

BRIEFING BOOK

MEETING THE MOMENT:
THE U.S. AND THE UN



2023



Introduction

Each year, the Better World Campaign (BWC) and the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) build support for U.S. policies that reinforce U.S. engagement with the United Nations and educate people about the real benefits the U.S. receives through our relationship with the UN. In 2023, we are working with the Biden Administration and 118th Congress to accomplish the following, so that the UN can better address the transnational challenges of the 21st century:

ENSURE

Ensure payment of outstanding arrears and full funding of our nation's UN regular budget and peacekeeping assessments on time and without conditions

PROMOTE

Promote U.S. assistance to UN peacekeeping operations to strengthen each mission's capabilities in logistics, training, doctrine, and management expertise

SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight the value of UN funds, programs, and agencies in advancing U.S. interests

ADVANCE

Advance constructive engagement on structural and management reforms at the UN and the continued implementation of ongoing reforms

ADVOCATE

Advocate for full U.S. engagement with key UN bodies

ENCOURAGE

Encourage action toward achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015

SUPPORT

Support U.S. Senate ratification of key multilateral agreements

The United States and the United Nations: A Critical Partnership to Tackle Global Challenges

More than three-quarters of a century ago, in the wake of the deadliest and most destructive conflict the world has ever witnessed, the United States and its allies came together to establish a new intergovernmental body, the United Nations. Tasked with preventing and suppressing threats to international peace and security, encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and facilitating cooperation on a broad suite of international economic, social, and humanitarian issues, the UN became a core component of the international order that the U.S. helped build and maintain after World War II. And while the world has changed significantly since 1945, the UN's role as a force multiplier for the United States—a key platform for multilateral diplomacy to mitigate conflict, as well as for marshalling the necessary resources and political will to address challenges that no country is capable of resolving alone—remains as vital as ever.

The work of the UN and its large family of affiliated agencies, programs, and initiatives covers a wide set of issues and advances core American national interests in myriad ways. These include:

- **Peacekeeping operations** deployed to conflict zones and tasked with ensuring stability, protecting civilians from violence, facilitating humanitarian assistance, supporting democratic elections, and helping to lay the foundation for sustainable long-term peace. As one of five permanent, veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, the U.S. effectively has final say over the decision to deploy UN peacekeepers, and U.S. diplomats play a central role in crafting the mandates the peacekeepers are expected to carry out. UN peacekeeping operations have been repeatedly shown to be effective in reducing civilian deaths, preventing conflicts from spreading over borders, and averting the recurrence of large-scale violence once fighting has stopped.
- **Special political missions** in Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere that mediate peace talks between warring parties, monitor and investigate human rights violations, train and provide technical assistance to election administrators and other key democratic institutions, and coordinate international humanitarian and development assistance.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO)**, a UN specialized agency, which works to coordinate the international response to public health threats, including global pandemics.
- **UN humanitarian agencies**, which provide lifesaving assistance every year to tens of millions of people around the world impacted by armed conflict, political instability, natural disasters, and other calamities. Through the work of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), and others, the UN system functions as the world's 911 service, providing food, shelter, clean water, cash assistance, vaccines, educational support, and reproductive health care to some of the world's most vulnerable people.
- **UN human rights mechanisms**, which help investigate and expose human rights violations around the world and provide a tool for pressuring repressive governments and holding abusers accountable.



On April 20, 2022 in Kharkiv, Ukraine, a man places his hand to the window of a train car as he says goodbye to his wife and children before they depart on a special evacuation train.
Photo Credit: Ashley Gilbertson/UNICEF

Over the past year, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has violated the foundational principles enshrined in the UN Charter—the treaty that established the UN—and challenged the international security order it sought to create. The UN system has responded forcefully to the war and its fallout: UN humanitarian agencies are on the front lines delivering lifesaving aid to the Ukrainian people; the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council have acted to isolate Russia diplomatically and begin the process of investigating and ensuring accountability for war crimes; the International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN specialized agency, is working to help avert potential disaster at Ukraine's nuclear power plants; and the UN has helped negotiate and oversee an international agreement that ended a Russian blockade and has allowed Ukraine to export agricultural products to global markets. Without these and other activities, the situation for people inside Ukraine and for millions more around the world would undoubtedly be far worse.

It is difficult to see how any of these actions would be possible without strong U.S. engagement and support—political, financial, and otherwise. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the UN's largest financial contributor, and host of UN Headquarters, the U.S. has long played a more powerful role than most other Member States in driving the UN's agenda. By that same token, the U.S.—as a global economic and military superpower—also depends a great deal on the efforts of the UN and other international organizations to create a more stable, just, healthy, and peaceful world. While Congress and the Administration have recognized this and made significant progress recently in restoring U.S. leadership at the UN, there is still work to be done. For example, the U.S. still carries well over \$1 billion in peacekeeping arrears inherited from policy decisions made during the Trump Administration. Failing to meet our financial obligations to the UN not only harms critical programs that advance American interests and values, but also sends a signal to our global competitors, particularly China and other authoritarian governments, that the door is open for them to influence the organization in a way that more closely aligns with their own national interests. To prevent this, the U.S. must persist in concentrating on robust and constructive engagement with the UN and the rest of the international system that it worked so hard to create in the middle of the 20th century.

To underscore the importance of U.S. engagement with the UN, this briefing book provides information on various aspects of the UN's work and how it advances U.S. interests. It is our hope that this book can serve as a helpful resource—both for policymakers and members of the public—as the U.S.-UN relationship continues to play out over the coming year.

The UN in Ukraine

“I want the Ukrainian people to know that the world sees you, hears you, and is in awe of your resilience and resolve. I also know that words of solidarity are not enough. I am here to zero in on needs on the ground and scale up operations. I am here to say to you, Mr. President, and to the people of Ukraine: We will not give up.”

– UN Secretary-General António Guterres, during a news conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, April 28, 2022

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to widespread devastation, killing thousands of Ukrainian civilians, causing the displacement of more than 14 million people, leaving upwards of 18 million in need of humanitarian assistance, and severely damaging the country's economy. Beyond Ukraine, Russia's illegal and brutal war has put significant stress on the international security order, revived fears of nuclear conflict, and exacerbated a global food security crisis that has left tens of millions of people hungry. Even before Russian troops and tanks crossed the border on February 24, 2022, the world was facing significant challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change to long-running conflicts and humanitarian crises in Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere. Russia's actions created new layers of complexity, danger, and horror for an already stressed international community.

The UN Security Council was established by the UN Charter to exercise “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” Unfortunately, Russia's status as one of the five permanent veto-wielding members of the Security Council has prevented the Council from fully discharging this role regarding Ukraine. Nevertheless, the UN system as a whole has responded forcefully to the war and its fallout: UN humanitarian agencies are on the front lines delivering lifesaving aid to the Ukrainian people; the UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council have acted to isolate Russia diplomatically and begin the process of investigating and ensuring accountability for war crimes; the International Atomic Energy Agency is working to help avert potential disaster at Ukraine's nuclear power plants; and the UN has helped negotiate and oversee an international agreement that ended a Russian blockade and allowed Ukraine to export agricultural products to global markets. Without these and other activities, the situation for people inside Ukraine and for millions more around the world would undoubtedly be far worse. Below is a more detailed picture of the UN's multifaceted efforts to address the war in Ukraine and its global impacts.



Photo Credit: Brendan Hoffman/Getty Images

Providing Humanitarian Relief Inside Ukraine

From the outset of the war, the UN Refugee Agency, UN Children's Fund, UN Population Fund, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, and other UN humanitarian agencies have been leading international efforts to provide lifesaving aid to Ukrainian civilians. This includes, among many other types of interventions:

- Working to reach hundreds of thousands of people in recently liberated and newly accessible areas of the Kharkiv, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions with ready-to-eat rations, canned goods, bread, pasta, flour, cooking oil, and other types of food aid;
- Providing cash assistance to internally displaced people across Ukraine to help cover the costs of food, rent, clothing, hygiene items, and other basic necessities;
- Delivering emergency medical supplies to Ukrainian hospitals, as well as vaccines to prevent outbreaks of measles, rubella, polio, and other vaccine-preventable diseases; and
- Providing psychosocial support to women and girls who have been victims of gender-based violence.

In recent months, a sustained campaign of Russian drone and missile attacks has destroyed nearly half of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, leaving millions of Ukrainians lacking steady access to heating, electricity, and water. In response, UN humanitarian agencies and their partners have been providing generators to keep hospitals open and functioning, supporting centers for displaced people to keep warm, helping Ukrainian authorities convert thousands of facilities into temporary heating points, and giving Ukrainian civilians blankets, mattresses, and other critical household items.

Isolating Russia Diplomatically and Pursuing Accountability for Human Rights Violations

While the Security Council has not been an ideal avenue for action over the past year, **the U.S. and its allies have repeatedly turned to the General Assembly to demonstrate widespread international opposition to Russia's actions.** For example, on March 2, 2022, the General Assembly met in emergency session and voted 141-5 to adopt a U.S.-supported resolution denouncing Russia and calling on it to "immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw" all of its military forces from Ukraine. In a subsequent vote in April, the General Assembly suspended Russia's membership on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), marking the first time a permanent member of the Security Council had its membership in a UN body revoked. In October, the Assembly voted 143-5 to condemn Russia's attempted annexation of four Ukrainian regions, and in November, it adopted a resolution calling on Russia to pay reparations to Ukraine. It also called for the establishment of an international register to document claims and information on damage, loss, and injury resulting from the Russian invasion.



The General Assembly stands for a moment of silence during the first plenary meeting of the eleventh General Assembly Emergency Special Session on Ukraine. At dais are, from left to right: Secretary-General António Guterres; Abdulla Shahid, President of the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly; and Movses Abelian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).
Photo Credit: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

The UNHRC has also been a key forum for international action against Russia. Within days of the start of the war, the Council met in emergency session and **overwhelmingly adopted a U.S.-supported resolution establishing an Independent Commission of Inquiry (COI) to investigate war crimes committed during the conflict and preserve evidence "for future legal proceedings."** After the vote, Ukraine's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva warned that, "Those from Russia directing and committing violations against my people should be paying attention. The evidence is going to be collected; you are going to be identified, and you are going to be held to account." In September 2022, the COI presented the Council with its most extensive evidence of war crimes to date, detailing indiscriminate attacks on civilians, executions, torture, gender-based violence, and other acts committed by Russian forces in the Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Sumy regions. The COI's work could ultimately aid efforts by the International Criminal Court and other judicial bodies to prosecute those who have perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict.



UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, meets Liudmyla, 65, at her destroyed home in Makariv.
Photo Credit: Andrew McConnell/UNHCR

The UNHRC has also trained its spotlight on human rights violations inside Russia itself, approving a resolution sponsored by the European Union in October 2022 **to establish a special rapporteur to investigate arbitrary arrests, crackdowns on civil society and independent media, limitations on freedom of speech and assembly, and other abuses committed by the Russian government against its own citizens.** This is the first time since the Council's creation that it has authorized a special rapporteur to look specifically into the human rights record of a permanent member of the Security Council.

