns. 2012 has been declared as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All.

Learn more: [www.un.org/en/events/sustainableenergyforall/](http://www.un.org/en/events/sustainableenergyforall/)

Learn more about the UN Environment Programme: [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

In 2012, more than 40,000 people – including parliamentarians, mayors, UN officials, chief executive officers and civil society leaders – attended the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, from 20-22 June. The outcome document, entitled "The Future We Want," represents countries' renewed political commitment to sustainable development. It calls for a wide range of actions, including detailing how the green economy can be used as a tool to achieve sustainable development; promoting corporate sustainability reporting measures; taking steps to go beyond gross domestic product to assess the well-being of a country; developing a strategy for sustainable development financing; and, adopting a framework for tackling sustainable consumption and production.

Learn more: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

## Helping in Emergencies

The United Nations organizes humanitarian relief and food supplies for millions of refugees, who are victims of famine, natural disasters and conflicts. The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with 35 offices around the world, is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian



action to alleviate human suffering in disasters and emergencies; advocate for the rights of people in need; and facilitate sustainable solutions. Humanitarian teams in 20 countries are currently aiming to reach some 62 million people. In the first half of 2012, a major new crisis emerged in the Sahel countries, with spreading food insecurity and malnutrition, and in the north of Mali, where conflict is leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Conflict, food insecurity and malnutrition have worsened in Yemen. South Sudan has had an accelerating influx of refugees and returnees, in addition to people being displaced by fighting and mounting food insecurity. Learn more: <http://ochaonline.un.org/>

### **Fighting Poverty**

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) works to make real improvements in people's lives and in the choices and opportunities open to them. Guided by the Millennium Declaration and its key benchmarks for measuring progress – the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - UNDP promotes inclusive development and works to reduce poverty in all its dimensions. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with countries to devise their own solutions to development.

Learn more: [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

Learn more about MDGs: <http://on.undp.org/>

### **Harmonizing Actions**

The United Nations helps countries coordinate and set rules promoting safe air travel, the protection of copyrights and patents, the determination of satellite positions and radio frequencies, and international postal regulation.

Learn more: [www.un.org/en/law/](http://www.un.org/en/law/)

### **Preventing Nuclear Proliferation**

Through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations has helped minimize the threat of a nuclear war by inspecting nuclear reactors in more than 145 countries, in order to ensure that nuclear material is not used for military purposes. Three main pillars underpin the IAEA's mission: safety and security; science and technology; and safeguards and verification. IAEA tracks compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving general and complete disarmament.

Learn more about IAEA: [www.iaea.org](http://www.iaea.org)

Learn more: [www.un.org/disarmament/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/)

### **Building Democracy**

The United Nations helps countries conduct free and fair elections. The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an inter-governmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict, and is a key addition to the capacity of the international community in the broad peace agenda. In war-torn societies, the UN works to build lasting peace and strengthen states. A good example is the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) ending more than 20 years of war. A key part of the agreement was a referendum in January 2011, for which the UN provided technical assistance, whereby the people of southern Sudan voted for either unity with Sudan or secession. In July 2011, the UN General Assembly admitted South Sudan as the 193rd member of the UN.

Learn more: [www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/](http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

### **Get involved – Volunteer your time**

As a volunteer, you could help contact lawmakers, raise funds, organize meetings and find partners for joint projects. You could even organize or participate in UN-related events in schools and in other settings. United Nations Associations (UNAs), set up in many countries to build support for the work of the United Nations, coordinate some of these efforts. Similarly, National Committees for UNICEF function as non-governmental organizations, to help mobilize greater support for UNICEF.

Learn about UNA-USA, which is now a part of the UN Foundation: [www.unausa.org/](http://www.unausa.org/)

Learn about UNICEF National Committees: [www.unicef.org/about/structure/index\\_natcoms.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/index_natcoms.html)

Learn about the UN Volunteers programme: [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org)

### **Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

As an inter-governmental body, the UN relies primarily on Member States but also welcomes grassroots initiatives to promote its work and ideas. Hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rally support for the UN and influence legislation at the national level. Among these are organizations such as Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders, Lions Clubs and Rotary International. Find an organization working on issues you care about and get involved.

## Donate Money

Almost 80% of United Nations resources are directed at promoting peace, building democracy, achieving higher standards of living and fostering economic and social progress. On the next page we have compiled a list of some of the organizations that will benefit from your help.

### **Not an Official Document • For Information Only**

This fact-sheet has been issued by:

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>United Nations</b></p> <p>The United Nations accepts financial contributions that are consistent with the policies, aims and activities of the Organization.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> United Nations Treasury, Room: M-19000 New York, NY 10017</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)</b></p> <p>The main advocate for global action on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS leads, strengthens and supports an expanded response to the epidemic.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> UNAIDS, Resource Mobilization 20, Avenue Appia CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland <a href="http://www.unaids.org/">www.unaids.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)</b></p> <p>OCHA helps to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors in order to alleviate human suffering and disasters in emergencies; advocates for the rights of people in need; promotes preparedness and prevention; and facilitates sustainable solutions.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> United Nations OCHA Room M-06020 New York, NY 10017 <a href="http://ochaonline.un.org/">http://ochaonline.un.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)</b></p> <p>UNICEF works for the protection, survival and development of children. Two thirds of its funding is provided by government contributions, and one third by public support.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> UNICEF House, Programme Funding Officer, 3 UN Plaza, 12<sup>th</sup> floor -New York, NY 10017 <a href="http://www.unicef.org/">www.unicef.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)</b></p> <p>UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them to generate their own solutions to global and national development challenges.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> UNDP, Division for Resource Mobilization One United Nations Plaza New York, NY 10017 <a href="http://www.undp.org/">www.undp.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)</b></p> <p>UNESCO's Co-Action Programme assists small grass-roots projects in the developing world, using funds raised from individuals and groups in industrialized nations. The initiatives are on a human scale and change the lives of local people.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> UNESCO New York Office 2 United Nations Plaza Room: DC2-900, New York, NY 10017 <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</b></p> <p>UNHCR provides shelter, food and medical assistance to millions of refugees worldwide. From Kosovo to Mozambique, UNHCR's operations are almost entirely funded by voluntary contributions.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> UNHCR, Case Postale 2500 CH-1211 Genève 2 Dépôt, Switzerland <a href="http://www.unhcr.org/">www.unhcr.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)</b></p> <p>UNFPA promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. It supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> UNFPA Resource Mobilization Branch 220 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 23 Floor New York, NY 10017 <a href="http://www.unfpa.org/">www.unfpa.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>UN Women</b></p> <p>UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, is a dynamic and strong champion for women and girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> 304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor New York, NY 10017 Tel: +1 212 906-6400; Fax: +1 212 906-6705 <a href="http://www.unwomen.org">www.unwomen.org</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>World Food Programme (WFP)</b></p> <p>WFP provides relief food to the neediest and supports development activities through food for work programmes. It also helps meet emergency food needs created by natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> Friends of WFP 1819 L Street, NW, Suite 900 Washington, D.C. 20036 <a href="http://www.wfp.org/">www.wfp.org/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>World Health Organization (WHO)</b></p> <p>WHO welcomes contributions from individuals and organizations. You may indicate that your contributions be sent "wherever needed most" or for specific programmes, such as AIDS, parasitic diseases, diarrhea, nutrition, water supply, etc.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Send contributions to:</b> WHO, Regional Office for the Americas 525 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW Washington, DC 20037-2897 <a href="http://www.who.int/">www.who.int/</a></p>