Protecting Global Food Security

Prior to the war, Ukraine was one of the world's breadbaskets, producing enough food to feed 400 million people every year. Together, Ukraine and Russia accounted for nearly one-third of the world's wheat exports, and in 2019, Ukraine provided 16% of the world's corn and 42% of its sunflower oil.

At the beginning of the invasion, however, when the Russian navy blockaded Ukraine's Black Sea ports, the country's ability to ship its agricultural products to world markets dropped precipitously. This worsened a global food security crisis already underway due to the pandemic, climate change, and armed conflict in other places, leading to price inflation and shortages that threatened the lives of people in countries that were most dependent on Ukrainian agricultural exports, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.



Secretary-General António Guterres travelled to Istanbul and oversaw the departure of two ships involved in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a UN-brokered operation to bring urgently needed hunger relief to the Horn of Africa.
Photo Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

Given the stakes, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Turkey led negotiations between Ukraine and Russia to come up with a solution. Their efforts bore fruit in July when the parties announced the Black Sea Grain Initiative, an agreement that ended the blockade and allowed for the safe passage of commercial ships carrying agricultural exports from Odesa and two other Ukrainian ports. Since the announcement of the deal and the beginning of the first shipments in August, more than 17.8 million tons of grain and other agricultural products have been able to leave Ukraine, helping to drive down global food prices by 15% since their peak in March and injecting much-needed revenue into the Ukrainian economy. Initially set to expire in mid-November, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was renewed for an additional 120 days.

Taking Steps to Prevent a Nuclear Disaster

Ukraine is heavily dependent on nuclear energy: prior to the Russian invasion, 16 reactors across four nuclear power plants produced more than half of the country's electricity. Unfortunately, the war has increased the risks that these facilities will be caught up in the fighting, potentially precipitating a nuclear accident. As such, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is playing a central role in efforts to ensure the safety of these facilities.



Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), briefs reporters on the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.
Photo Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

In September 2022, the agency dispatched inspectors to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is in Russian-occupied territory close to the front lines and has been subjected to repeated episodes of shelling. Two IAEA officials remain at the facility as part of a continuous international presence there, and the IAEA continues to negotiate with both sides for a demilitarized "protection zone" around the plant to prevent future incidents of shelling. In December, the agency announced that it would install permanent teams of safety and security experts at all other nuclear stations across Ukraine, including the defunct Chernobyl plant, in response to Russia's growing attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Advancing U.S. Economic Interests

While the UN is often primarily thought of as an organization focused on international peace and security, global economic cooperation is a crucial component of its work, and has been since the very beginning. Article 55 of the UN Charter mandates the organization to promote “higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development” as well as “solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems.” This reflected the conviction of the UN’s founders that global economic interdependence and prosperity were essential to help prevent the outbreak of another devastating world war.

UN technical and specialized agencies are a critical part of the organization’s efforts to promote multilateral economic cooperation. By establishing international rules and guidelines for everything from intellectual property, to telecommunications, to air travel and postal delivery, UN specialized agencies provide a “soft infrastructure” of universal standards that help American businesses access foreign markets and compete globally. The work of several of these agencies is reflected below.

- **International Civil Aviation Organization:** ICAO enables safe air travel everywhere by setting global standards for navigation, communication, and airline safety. These standards map out airspace jurisdiction and establish “free range” airspace over oceans and seas. The agency also sets international standards for limiting environmental degradation and works to strengthen aviation security by conducting regular audits of aviation security oversight in ICAO Member States.
- **International Maritime Organization:** IMO sets international safety standards for ships, ports, and maritime facilities; develops ship design and operating requirements; and leads global efforts to prevent maritime pollution. Standards promulgated by IMO are central to the health of the U.S. economy, as more than 90% of all international trade is carried out on ships. IMO also works with Member States to address piracy, terrorism, and other security threats to the international shipping industry.
- **World Intellectual Property Organization:** According to the U.S. Patent and Trade Office, intellectual property-intensive industries directly and indirectly support more than 45.5 million jobs in this country, constituting 30% of all employment. WIPO encourages innovation and economic growth through the registration and protection of patents, copyrights, and other forms of intellectual property, as well as through adjudication of cross-border disputes on intellectual property.
- **International Telecommunication Union:** ITU facilitates the connectivity and interoperability of the world’s telecommunications networks, which is of critical importance to the U.S. telecommunications industry and American defense and intelligence communications capabilities. By allocating radio spectrum and satellite orbits, as well as developing technical standards to ensure that networks interconnect seamlessly, ITU helps make communicating possible even in some of the world’s most remote locations.
- **Universal Postal Union:** UPU facilitates postal service across the globe, helping Americans conduct business everywhere, from Beijing to London to São Paulo. By setting standards for the worldwide postal system and promoting affordable basic postal services globally, UPU enables U.S. businesses to utilize the postal system to conduct business at low costs. UPU always plays an important role in mail security and is taking steps to combat the trafficking of illicit drugs, particularly opioids, in the mail.

Contracting with U.S. Businesses

The UN Secretariat has 40,000 staff and a large global presence, with 12 peacekeeping missions and dozens of other field missions around the world. To carry out its global operations, the UN purchases an array of goods and services, including telecommunications equipment, financial services, construction, food production, medical care, office equipment, and armored vehicles, from private vendors. According to the United Nations Global Marketplace, the UN purchased more than \$2.33 billion in goods and services from U.S. companies in 2021 (the most recent year for which data is available), the most of any country. This represented a 20.6% increase over the previous year.

Economic Benefits for New York

In addition to contracting with American companies, the UN generates billions of dollars in revenue each year for New York City, which hosts UN Headquarters. A 2016 report by the New York City Mayor’s Office for International Affairs found that the **UN boosts the local economy by \$3.69 billion each year, the equivalent of hosting more than seven Super Bowls annually.**

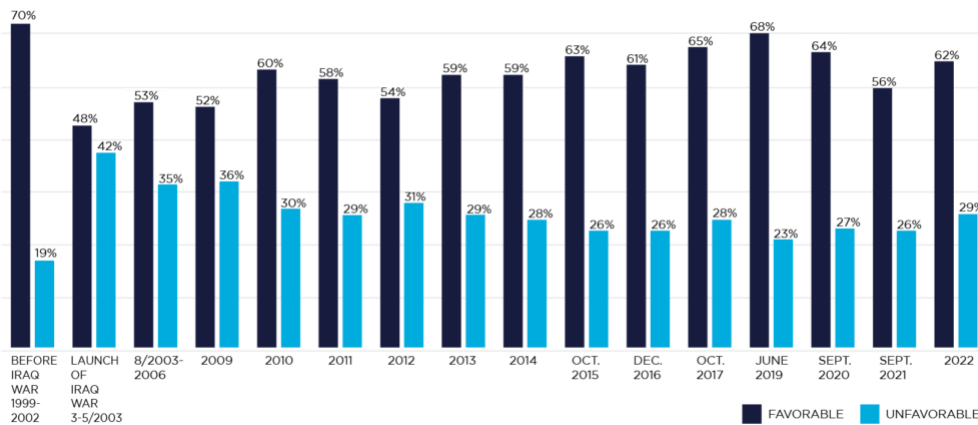
American Attitudes Toward the UN

Over the course of two decades, the Better World Campaign has surveyed American voters on their opinion of the United Nations: Do Americans feel favorably about the organization? Do they believe the UN is needed today? Do they support the paying of dues to the UN? Since 2009, the Better World Campaign has conducted this research through the bipartisan team of Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates.

In 2022, U.S. voters' favorable opinions of the United Nations grew considerably from the year before: 62% of those polled had a favorable opinion of the UN, an increase from 56% in 2021.

UN Favorability over time

Each year we include a topical question among our standard questions. While we cannot say for certain what is responsible for the increase in Americans' positive sentiment overall, this year's topical question offers a clue. With the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine being felt across the world, we asked American voters whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "The United Nations is playing a positive role in Ukraine." A majority of U.S. voters, 52%, responded that they believe the United Nations is playing an important role in Ukraine.



In a follow-up question, we presented a list of the UN's functions in Ukraine and asked respondents to choose the most important function. Republicans and Democrats alike chose "establishing humanitarian safe zones for civilians and delivery of humanitarian aid."

Most Important UN Functions In Ukraine

- **29%** Establishing humanitarian safe zones for civilians and delivery of humanitarian aid
- **23%** Providing food and shelter for Ukrainian refugees and displaced people
- **14%** Monitoring Ukraine's nuclear facilities
- **8%** Negotiating grain shipments to address the hunger crisis
- **6%** Providing emergency health care to Ukrainians
- **3%** Assisting Ukrainian farmers with crops
- **3%** Raising money to help Ukrainians
- **6%** All of the above
- **8%** Don't know/Wouldn't answer

After learning the scope of the UN's actions in Ukraine, favorable opinions of the UN's work overall increased significantly, from 52% to 63%. The increase was especially notable among independent voters, whose approval of the UN's work in Ukraine jumped 19 points.

| | % Agree Initially | % Agree After Hearing UN Actions |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ALL VOTERS | 52% | 63% |
| Republicans | 43% | 54% |
| Independents | 40% | 59% |
| Democrats | 67% | 77% |

Some findings have remained roughly consistent over the years. Roughly 7 in 10 voters (69%) believe the UN is still needed today. Roughly 3 in 4 voters believe it is better for the U.S. to work with allies and through international organizations (74%) than to act mainly on its own (21%) when it comes to achieving U.S. foreign policy goals. This viewpoint holds true across partisan lines (Republicans: 61%, Independents: 66%, Democrats: 92%). Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that most voters continue to support the U.S. paying its assessments for the UN regular budget (67% favor) and for the UN peacekeeping budget (65% favor) on time and in full.

Providing Humanitarian Assistance

For the world's most vulnerable people, the UN functions as a global 911 service—a first responder that helps deliver food, shelter, clean water, medical assistance, and education to those caught in the middle of deadly conflicts or suffering in the aftermath of natural disasters. Given its high degree of international legitimacy, capacity, and reach, the UN is uniquely positioned to coordinate and lead these types of relief efforts.



Photo Credit: Marco Dormino/UN Photo

2022, unfortunately, demanded more from the UN's diverse network of first responders than any year in recent memory, and the needs in 2023 are again expected to outpace the preceding 12 months. In fact, the UN's Global Humanitarian Overview for 2023 calls for \$51.5 billion to reach 230 million people in need—an increase of \$10.5 billion from the initial 2022 target released before the invasion of Ukraine.

While the world's most desperate crises share many traits—violent conflict, economic instability, health disparities—one collective challenge unites them all: severe food insecurity. Across the planet, the largest food crisis in modern history is quickly exploding, creating compounding challenges and reversing critical development gains. As many as 828 million people go to bed hungry every night and the number of those facing acute food insecurity has soared from 135 million in 2019 to 345 million today. Below are four examples of how the UN tackled these complex food insecurity challenges in 2022 and is working collaboratively to mount expanded responses in 2023.

Haiti

Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, Haiti has been trapped in a severe political, economic, and humanitarian crisis.

Armed gangs have transformed Port-au-Prince into a sea of lawlessness, paralyzing the lives of ordinary citizens who struggle every day to evade random killings, rape, torture, and—most prevalent of all—extreme hunger. In one of the most stunning developments, in September 2022 gangs seized control of a critical oil terminal that supplies the country with 70% of its diesel—an essential commodity in a nation with no working electrical grid. Although police regained control of the site two months later, fuel costs have continued to soar and, as of December 2022, public transportation prices were 200% higher than the previous year, putting immense upward pressure on food prices and severely limiting Haitians' ability to procure even the most basic dietary staples.

In that same month, two of the four warehouses run by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Haiti were looted, pillaged, and burned; \$6 million worth of relief assistance, including 2,000 tons of food, was stolen. Against this chaotic backdrop, however, the UN and its partners have continued their work. WFP reached over 1 million Haitians in 2022 with food commodities, hot meals, cash-based transfers, and other forms of lifesaving assistance. WFP also leveraged its UN Humanitarian Air Service to deliver fuel to hospitals and health centers that are treating people suffering from a deadly resurgence of cholera. Other UN humanitarian agencies, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and UN Population Fund, distributed hundreds of thousands of gallons of drinking water, baby supplies, therapeutic foods, and other essentials.

The needs, however, continue to rise. Haiti began 2023 with half of the country's population (approximately 4.7 million people) in all-out food crisis, with nearly 20,000 people suffering "catastrophic" levels of food insecurity, and half of all children (2 million) not in school. Absent a significant improvement in the security situation, the UN is scaling up its response to these mounting challenges. The UN has set a goal of reaching 3 million people over the year, which will include expanding school feeding programs and take-home rations, increasing treatment of severe acute malnutrition in children, promoting infant and young child feeding practices, and improving access to sanitation and hygiene services, among many other key targets.

Sri Lanka

2022 was a disastrous year for the people of Sri Lanka. The country suffered an all-out economic collapse, triggering nationwide shortages of food, fuel, and medicine.

Beginning in April, lines for gas and cooking fuel snaked miles around Colombo, and families were forced to significantly reduce their food portion sizes, with many reporting they were skipping meals entirely. The lack of these necessities and a disastrous national experiment in organic agricultural practices, in turn, sparked social chaos and political turmoil. In April, the parliament declared a state of emergency. In July, the Prime Minister declared that Sri Lanka was effectively bankrupt. A week later, the president fled the country on a military jet.

By the end of year, the multidimensional crisis had caused the cost of food to increase by 64.4% and reduced agricultural production by a further 40% as fertilizer, feed, veterinary supplies, and other essential production inputs became increasingly scarce. According to the World Bank, Sri Lanka is now among the 10 countries most affected by food inflation, with an annual rate of 81%. As a result, the UN reports that 36% of the country's population (approximately 7 million people) are food insecure—a situation that is anticipated to worsen.

Since the start of emergency operations in mid-2022, the UN has leveraged its presence to respond to this sudden, unprecedented situation, reaching 1.8 million people in need across all of its agencies, funds, and programs. WFP has delivered lifesaving assistance to 1.1 million people, including reaching almost 500,000 people with cash assistance and nearly 100,000 with in-kind assistance. WFP additionally distributed rice to thousands of schools around the country, ensuring some 500,000 children weren't forced to study while hungry. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) also scaled up its emergency and resilience interventions, reaching nearly 250,000 people across 62,000 households, including distributing 2,381 tons of fertilizer to over 45,000 farming households and providing cash transfers of approximately \$1.4 million to 15,000 households.

Food insecurity in Sri Lanka is projected to continue in 2023, with another poor harvest season forecast and no immediate off-ramp to the country's severe debt crisis. The UN's revised response plan for the country calls for immediate food assistance for 2.4 million vulnerable and food insecure people; provision of support and fertilizers for 1.5 million farmers and fishers; and nutrition support for 2.1 million people, including pregnant women and children.

Madagascar

While often underreported, Madagascar is suffering through what has been referred to as potentially the world's first climate change famine—a massive humanitarian crisis sparked, in part, by prolonged drought, sandstorms, cyclones, and other extreme weather.

The impacts of these conditions have decimated agricultural production and left an estimated 2 million people in acute food insecurity and 500,000 children under the age of 5 suffering from acute malnutrition.

Agriculture is the backbone of Madagascar's economy, accounting for 25% of its GDP and employing 80% of the population. With lives and livelihoods both severely jeopardized by the crisis, the island nation has become one of the five countries most affected by hunger and malnutrition, according to the 2022 Global Hunger Index. This dire reality has pushed people in the country's south, known as the Grand Sud, to pursue desperate survival measures such as eating locusts, grass, or leaves, and it has forced children to leave school to help their families forage for food.

Thanks to robust U.S. funding, the UN has been able to significantly expand its response to the crisis, reaching more than 1 million people in 2022 with in-kind food assistance, malnutrition treatment, and direct technical support to vulnerable

smallholder households. In 2023, the UN's focus will remain on saving lives and alleviating suffering due to the drought and cyclone crises, with a focus on food security, nutrition, health, potable water, hygiene supplies, and sanitation services. At the same time, partners will ensure the centrality of protection and education, with schools serving as a safe haven for drought-affected children as well as a vital entry point for referrals to other programs, including nutrition.

Burkina Faso

An ongoing war with extremist groups linked to Al-Qaeda and ISIS has killed thousands of civilians and made Burkina Faso home to one of the largest displacement crises in the world.

The federal government's inability to stem the violence led to two military coups in 2022, in January and in September. As a result, humanitarian needs in Burkina Faso—already one of the poorest countries in the world—are rising fast. By the end of 2022, approximately 25% of the population (nearly 5 million people) was in need of emergency assistance, an increase of 40% from the beginning of the year. Internal displacement and insecurity have left communities isolated from the rest of the nation, cutting people off from their livelihoods and triggering rampant hunger. The UN itself has been affected by political instability, with Burkina Faso's government ordering the expulsion of the top UN official in the country in December.

In the face of these challenges, UN humanitarian action is making a difference. In the first nine months of 2022, the UN and its partners delivered food assistance to 1.8 million people in Burkina Faso and supported 740,000 people with access to health care in areas where health facilities have closed and medical supplies are lacking. The UN also provided access to water, hygiene, and sanitation to 550,000 people and nutritional support to 421,000 children and new and expectant mothers.

Unfortunately, though, Burkina Faso is unlikely to see any major reduction in humanitarian demands in 2023, requiring the UN and partners to do more to mobilize resources to reach crisis-affected populations, including providing nutritious food to school-age children and supporting smallholder farmers affected by insecurity and recurrent climate shocks.

Confronting the Climate Emergency: Creating a Sustainable and Just Future

The climate crisis is the defining issue of our time. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.

Over the past two centuries, modern energy, agriculture, and industrial practices have greatly increased the level of heat-trapping greenhouse gases (especially carbon dioxide and methane) in the atmosphere. There is broad scientific agreement that the world is warming as a result, with damaging and unpredictable impacts on weather. The world is already experiencing the effects of unchecked climate change, including increasingly severe storms and wildfires, extreme droughts, and devastating floods threatening people, ecosystems, and economies.

The Role of the UN

The UN is at the forefront of the effort to save our planet. In 1992, its Earth Summit led to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a first step in addressing the climate crisis. The treaty committed signatories to avoiding dangerous human interference with the climate system and reducing emissions commensurate with their levels of development. U.S. President George H.W. Bush signed the treaty, and the Senate unanimously ratified it.

In 1998, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) founded the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to provide governments with the best scientific information so policymakers could develop sound climate change policies. In 2014, the IPCC provided more clarity about the role of human activities in climate change when it released its Fifth Assessment Report. Its conclusion: Climate change is real, and human activities are the main cause.

The IPCC's report, released in February 2022, found that the impacts of climate change are already more widespread and severe than expected; that even if the world rapidly decarbonizes, some climate impacts are unavoidable; and that for every one-tenth of a degree of warming above 1.5°C above preindustrial levels, threats to biodiversity, food security, and access to clean water, among other things, rise dramatically.

Climate Negotiations

After years of negotiations facilitated by the UNFCCC, including the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and the Copenhagen Accord in 2009, a breakthrough was achieved with the Paris Agreement in 2015.

The agreement charted a new course in global climate efforts by bringing all nations together for the first time under a common framework to combat climate change. The agreement's central aim is to keep the global temperature rise well below 2°C above preindustrial levels while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

The agreement is based on national action plans, called nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which are to be strengthened over time every five years starting in 2020. The agreement also reaffirmed a commitment to mobilize \$100 billion each year from public and private sources to help developing economies limit their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Challenges and Steps Forward

Despite the adoption of the Paris Agreement, given the enormity of the task of putting the world on a low-GHG emissions trajectory, progress has been slow. Each of the past eight years was the hottest on record, and recent reports have found that global emissions continue to rise, even in light of the slowdown of the global economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

After a yearlong delay because of the pandemic, world leaders, representatives of the private sector, and activists gathered for COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 to take stock of progress, finalize the rules of the Paris Agreement, and chart a path forward. While leaders made some tangible progress, significant gaps remained, especially in the ambition and implementation of the pledges countries put forward. To keep temperatures from rising above 1.5°C, emissions in developed economies will need to continue to decrease rapidly, while emissions in emerging and developing economies such as China and India will need to quickly peak and then also similarly plummet. Unfortunately, that is still not the most likely scenario, and much more work will need to be done to ensure that national actions match international promises.



Secretary-General António Guterres (left at podium) briefs reporters on the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Ethiopia and the upcoming UN Climate Conference (COP27) at UN Headquarters.
Photo Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

In November 2022, parties to the UNFCCC gathered for the COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. During this discussion, delegates agreed to create a fund to compensate developing economies for loss and damage resulting from the impacts of climate change. This agreement, coming on the heels of historic floods that devastated large swaths of Pakistan and were exacerbated by climate change, is a product of the recognition that while 20 of the world's wealthiest countries produce 80% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, small-island and low-income countries are bearing the brunt of the most severe climate change impacts. Delegates agreed to negotiate over the coming year basic details around which countries will pay into the fund and which ones will be eligible to benefit. As with everything else, the success of this agreement will ultimately come down to implementation and the willingness of countries, including the U.S., to meet their international commitments.

On the domestic front in the U.S., President Biden has established an ambitious goal of reducing the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 from a 2005 baseline. The goal is seen by experts as achievable with the right mix of climate regulation and legislation. In August 2022, President Biden signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act, billed as "the single biggest climate investment in U.S. history." Through tax credits and other provisions, the law is intended to increase the growth of renewable energy, drive greater demand for electric vehicles and other low-carbon technologies, support forest restoration and climate-resilient agricultural practices, and pursue other means of addressing climate change. According to the Administration, all told, the bill could put the U.S. on a path to reducing emissions by as much as 40% by 2030.

In another significant development, in September 2022, the Senate approved U.S. ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the 1987 Montreal Protocol, a UN treaty that seeks to phase down the use of hydrofluorocarbons. HFCs, which are used in air conditioners and other types of refrigeration, are greenhouse gases that are hundreds to thousands of times more powerful than carbon dioxide, and restricting their use in line with the Kigali Amendment will avoid 4.6 billion tons of emissions by 2050. Ratification was supported by a diverse coalition of organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, and Natural Resources Defense Council. The Chamber stated that ratification "would enhance the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers working to develop alternative technologies, and level the global economic playing field." That is because the world's leading producers of substitutes for HFCs are in the United States, while the world's fastest-growing markets for refrigerators and air conditioners are overseas.

Ultimately, climate change is a crisis that transcends national borders and puts at risk the health, safety, and livelihoods of people around the world. As such, it demands a multilateral response, involving all countries large and small, rich and poor.

Given its convening power and mandate to catalyze collective solutions to international challenges, the UN will continue to be a critical partner in efforts to reduce emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change worldwide.

Global Health

For decades, the United Nations has been actively involved in promoting and protecting health worldwide. With a visible presence in more than 190 countries, key UN agencies including the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and World Health Organization (WHO) have the reach to deliver assistance in every corner of the globe. The UN works closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, and governments to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages, helping to achieve many U.S. foreign policy and development objectives.

The extraordinary impact of the convergence of COVID-19, related economic shocks exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, and multiple complex crises around the world has driven global health needs higher than ever. Below are several major areas where the U.S. and UN are working together to promote better health around the world.

Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed both the interconnectedness and fragility of global health architecture and the necessity of being better prepared for the next public health emergency. Global action spearheaded by the U.S., UNICEF, WHO, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, successfully procured and delivered more than 1.85 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine to 146 countries. At the same time, however, the pandemic severely delayed child immunization and malaria campaigns around the world, disrupted supply chains for global health interventions and personal protective equipment, and triggered major health workforce shortages. This resulted in the biggest decline in childhood immunization in the past 30 years and the largest rise in malaria deaths in 20 years.

The U.S. government is negotiating with other countries at the World Health Organization and at the UN in New York to reform the global health architecture and protect national sovereignty. The reforms would create initiatives to ensure better preparation for and response to disease outbreaks, strengthen the health workforce, and apply lessons learned from the partnerships developed during the depths of the pandemic, including:

- Establishment of a pandemic preparedness and response fund at the World Bank. The fund seeks to incentivize countries to identify and close health capacity gaps and create more inclusive, country-driven collaboration.
- Increase investment and coordination in vaccine research and development through U.S. National Institutes of Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and the private sector, as well as scaling up manufacturing for rapid access to vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics, especially in Africa.
- Increase the resilience of health systems to stressors and shocks by increasing access to primary health care.

Negotiations on a new instrument for pandemics will continue throughout 2023 and will be long and complex. It is imperative to keep sustained energy and commitment to turn the lessons learned from COVID-19 into long-term solutions.

Polio

Since 1988, when the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) was set up, polio cases have plummeted by 99% globally. In 2020, thanks to sustained funding from the U.S. government through leading UN partners like UNICEF and WHO and the coordinated efforts of GPEI, Africa was certified as polio-free, leaving only two remaining endemic countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, recent detections of wild polio in Malawi and Mozambique, as well as vaccine-derived poliovirus in wastewater in New York and London underscore that if poliovirus exists anywhere in the world, it is a threat to every country.

To counter the risk of both wild and vaccine-derived poliovirus, GPEI launched an ambitious new strategy over 2022-2026. The strategy has two main goals: to permanently interrupt all poliovirus transmission in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to stop vaccine-derived poliovirus transmission and prevent outbreaks (largely in Africa) by the end of 2023.



Photo Credit: Allison Shelley/Emic Films for UNF

Childhood Immunizations

Over the past 20 years, UNICEF, with the U.S. as its largest contributor, has helped reach more than 760 million children with lifesaving vaccines. The agency's large purchasing power cut in half the cost of the pentavalent vaccine that protects tens of millions of children from diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, and other potentially deadly infectious diseases.

Due to COVID-19, in 2021, an estimated 25 million children missed out on lifesaving vaccines, 2 million more than in 2020 and 6 million more than in 2019. Of these 25 million, 18 million received no vaccine whatsoever. While efforts have been made to catch up, it is clear that investing in strong immunization programs and health workforce enhances humanitarian outcomes by reducing the spread of infectious diseases in fragile settings. It is also extremely cost-effective: every dollar invested in childhood immunization yields up to \$52 in savings for low- and middle-income countries in health costs, lost wages, and economic productivity.

The U.S., CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF, and WHO have been working to respond to disruptions in the global supply chain caused by COVID-19. From the development and delivery of vaccines to combat COVID-19, polio, or measles, to promising vaccine candidates against malaria and HIV/AIDS, these actors are working with manufacturers and implementing partners to improve vaccine procurement, as well as freight, logistics, temperature management, storage, and delivery in countries.

Women's Health

Since restoring funding to UNFPA at the start of the Biden Administration, the U.S. has helped the organization deliver lifesaving services to millions of women and girls worldwide. Unfortunately, there has been little progress to end preventable maternal deaths and fill the unmet need for family planning. Each year, more than 303,000 women and girls die from largely preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Additionally, 214 million women would like to delay or avoid pregnancy but do not have access to contraception. Access to modern methods of contraception would decrease unintended pregnancies by 70%, maternal deaths by 67%, and newborn deaths by 77%.



Photo Credit: Allison Shelley/Emic Films for UNF

Around the world, UNFPA provides safe birthing and dignity kits after disasters, helps install solar lighting in refugee camps to deter gender-based violence, and provides contraceptives in more than 150 countries to prevent maternal mortality and improve the status of women. As

the world continues to face an unprecedented pandemic and numerous crises, UNFPA plays an irreplaceable role in the provision of reproductive and maternal health services, gender empowerment programs, and other critical services in humanitarian emergencies.

UNFPA was a significant actor in combating COVID-19, including providing needed personal protective equipment in countries and helping victims of gender-based violence. In Ukraine, UNFPA has aided women escaping the horrors of Russia's invasion, including helping expectant mothers whose maternity wards were bombed and dispatching mobile hospitals to provide sexual and reproductive health services around the country. UNFPA also operates 172 Family Health Clinics in Afghanistan where women can receive needed services, even as rights for women continue to be narrowed by the Taliban-led government.



Photo Credit: Eskinder Debebe / United Nations Photo

HIV/AIDS and the Global Fund

The U.S. is one of the largest contributors to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and is the largest funder of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund), key programs to fight the AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS has been an essential partner of the U.S. government since the launch of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in 2003 and plays a critical role in global efforts to end the AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS helps articulate the vision and mobilize the political will and resources that support U.S. goals and priorities: saving lives, achieving epidemic control, and increasing global burden-sharing.

Programs supported by the Global Fund since its inception in 2002 have helped save more than 44 million lives. In 2020, the Global Fund provided 21.9 million people living with HIV and AIDS antiretroviral therapy; treated 4.7 million people for TB; and distributed more than 188 million insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria, a 17% increase despite the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The Seventh Replenishment for the Global Fund concluded in September 2022 with a record number of pledges. Beyond supporting the global COVID-19 response and fighting the three diseases, the Global Fund's efforts to help build health infrastructure around the world has enabled countries to more quickly identify and respond to new disease threats and prevent these diseases from spreading to other countries.

Malaria

The U.S. has long prioritized combating malaria. Through global cooperation and attention, the rate of malaria-related deaths has plummeted by more than 50% worldwide since 2000. This progress was made possible by U.S. leadership through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), as well as U.S. contributions to and partnership with the Global Fund, the Roll Back Malaria partnership, UNICEF, and WHO.

While countries have worked hard to hold the line against further setbacks to malaria prevention, testing, and treatment during the pandemic, the recently released WHO World Malaria Report 2022 still shows malaria infections were higher in 2021 than pre-pandemic levels. In 2021, 619,000 people died from malaria, out of 247 million cases. About two-thirds of the additional deaths were linked to disruptions in the provision of malaria services during the pandemic.

These staggering numbers underscore the importance of sufficient funding for malaria research and development, and the development and rollout of insecticide-treated bed nets, antimalarial drugs, surveillance tools, and rapid diagnostic tests. WHO approved its first-ever malaria vaccine-RTS-S, which could make a major reduction in the annual toll of the disease.



Confronting the Climate Emergency: Creating a Sustainable and Just Future

The climate crisis is the defining issue of our time. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.

Over the past two centuries, modern energy, agriculture, and industrial practices have greatly increased the level of heat-trapping greenhouse gases (especially carbon dioxide and methane) in the atmosphere. There is broad scientific agreement that the world is warming as a result, with damaging and unpredictable impacts on weather. The world is already experiencing the effects of unchecked climate change, including increasingly severe storms and wildfires, extreme droughts, and devastating floods threatening people, ecosystems, and economies.

The Role of the UN

The UN is at the forefront of the effort to save our planet. In 1992, its Earth Summit led to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a first step in addressing the climate crisis. The treaty committed signatories to avoiding dangerous human interference with the climate system and reducing emissions commensurate with their levels of development. U.S. President George H.W. Bush signed the treaty, and the Senate unanimously ratified it.

In 1998, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) founded the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to provide governments with the best scientific information so policymakers could develop sound climate change policies. In 2014, the IPCC provided more clarity about the role of human activities in climate change when it released its Fifth Assessment Report. Its conclusion: Climate change is real, and human activities are the main cause.

The IPCC's report, released in February 2022, found that the impacts of climate change are already more widespread and severe than expected; that even if the world rapidly decarbonizes, some climate impacts are unavoidable; and that for every one-tenth of a degree of warming above 1.5°C above preindustrial levels, threats to biodiversity, food security, and access to clean water, among other things, rise dramatically.

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UN Peacekeeping: A Force for Global Stability

For more than seven decades, UN peacekeeping has been one of the most important tools the UN has at its disposal for conflict mitigation and stabilization. Helping countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace, peacekeeping has unique strengths, including high levels of international legitimacy and an ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates. Today's peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to stabilize conflict zones and separate warring parties but also to protect civilians from violence; assist in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections; protect and promote human rights; and help restore the rule of law.



Photo Credit: Gemma Cortes / United Nations Photo

UN peacekeeping operations are authorized by the UN Security Council, and the U.S. has long used its position as a permanent member of that body to advocate for broadening the size and scope of peacekeeping mandates to more effectively meet the world's evolving security and civilian protection challenges. Both Republican and Democratic presidents have recognized the value of UN peacekeeping, because:

Peacekeepers save lives and reduce conflict

As a [November 2021 article](#) in Foreign Affairs explains, "Decades of academic research has demonstrated that peacekeeping not only works at stopping conflicts but works better than anything else experts know. Peacekeeping is effective at resolving civil wars, reducing violence during wars, preventing wars from recurring, and rebuilding state institutions. It succeeds at protecting civilian lives and reducing sexual and gender-based violence. And it does all this at a very low cost." The article also notes that, "to convince other countries to contribute financially, the United States needs to set a better example by paying its own assessed dues."

Peacekeeping missions are cost-effective

The U.S. Government Accountability Office found in separate reports issued in 2006 and 2018 that UN operations are one-eighth the cost to American taxpayers of deploying comparable U.S. missions. Overall, at a total yearly cost of just over \$6 billion, UN peacekeeping operations as a whole are less than half the annual budget of Rhode Island.

Peacekeeping promotes multilateral burden-sharing

Because the UN has no standing army, UN Member States voluntarily contribute troops and police to its peacekeeping operations. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the U.S. plays a central role in decisions to authorize and deploy peacekeeping missions. The U.S., however, provides just several dozen of the 73,000 total uniformed personnel. A number of countries — including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania — provides most of the rest.

Key UN Peacekeeping Missions Currently in the Field

There are currently more than 90,000 peacekeepers (soldiers, police, and civilians) serving in 12 missions across Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and South Asia.

These include operations in:

South Sudan

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was first deployed in 2011, when South Sudan gained independence, tasked with helping to stabilize the world's newest country and support state-building efforts. Two years later, when civil war erupted between military factions supporting the President and Vice President, UNMISS was forced to quickly pivot to civilian protection. Opening the gates of its bases to fleeing civilians saved the lives of more than 200,000 people who otherwise could have been targeted or killed for their ethnicity or perceived political affiliations. In 2018, the main parties to the conflict concluded a peace agreement, and while implementation has been haltingly slow, threats facing civilians have diminished considerably in some areas. As a result, UNMISS is currently focused on protecting civilians from more localized subnational violence in the country, supporting efforts to promote implementation of the peace agreement, and facilitating humanitarian assistance to the population, nearly two-thirds of whom are facing food insecurity.

Lebanon

The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has long worked to reduce tensions along the Blue Line separating Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL's Tripartite Forum, which features monthly meetings between the UNIFIL Force Commander and senior officials of the Israeli and Lebanese militaries, is the only formal mechanism where representatives of the two countries meet at any level. This is an important tool for facilitating communication and information-sharing and formulating peaceful solutions to disagreements, reducing the risk of flare-ups and providing an off-ramp when tensions escalate. UNIFIL also monitors the border through regular patrols to detect ceasefire violations, deploys troops to locations where incidents occur to ensure that the situation is contained, and undertakes demining activities in areas near the Blue Line, which is heavily contaminated by unexploded ordnance that pose a threat to civilians. Such activities are vital to ensuring stability in a volatile and strategically important region.

Cyprus

The UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was created to help stem fighting between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, most notably maintaining a buffer zone separating Turkish forces in the north and Greek Cypriot forces in the south. While the conflict remains frozen, UNFICYP's presence has been critical to preventing a resumption of fighting between the forces, which almost certainly would draw in other global powers on each side. In addition to helping maintain the ceasefire, the UN has worked to support ongoing peace talks between the two sides.

UN Political Missions

In addition to peacekeeping operations, the UN operates special political missions (SPMs) engaged in conflict prevention, mediation, and post-conflict peacebuilding around the world. Authorized by the Security Council, SPMs are tasked with an array of responsibilities, including supporting political dialogue and reconciliation processes, facilitating free and fair elections, monitoring human rights violations, coordinating international development and humanitarian assistance, and encouraging the development of effective rule of law institutions. Funded by Member State dues, SPMs account for nearly one-quarter of the UN regular budget. The work of several SPMs currently in the field is highlighted below.

Afghanistan

First deployed in 2001 after the U.S. invasion, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has supported numerous activities critical to the country's stability and development over the years. In the wake of the Taliban's seizure of power in August 2021, the UN's work in Afghanistan has become significantly more complicated. However, the UN remains focused on coordinating the delivery of critical humanitarian and development assistance to Afghan civilians, who continue to experience historic levels of economic dislocation and food insecurity. Overall, nearly 24.4 million Afghans—60% of the population—required humanitarian assistance in 2022, a number that is projected to rise to 28.3 million this year, and more than 20 million Afghans are experiencing high or critical levels of food insecurity.

After the fall of the internationally recognized government, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) worked to prevent the collapse of the country's health system by directly paying the salaries of 25,000 doctors, nurses, and other health care workers across 2,200 health facilities. UNDP also established a program, supported by the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan, to finance a variety of local activities, including grants to support small businesses, especially those run by women; cash-for-work projects offering short-term income to the unemployed to restore local infrastructure; and basic income support to people with disabilities, elderly people, and other vulnerable individuals. This program, known as ABADEI, seeks to help 2 million people over the next two years, and like the efforts to pay health care workers, provides assistance directly to beneficiaries, thereby skirting the Taliban authorities. Beyond these efforts, the UN has worked to respond to the broader humanitarian crisis in the country, providing food and nutrition assistance, clean drinking water, shelter, vaccines, and other lifesaving forms of humanitarian assistance to millions of Afghans over the past year.



Ramiz Alakbarov (on screen), Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, briefs the Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

Photo Credit: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

UNAMA also continues to track human rights violations in the country and has persistently called on the Taliban to ensure equal rights for women and girls, including access to education, work, and freedom of movement. Building off of this work, the UN Human Rights Council voted in late 2021 over Chinese and Russian objections to establish a special rapporteur to investigate abuses committed by the Taliban. The

Council renewed this position in October 2022 and sharpened its mandate to place greater emphasis on documenting violations of the rights of women and children, a particularly important area of concern given the Taliban's ban on secondary and university education for girls and women.

Somalia

For more than two decades, Somalia has been in a protracted state of political and humanitarian crisis, a situation further complicated by the presence of Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaeda. In order to help stabilize the country, the U.S. supports the work of UNSOM, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia. UNSOM provides policy advice and technical assistance to Somalia's internationally recognized federal government on a range of critical state-building issues, including aiding efforts to create a new constitution; building the government's capacity to carry out security sector reform and strengthen the criminal justice system; helping Somali authorities institute a nationwide disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program for ex-combatants; and promoting negotiations among Somalia's disparate political and regional groups. The UN has also worked alongside the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to strengthen the ability of the Somali Police Force to carry out criminal investigations and counter Al-Shabaab.



Somalia's Federal Minister of Women and Human Rights Development, Khadija Mohamed Diriye, speaks during the launch of the National Action Plan for Women in Maritime Sector (WIMs) in Mogadishu, on 15 February 2023.

Photo Credit: UN Photo / Steven Candia

UNSOM coordinates its efforts closely with a force led by the African Union (AU) that has fought alongside Somali security forces to secure territorial gains against Al-Shabaab in recent years. The UN Support Office for Somalia, which works with UNSOM, provides crucial equipment and logistical support to AU forces as they seek to weaken Al-Shabaab and help extend the Somali government's authority throughout areas controlled by the group. The AU mission, which is in the process of transitioning all security responsibilities to Somali forces, is authorized by the UN Security Council to operate through 2024.

Colombia

In 2016, the Colombian government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas signed a historic peace agreement, ending a devastating 57-year civil war that had cost more than 220,000 lives. To support the agreement, the UN Security Council authorized a special political mission, initially to verify the end of hostilities and the FARC's disarmament and subsequently to verify other aspects of the peace deal, including the demobilization and reintegration of 13,000 former FARC combatants into society. The mission is also charged with supporting the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a transitional justice mechanism set up to prosecute the perpetrators of crimes during the conflict. Implementation of the peace agreement has been slow and marked by setbacks as violence against former FARC combatants, human rights defenders, and Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities continues to be a significant concern, as does violence perpetrated by other armed groups in the country. But the disarmament and demobilization of the FARC has helped bring a level of stability to Colombia not seen in decades. It also has provided a jumping-off point for addressing the deeper root causes of insecurity in the country. As a monitor of the peace agreement, the UN will continue to have an important role in pressuring all parties to live up to their commitments in the year ahead.

The UN Human Rights Council

The fight for human rights has been a core tenet of the UN's mission since its inception. The UN's human rights work is multifaceted and carried out by an array of entities, one of the most significant of which is the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Composed of 47 Member States elected to three-year terms by the General Assembly, the Council passes resolutions on country-specific human rights situations, orders inquiries, holds special sessions to respond to emergencies, and appoints independent experts. While the Council's decisions are not legally binding, they do carry important moral weight and can be used as a tool for naming and shaming human rights abusers.

Since the Council's establishment in 2006, U.S. engagement has ebbed and flowed from administration to administration. In June 2018, the Trump Administration withdrew from the Council, accusing the body of anti-Israel bias and pointing out that some authoritarian states are members. In 2021, the Biden Administration reversed this policy, winning election to the Council in October. The U.S. took its seat in January 2022.

While the UNHRC is not perfect, history has shown that the U.S. is far more effective in improving the Council's record when it is a member. For example, when the U.S. was fully engaged in the Council's work from 2010 to 2018, it made progress on several fronts.



The proportion of country-specific resolutions targeting Israel declined by 30% during U.S. membership versus the previous three-year period under the Bush Administration (2006-2009) when the U.S. was not a member.

The number of special sessions devoted to Israel also fell considerably, from six during the first three years of the Council's existence, to just two during the subsequent eight years when the U.S. was engaged. Of special note, Item 7 of the Council's permanent agenda, which subjects Israel to unique scrutiny, came about in 2007, again when the U.S. had decided to shun the Council.

When resolutions targeting Israel under Agenda Item 7 did come up, fewer countries voted for them when the U.S. was a member of the Council.

In March 2018, just three months before the U.S. resigned its seat, the State Department itself reported "the largest shift in votes towards more abstentions and no votes on Israel-related resolutions since" the Council's creation.

During the years when the U.S. was engaged, the Council deepened and broadened its repertoire, adopting resolutions strongly supported by the U.S. on a range of pressing human rights issues.

This included the creation of groundbreaking Commissions of Inquiry (COIs) to investigate human rights violations in Syria and North Korea, the establishment of a special rapporteur to monitor the human rights situation in Iran, and the authorization of the first-of-its-kind independent expert focused on combating violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Since returning to the Council at the beginning of 2022, the U.S. has built on this prior record of successful engagement, working with allies and other like-minded countries to notch wins on a broad range of country-specific human rights priorities. Several of these are discussed in greater detail below.

Ukraine

Within days of Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the UNHRC met in emergency session and overwhelmingly adopted a U.S.-supported resolution establishing a COI to investigate war crimes committed during the conflict and preserve evidence "for future legal proceedings." The vote was 32-2, with 13 abstentions, highlighting Russia's international isolation. In September 2022, the COI presented the Council with its most extensive evidence of war crimes to date, detailing indiscriminate attacks on civilians, executions, torture, gender-based violence, and other acts committed by Russian forces in the Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Sumy regions. The COI's work could ultimately aid efforts by the International Criminal Court and other judicial bodies to prosecute those who perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict.

Russia

The UN's reaction to the war in Ukraine extended beyond the creation of the COI. In a vote on April 7, 2022, the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to suspend Russia's membership on the UNHRC, marking the first time a permanent member of the Security Council had its membership in a UN body revoked. In October 2022, the Council turned its attention to human rights violations inside Russia itself, approving a resolution sponsored by the European Union to establish a special rapporteur to investigate arbitrary arrests, crackdowns on civil society and independent media, limitations on freedom of speech and assembly, and other abuses committed by the Russian government against its own citizens. This is the first time since the Council's creation in 2006 that it has authorized a special rapporteur to look specifically into the human rights record of a permanent member of the Security Council, marking a milestone in Russia's international isolation.

Venezuela

On October 7, 2022, the UNHRC voted to adopt a U.S.-supported resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela—an entity established in 2019 to assess the human rights situation in the country—for an additional two years. Prior to the Council's vote, the mission released a hard-hitting report which concluded that "President Nicolás Maduro, supported by other high-level authorities, stand out as the main architects in the design, implementation and maintenance of a machinery with the purpose of repressing dissent." Anderson Sequera, a Venezuelan political analyst, called it "the most blunt report when it comes to pinpointing who's responsible" for torture, arbitrary detention, murder, and other serious human rights violations in Venezuela.

Following the UNHRC vote in October, Venezuela was defeated in the UN General Assembly for reelection to a seat on the Council, having been narrowly elected to the body in 2019. Venezuela's ejection from the Council and its replacement by Chile and Costa Rica—two democracies with good human rights records—was a positive development for the work of the UNHRC and a further testament to the international community's disapproval of the Maduro government's human rights record.

Nicaragua

The human rights situation in Nicaragua has deteriorated significantly in recent years, as President Daniel Ortega and his Sandinista political party have violently suppressed dissent, shuttered independent media, and carried out fraudulent presidential elections in 2021. In response, the UNHRC adopted a U.S.-supported resolution in March 2022 establishing a group of three human rights experts with a mandate to conduct thorough and independent investigations into all alleged human rights violations committed in Nicaragua since April 2018. By training a UN-sponsored spotlight on Nicaragua, the UNHRC's action deepened the Ortega government's international isolation and ensured that efforts to demand accountability for its violations of human rights will remain on the international community's agenda.

Afghanistan

The fall of Afghanistan's internationally recognized government in August 2021 raised urgent concerns about the Taliban's commitment to basic human rights norms. Shortly after the takeover, the UNHRC voted overwhelmingly to establish a special rapporteur on Afghanistan, a position that was renewed by the Council with strong U.S. support in October 2022. Charged with investigating human rights abuses in Afghanistan, the special rapporteur was tasked by the Council in its 2022 renewal resolution with placing particular emphasis on violations of

the rights of women and children, an especially important area of concern given the Taliban's ban on secondary and university education for girls and women.

Iran

Following the death of Mahsa Amini while in custody of Iran's morality police in September 2022, mass anti-government demonstrations broke out across the country. Iranian security services responded violently, killing hundreds of protesters and jailing thousands. In an emergency session convened in November to discuss the situation, the UNHRC adopted a resolution condemning the crackdown and establishing a fact-finding mission to investigate rights violations committed by Iranian authorities, "especially with respect to women and children." Canada's Ambassador to the UN called the resolution, adopted by a vote of 25-6, "a big breakthrough" and noted that "you're going to have some very professional people collecting evidence, collecting data, and beginning to gather the material that we need to deal with the extent of all of the human rights abuses that we know are taking place in Iran."

The U.S. is scheduled to remain on the Council through the end of 2024, when it will be eligible to run for another term. Over the next several years, the Council will continue to grapple with an array of human rights challenges, likely including ongoing fallout from the war in Ukraine, the civil war in Syria, government repression in Iran and Afghanistan, and threats to fundamental international human rights norms in numerous other contexts. As these discussions move forward, it will be critical for the U.S. to remain at the table, leveraging a policy of principled engagement to advance its own interests and ensure that the Council continues to fulfill its responsibility to human rights defenders around the world.

The UN Budget

Since the UN's inception in 1945, the U.S. has been its largest financial contributor. As a permanent member of the Security Council and host of UN Headquarters in New York City, the U.S. enjoys a significant amount of clout at the UN, and its leadership in providing financial support to the organization reflects that influence. Funding from Member States for the UN system comes from two main sources: assessed and voluntary contributions.

Assessed contributions

Assessed contributions are payments that all UN Member States are required to make under the UN Charter. These assessments provide a reliable source of funding to core functions of the UN Secretariat via the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets. In addition, UN specialized agencies have their own assessed budgets.

Voluntary contributions

Voluntary contributions are left to the discretion of individual Member States. These contributions are vital to the work of the UN's humanitarian and development agencies—including the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and World Food Programme (WFP)—that do not have assessed budgets.

Assessments for the UN Regular Budget and Specialized Agencies

The UN regular budget funds the UN's core bodies and activities outside of peacekeeping. These include:

- Special political missions operating in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and other countries that are either undergoing or emerging from conflict, where they work to advance peace negotiations and mediation processes, investigate human rights abuses, support the development of effective governing institutions, and facilitate free and fair elections;
- Efforts to ensure international implementation and compliance with sanctions adopted by the Security Council against terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda and rogue states like North Korea; and
- Much of the organization's core international human rights monitoring and advocacy work, as more than 40% of funding for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights comes from the regular budget.

The UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets are approved by the UN General Assembly. For 2023, the regular budget totals \$3.4 billion, nearly one-quarter of which is for special political missions. This covers nearly 40,000 employees in duty stations around the world at \$1.6 billion less than the 2023 operating budget of Delaware.

Member State assessment rates are also determined by the General Assembly, with renegotiations taking place every three years. The current assessment structure sets maximum (22%) and minimum (.001%) rates, with a country's rate based on its ability to pay. That is determined by a formula which factors in a Member State's gross national income, per capita income, and several other economic indicators.

Given its high level of economic development and per capita income relative to other countries, the U.S. pays the maximum rate. Over time, the U.S. has negotiated several reductions in its share, most notably an agreement in 2000 to establish the current maximum and minimum assessment structure, essentially capping U.S. contributions at 22% of the UN's regular budget. Prior to this agreement, the U.S. was assessed 25%. Without this ceiling, the U.S. would likely today be assessed more than one-quarter of the regular budget and as much as one-third of the peacekeeping budget.

Assessments for UN Peacekeeping Operations

The UN peacekeeping budget funds a massive global military deployment: 10 missions with more than 86,000 personnel spread across three continents. Nevertheless, at just over \$6 billion annually, the UN peacekeeping budget comprises approximately 0.3% of annual global military spending.

Member State assessments for peacekeeping are largely based on the same criteria as the regular budget, with one additional factor: the five permanent members of the Security Council—China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.—pay a premium, and are therefore assessed at a slightly higher rate for peacekeeping than for the regular budget. Since these so-called P5 countries hold veto power over Security Council decisions, no UN peacekeeping mission can be deployed without their support. The P5's higher financial responsibility is therefore meant to reflect this unique role in authorizing peacekeeping missions and crafting their mandates.

Similar to the regular budget, peacekeeping rates are revised every three years by the General Assembly, and new assessment rates for 2022-2024 were approved unanimously by Member States in December 2021. Over the past two decades, the U.S. rate has declined from a high of 31.7% of the peacekeeping budget in 1994. In 2021, the U.S. was assessed 27.89%. After the most recent rate discussions, the U.S. rate declined even further, to 26.94%, the first time it has been below 27% since 2009. At the same time, other countries' assessment rates have increased. For example, China's has risen dramatically, from just 3.14% of the peacekeeping budget in 2009 to 18.68% today, a testament to the country's expanding economy and growing role on the world stage.

Why Are Assessed Budgets Necessary?

Each year, the vast majority of the funding contributed by the U.S. to the UN is voluntary. For example, in 2021, Congress appropriated more than \$3 billion to pay U.S. assessments for UN peacekeeping missions, the regular budget, and other international organizations. That same year, the U.S. made more than \$9.1 billion in voluntary contributions to the UN, nearly three-quarters of which was for UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP alone. In total, just over one-quarter of all U.S. contributions to the UN in any given year are assessments.

Nevertheless, there have been periodic calls for the UN to do away with assessed budgets entirely and rely solely on voluntary contributions. Such proposals are impractical: instead of saving American taxpayers money, an entirely voluntary funding system could lead to significant budgetary shortfalls for critical UN programs and activities that advance U.S. national interests, necessitating additional contributions above what the U.S. pays now.

Assessed funding structures require other countries to share the financial burden

A major advantage of assessed funding is that it ensures the financial burden for core UN activities is spread across the entire international community, rather than the primary responsibility of a single country. While the U.S. is the largest single contributor to the UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets, the UN's other Member States still collectively shoulder the vast majority of costs. The fact that all Member States, even the least developed, are required to contribute to the organization at specified levels prevents the U.S. from being saddled with the burden of financing these activities alone.

U.S. leaders and experts agree that voluntary funding is problematic

Successive administrations and outside experts have recognized the limitations inherent in voluntary funding structures. A 2005 congressionally mandated bipartisan report on UN reform led by Newt Gingrich and George Mitchell noted that such schemes are often slow and lead to U.S. priorities being underfunded. Later that year, the House passed the United Nations Reform Act of 2005, which proposed that the U.S. withhold dues from the UN unless certain specific reforms were met, including switching to a system of voluntary financing. The Bush Administration said it had "serious concerns" about the legislation because it "could detract from and undermine our efforts" and requested "that Congress reconsider this legislation."

Voluntary financing could lead to shortfalls for U.S. priorities

The UN's assessed budgets fund many of the organization's most consequential and politically sensitive activities. The reality is that any large organization needs stability and predictability in its budget. In particular, planning for peacekeeping missions and other massive logistical operations requires significant lead time and preparation that can happen only with assured funding streams.

Adoption of voluntary financing arrangements for the UN's regular, peacekeeping, and specialized agencies budgets would almost certainly lead to underfunding from other countries. For example, the UN's voluntarily financed humanitarian and global health activities, far less controversial than the organization's peacekeeping and human rights work, are perennially short of need. In 2022, UN humanitarian agencies and partner organizations ultimately needed a total of \$51.7 billion to provide aid to tens of millions of people in humanitarian emergencies around the world, including in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Haiti, Somalia, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen. By the end of the year, however, they had received only \$25.8 billion, or just under half of the total they needed. By requiring all Member States to contribute, assessed funding structures can help avoid these types of shortfalls.

U.S. Assessed Financial Contributions to the UN

In recent years, U.S. assessments for the UN regular budget, peacekeeping operations, and specialized agencies have amounted to approximately \$3 billion annually, equivalent to around 0.06% of the total federal budget. Annual funding to pay UN assessments is provided by Congress through three accounts in the State Department, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) appropriations bill: Contributions to International Organizations (CIO), Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA), and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). Each year, the Better World Campaign (BWC) formulates recommendations based on anticipated funding needs for these accounts. A summary of recent funding for these accounts and our Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 recommendations is provided below.

Dollar amounts are in thousands.

| Acct. | FY22 Omnibus | FY23 President's Request | FY23 House SFOPS | FY23 Senate SFOPS | FY23 Omnibus | FY24 President's Request | FY24 BWC Recs. |
|-------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| CIPA | \$1,498,614 | \$2,327,235 | \$1,797,500 | \$1,962,235 | \$1,481,915 | \$1,940,702 | \$2,877,834 |
| CIO | \$1,662,928 | \$1,658,239 | \$1,659,739 | \$1,604,205 | \$1,438,000 | \$1,703,881 | \$1,703,881 |
| PKO | \$455,000 | \$463,559 | \$460,759 | \$452,059 | \$460,759 | \$420,458 | \$563,120 |

Contributions to International Organizations (CIO): \$1.703 billion

The CIO account funds U.S. assessments for the UN regular budget (UNRB) and more than 40 other international organizations, including UN specialized agencies and non-UN organizations such as NATO and the Organization of American States. Funding through CIO helps support the work of the UN and its family of agencies on an array of U.S. policy priorities, including:

- The work of the World Health Organization (WHO) to address the COVID-19 pandemic and other global health threats;
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has been working to ensure the safety of nuclear power plants in Ukraine during the current conflict;
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which focuses on long-term efforts to fight hunger and support sustainable agriculture, food safety, and animal health;
- Special political missions operating in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, and other countries that are either undergoing or emerging from conflict, where they work to advance peace negotiations and mediation processes, investigate human rights abuses, support the development of effective governing institutions, and facilitate free and fair elections;
- Much of the UN's core international human rights monitoring and advocacy work.

In addition to funding the UNRB and all other international organizations funded by this account, our recommendation (which is in line with the President's budget request for FY24) for CIO includes \$150 million for the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which the U.S. defunded in 2011 and withdrew from entirely in 2018. The FY23 Omnibus Appropriations bill signed into law in December 2022 included language waiving current statutory funding prohibitions on the agency, allowing the U.S. to resume financial contributions. Our funding recommendation would allow for a down payment to be made to begin addressing U.S. arrears to UNESCO, approximately \$612 million, should the Biden Administration choose to rejoin. UNESCO does essential work in a number of areas, including promoting international Holocaust education and press freedom, disseminating guidance to governments to minimize educational disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, and helping to protect and restore cultural heritage sites that have been threatened or destroyed by extremists in Iraq and the Sahel. The U.S. absence from UNESCO has starved these activities of needed resources and given strategic adversaries, especially China, greater room to advance their own interests, often at cross purposes with the founding principles of the organization, which are grounded in international human rights norms. It is therefore critical that the U.S. moves to return to the organization and restart dues payments.

In addition to providing adequate funding for CIO, Congress and the Biden Administration must work together to address the timing of payments to the UN. Since the 1980s, the U.S. has paid its UNRB dues in the fall every year, despite the fact that the UN's fiscal year begins on January 1st and bills are sent to Member States in the first quarter. This practice has exacerbated regular liquidity challenges at the UN, repeatedly threatening the organization's ability to pay staff and vendors and forcing the Secretary-General to periodically institute hiring restrictions, spend down cash reserves, and take other undesirable austerity measures. No organization, particularly one as consequential as the UN, can adequately fulfill its obligations when operating under such persistent budgetary uncertainty. As a result, we urge congressional appropriators and the White House to reach a mutually beneficial solution that would allow the U.S. to pay its UNRB dues in a more expeditious manner.

Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA): \$2.877 billion

CIPA funds U.S. assessments for 10 UN peacekeeping missions, including critical operations in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Golan Heights, Lebanon, Mali, and South Sudan. All of these missions were approved by the UN Security Council—of which the U.S. is a permanent member with veto power—and play an essential role in promoting stability, protecting civilians, and mitigating conflict in strategically significant regions of the world. UN peacekeeping operations are extremely cost-effective and do not require the U.S. to put boots on the ground.

Assessment rates for peacekeeping are determined by each country's ability to pay, with permanent members of the Security Council paying slightly more than they do for the regular budget in recognition of their unique responsibility for greenlighting peacekeeping missions. Under the current formula, the U.S. is assessed at a rate of 26.94%. Unfortunately, since the mid-1990s, U.S. law has capped U.S. contributions at 25%. While Congress frequently waived this requirement on an ad hoc basis in the past, between FY17 and FY23 it did not do so, causing the U.S. to accrue more than \$1.28 billion in cap-related arrears under CIPA.

In part because of these underpayments, the UN is unable to sufficiently reimburse countries who participate in peacekeeping for their contributions of personnel and equipment. This creates significant challenges for troop contributors, most of which are lower-income countries that rely on reimbursements to help sustain complex peacekeeping deployments. U.S. underpayments also threaten to:

- **Erode U.S. influence at the UN in favor of its global competitors.**

China, which like the U.S. is a permanent member of the Security Council, has significantly increased its participation in UN peacekeeping in recent years. Currently, it is the 10th-largest troop contributor (providing more than France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S. combined), and the second-largest financial contributor. China is seeking to use this expanded profile to more aggressively articulate its agenda at the UN, including by challenging the aspects of UN peacekeeping mandates related to human rights and civilian protection.

- **Undermine U.S. ability to push for critical reforms at the UN.**

During the Obama Administration, the U.S. and UN worked together to adopt several critical reforms and efficiencies, cutting the cost per peacekeeper by 18% and reducing the number of support staff on missions to lower administrative costs. The UN also undertook important efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel, including an unprecedented policy calling for the repatriation of entire units whose members engaged in widespread instances of abuse. This was all done at a time when the U.S. was not enforcing the 25% cap. The U.S. failure to pay its assessments in full alienates like-minded countries whose support is needed to make progress on reform priorities and makes it less likely that future U.S. entreaties around cost, efficiency, and accountability will be taken seriously.

BWC's FY24 recommendation for CIPA includes sufficient funds to pay the estimated U.S. FY24 peacekeeping dues at the full assessed rate (approximately \$1.597 billion), plus an additional \$1.28 billion to fully pay back arrears. To make these payments, language will need to be inserted into the FY24 legislation waiving the cap.

Peacekeeping Operations: \$563.1 million

The PKO account supports several non-UN regional peacekeeping operations and bilateral security initiatives, including an international observer force in the Sinai Peninsula that monitors security provisions of the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty. PKO also finances U.S. assessments for the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), which provides critical equipment and logistical support to African Union forces in Somalia. By working to help local forces defeat Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaeda that has carried out numerous attacks in Somalia and the wider region, both entities play an essential role in advancing U.S. counterterrorism objectives in East Africa. BWC's FY24 recommendation would allow the U.S. to fulfill its current financial obligations to UNSOS, as well as pay back an estimated \$108 million in arrears accrued from FY17 to FY23 due to application of the peacekeeping cap.

UN Strengthening and Reform

Ensuring that the UN is fit for purpose and able to address the growing list of challenges facing the international community is a key priority for both the organization's leadership and the U.S. Since taking office in 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has worked with Member States to implement reform, modernization, and accountability efforts on a number of tracks, including through improvements to budgetary and management processes, creating new performance assessment tools for peacekeeping operations, and redoubling efforts to root out misconduct, particularly cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, by UN personnel. At the same time, UN reform encompasses a much broader set of issues with geopolitical implications. For example, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reignited long-simmering questions about the role of the UN Security Council in protecting international peace and security, whether its membership should be expanded to be more representative and inclusive, and how to deal with situations where vetoes by the Council's permanent members prevent the body from discharging its duties. These issues are discussed in further detail below.



United States Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield.
Photo Credit: Greg Nash/Associated Press

Budgetary and Management Issues

Ensuring a UN whose operations are efficient and cost-effective has long been a priority for both the Secretary-General and the U.S. On December 30, 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2023 regular budget, which funds many core activities and mandates of the UN outside of peacekeeping. In an important development, the Assembly decided to make permanent a reform that was introduced on a trial basis in 2020 to move the UN from a biennial budget cycle to one that is annual. At the time, the move was touted as a way to ensure that spending and resource decisions are made closer to the point of implementation and based on up-to-date information. This decision proved prescient in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, and other international crises that have tested the UN's programs and financial capacity over the past three years. Moving the UN regular budget permanently to an annual cycle will better position the organization to respond nimbly to unforeseen circumstances and emergencies.

Overall, the General Assembly approved a regular budget of \$3.4 billion for 2023, nearly one-quarter of which finances UN special political missions. During debate, the Assembly adopted an amendment to increase funding for human rights monitoring mandates authorized by the UN Human Rights Council, a move that was supported by the U.S. and its allies and opposed by China, North Korea, Russia, Syria, and other countries. For the first time, the regular budget also includes funding for implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a UN-brokered agreement that is key to protecting global food security and shoring up Ukraine's economy.

Security Council Expansion and Reform of the Veto

When the UN was founded in 1945, it had 51 members; today, it has 193. The world is not the same as it was 78 years ago when delegates from around the world met in San Francisco to draft the UN Charter, the treaty that established the United Nations. Despite the numerous and significant geopolitical shifts that have taken place in the intervening years, as well as the explosive growth of the UN's membership itself, the basic structure of the Security Council has changed only once: in 1963, when Member States amended the Charter to expand the number of elected, non-permanent members from six to 10. Moreover, just five countries—China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.—continue to hold permanent seats on the Council and have the power to veto any substantive resolution. This has sparked criticism that the Council's membership does not reflect current geopolitical realities and that its work frequently serves the interests of a small number of powerful

countries rather than “the maintenance of international peace and security” more broadly. These critiques have grown louder recently as Russia has deployed its veto to prevent the Council from taking action on the war in Ukraine, a conflict that violates the principles enshrined in the Charter.

Security Council reform has been on the General Assembly’s agenda since 1979, and over the years, various proposals to expand the Council’s membership have been put forward by different coalitions of Member States. In 2005, the so-called G4 (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) proposed a 25-member Security Council with themselves and two African countries being added as permanent members without veto power. Another group, referring to itself as “Uniting for Consensus” and composed of regional rivals of the G4 including Italy and Pakistan, proposed doubling the number of non-permanent members but leaving the number of permanent seats untouched. The Group of African States, meanwhile, proposed a 26-member Council with two new permanent seats with veto power and five additional non-permanent seats reserved for African countries. Other proposals have envisioned increasing the representation of small-island developing countries or adding a permanent seat to the Council for Arab states.

None of these proposals have advanced, however, because there is still no consensus among Member States about what a revamped Security Council should look like. Adding seats to the Council again would require amending the Charter, meaning any change would have to be ratified by two-thirds of the UN’s membership, including all five of the Council’s current permanent members. Naturally, these P5 countries themselves are divided on this question. China opposes permanent seats for Japan and India, for example, while Russia supports India but refuses to countenance adding Germany or Japan. For its part, the U.S. supports permanent seats for all three countries. In his speech to the General Assembly in September 2022, President Biden took this position a step further, endorsing “permanent seats for those nations we’ve long supported and permanent seats for countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.” In the near term, however, it appears unlikely that this statement, while significant, will break the logjam in New York.



The Security Council votes on a draft resolution, February 25, presented by Albania and the United States of America, condemning in the “strongest terms, Russia’s aggression against Ukraine”. The resolution was not adopted with 11 votes in favour, one vote against (Russian Federation), and three abstentions (China, India and United Arab Emirates), due to the veto by the Russian Federation.
Photo Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

Beyond Security Council expansion, there has also been debate in the General Assembly about how to regulate the use of the veto, or at least more systematically name and shame P5 countries that abuse it. In April 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the General Assembly adopted a U.S.-supported resolution that seeks to increase the Assembly’s ability to publicly scrutinize Security Council vetoes. Now, Security Council vetoes automatically trigger a General Assembly meeting within 10 days, where all Member States are given the opportunity to discuss the issue. Speaking in support of the resolution, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield called it a “significant step toward the accountability, transparency, and responsibility” of countries with veto power.

The war in Ukraine also spurred the Security Council to invoke the “Uniting for Peace” resolution for the first time in 40 years, reviving an alternative pathway for action when the veto becomes an obstacle. Adopted by the General Assembly in 1950 during the Korean War, the resolution states that if the Security Council fails to take action on a particular threat to international peace and security or act of aggression due to a “lack of unanimity of the permanent members,” the General Assembly may take up the matter in an emergency special session “with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures.” While, unlike Security Council resolutions, General Assembly decisions are not legally binding, they can provide a clear statement of international resolve on a given issue, put public pressure on rogue regimes by illustrating their isolation, and help catalyze further action by the international community.

Following Russia's veto of a Security Council resolution on Ukraine on February 25, 2022, the Council voted on a procedural move (which cannot be vetoed by the P5) to call for an emergency special session in the General Assembly. In keeping with the Uniting for Peace requirements, the General Assembly convened 24 hours later, adopting a resolution by 141-5 later that week condemning the invasion and calling on Russia to immediately withdraw its troops. Since then, the General Assembly has repeatedly resumed the emergency special session to adopt a range of other Ukraine-related measures, including resolutions suspending Russian membership in the UN Human Rights Council, condemning Russia's efforts to illegally annex Ukrainian territory, and calling for the creation of an international registry to document claims and information on damage, loss, and injury resulting from the war.

Peacekeeping Reform

Since taking office in 2017, Secretary-General Guterres has implemented a restructuring of the peace and security architecture of the UN Secretariat to prioritize conflict prevention and enhance the effectiveness and coherence of UN peacekeeping and special political missions. A key step in this process was the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, launched in 2018, which brought together all of the key stakeholders in UN peacekeeping (members of the Security Council, troop-contributing countries, top financial contributors, and countries that host peacekeeping missions) around a set of reform priorities.

Among these reforms, one of the most innovative is the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS), which better enables leadership within a mission to assess and improve performance on the ground. CPAS was piloted in the Central African Republic to help the UN peacekeeping mission there (MINUSCA) coordinate and track its support for implementation of a peace agreement signed in December 2019. By tracking such indicators as the number of conflict-related civilian deaths, children released from armed groups (a commitment under the agreement), and public buildings being occupied by armed groups, MINUSCA has been able to more readily see where its support to the peace agreement is bearing fruit and where it is not. Having worked successfully in the Central African Republic, CPAS is now deployed in eight additional missions.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

In recent years, the UN has implemented new policies to address instances of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN personnel, including peacekeepers. These measures have been wide-ranging and are summarized below.

- The UN has appointed **victims' rights advocates**, both at UN Headquarters and in the field, who work across the UN system to make sure victims have access to urgent assistance, can file complaints safely and reliably, and get timely information on the progress of their case.
- Since the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 2272 in 2016, the Secretary-General has enjoyed expanded authority to **repatriate entire military or police units** that engage in widespread or systematic violations. To date, the Secretary-General has utilized these powers in the Central African Republic to send home troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, and Gabon.
- The UN expanded a **vetting database** in place for civilian personnel to cover all troops and police serving on UN peacekeeping missions.
- In order to ensure transparency, the UN maintains a publicly available online database of credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse made against personnel in field missions. The database provides information on the nationality of uniformed personnel accused of misconduct—a critical element in holding troop- and police-contributing countries accountable for the conduct of their citizens—as well as information on interim actions taken, the duration of investigations, and details around steps taken by Member States, including criminal prosecutions and administrative sanctions.
- UN investigative entities are now required to conclude their investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse cases within six months, shortened to three months in cases suggesting “the need for greater urgency.” The Secretary-General has taken other steps, too, requiring troop-contributing countries to **deploy national investigation officers (NIOs)** with sufficient experience and expertise to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse cases by their personnel. In partnership with Member States, the UN works to support the capacity-building and training of these NIOs. Finally, the Secretary-General has called on troop-contributing countries to establish on-site court-martial proceedings to ensure a quicker judicial process for allegations of sex crimes.
- The Secretariat has developed a mandatory **online training program** for all UN personnel on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.
- The UN administers a **trust fund** to provide critical services to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, including psychosocial assistance, medical care, access to legal help, and assistance in establishing paternity claims. The trust fund is financed in part through reimbursement payments that are withheld from troop-contributing countries when allegations against their troops are substantiated. To date, project funding has been disbursed in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, and Liberia.

Key UN Bodies

The UN Charter, the treaty signed in June 1945 that created the United Nations, established six principle organs of the new international organization. While the Trusteeship Council, created to administer colonial territories as they transitioned to self-governance or independence, is currently inactive, the other five bodies remain key pillars of the UN system today. A description of the structure and functions of each is provided below.

UN Security Council

The Security Council is the UN's premier decision-making body, empowered to impose legally binding obligations on Member States. Conferred by the UN Charter with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," the Council has several tools at its disposal for conflict prevention and management. Chapter VI of the Charter authorizes the Council to make recommendations to resolve threats to international peace and security by various peaceful means. If that is unsuccessful, the Security Council may authorize enforcement measures, including sanctions and military force, under Chapter VII.

The Security Council is composed of 15 Member States: five permanent members (also known as the P5), made up of the "Big Four" Allied Powers from World War II or their continuator states (China, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.) plus France; and 10 rotating non-permanent members, elected to two-year terms by the UN General Assembly on the basis of equitable geographic distribution among regional groups. Votes on non-procedural matters require the concurrence of the P5, effectively giving them a veto over such decisions.

Since its establishment, the Council has served as a key forum for addressing security challenges. The Council has authorized more than 70 peacekeeping missions to help stabilize conflict zones around the world; set up international sanctions regimes targeting the finances and access to weapons of rogue regimes like North Korea and terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS; and sought to deepen international cooperation on everything from terrorist financing to nuclear nonproliferation.

Nevertheless, the P5 countries' veto power has, at times, prevented the Council from fully asserting its role as a guarantor of global order. This was especially true when U.S.-Soviet tensions were at their height during the Cold War. While the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought on a period of increased cooperation, disputes over crises in Israel/Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen have exposed ongoing divisions among the P5 and limited the Council's effectiveness in some contexts.

UN General Assembly

Unlike the Security Council, the UN General Assembly has universal membership: all 193 UN Member States have a seat, and no country possesses veto power. While its decisions are generally non-binding, they still carry important political and moral clout, serving as a marker of the views of the international community. Over the years, the General Assembly has approved numerous noteworthy decisions, including:

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights:** The UDHR, a landmark document outlining basic global standards for human rights, was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. Eleanor Roosevelt, former first lady and chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights, played a central role in drafting and shepherding the UDHR to passage.
- **Setting the Global Development Agenda:** In 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight time-bound targets aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, improving access to education, and combating the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. In 2015, the Assembly adopted the successor to the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals, a new set of development objectives to build on the important progress achieved by the MDGs with a 2030 due date.

The General Assembly has other important functions as well, including developing and approving the UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets and assessment rates for Member States, electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council and other UN bodies, and appointing the Secretary-General.

UN Secretariat

The UN Secretariat is staffed by 40,000 personnel worldwide and carries out the day-to-day operations of the UN, implementing mandates adopted by the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, and other relevant UN bodies. Some of its main functions include:

- Planning and managing peacekeeping and political missions;
- Mediating international disputes;
- Assisting implementation of Security Council sanctions;
- Coordinating disaster relief across dozens of humanitarian agencies;
- Promoting social and economic development and publishing related statistics and research; and
- Facilitating discussion and meetings among Member States.

All of this is done with an annual budget of approximately \$3 billion, equal to less than one-quarter of the budget of Rhode Island.

The Secretariat is led by the Secretary-General, who is selected every five years by the Security Council and approved by a majority vote of the General Assembly. Although there is no formal limit to the number of terms a Secretary-General may serve, by custom they have served

no more than two. The current Secretary-General is former Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres, who assumed office on January 1, 2017, and is in his second term.

UN Economic and Social Council

ECOSOC is the central UN forum for discussing and formulating policy recommendations on international economic, social, cultural, educational, and health issues. According to the Charter, ECOSOC is tasked with:

- Promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress;
- Identifying solutions to international economic, social, and health problems;
- Facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and
- Encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As part of this work, ECOSOC helps to coordinate the work of the UN's numerous specialized agencies, funds, and programs, and—by granting consultative status to non-governmental organizations—serves as a key venue through which civil society can participate in the work of the UN. ECOSOC is made up of 54 Member States that are elected to three-year terms by the General Assembly.



In the lead up to COP27, to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, Secretary-General António Guterres, with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, hosts an informal Leaders' Roundtable on Climate Action, bringing together a small but diverse and representative group of Heads of State and Government during the 77th session of the UN General Assembly.
Photo Credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias

International Court of Justice

The ICJ is the UN's judicial organ, composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms by the General Assembly and Security Council. The purpose of the ICJ is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes between states. This is a key element of the international security order envisioned by the UN Charter, which commits countries to undertake several methods, including judicial settlement, to peacefully resolve disputes. The ICJ also gives advisory opinions on legal questions submitted by other UN organs or agencies.

The ICJ does not have the authority to weigh in on any international legal dispute it wishes; instead, the Court's ability to hear a case is derived from the consent of the Member States concerned. States involved in a dispute can accept ICJ jurisdiction in three ways:

- Two or more states can enter into a special agreement to submit their case to the Court; or
- A jurisdictional clause in a treaty may require countries that have ratified the treaty to submit disagreements over interpretation or application of the document to the Court (more than 300 treaties, both bilateral and multilateral, contain such clauses); or
- A state may submit a unilateral declaration accepting the Court's jurisdiction as compulsory in the event of a dispute with another state that has made a similar commitment.

Member States are bound to comply with ICJ decisions in any case to which they are a party. According to the Charter, if a Member State fails to perform its obligations under an ICJ judgment, the case can be referred to the Security Council, which can then apply enforcement measures. Over the years, the U.S. has been involved in several cases before the Court. In 1980, for example, the ICJ ordered Iran to pay reparations to the U.S. over the 1979 hostage crisis.

UN Funds, Programs, and Specialized Agencies

The UN system is composed of more than 30 affiliated organizations, programs, funds, and specialized agencies, with their own membership, leadership, and budget processes. These entities work with and through the UN Secretariat to promote peace and prosperity.

UN funds and programs are financed through voluntary rather than assessed contributions, and include the following:



Photo Credit: Martine Perret/UN Photo

UN Children's Fund

UNICEF provides long-term humanitarian and development assistance to children and mothers, working to help increase the number of girls enrolled in school worldwide and providing clean water, sanitation, educational support, and nutritional assistance to children in disaster zones and war-torn regions around the world. UNICEF is also responsible for procuring vaccines that reach 45% of the world's children, saving the lives of 2.5 million children each year.

World Food Programme

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency dedicated to the goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition, delivering food assistance in emergencies, and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. Each year, the agency provides food aid, cash assistance, and nutrition support to tens of millions of people in countries undergoing conflict and natural disasters. In 2020, in recognition of its lifesaving work, WFP was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

UN Development Programme

UNDP is the UN's global development network, focusing on the challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, energy and environment, and HIV/AIDS. UNDP is one of the implementing bodies for UN electoral assistance, helping to facilitate elections in around 60 countries every year, including nations undergoing sensitive post-conflict political transitions.

The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR protects refugees worldwide and facilitates their resettlement or return home. UNHCR is currently working on the ground to help tens of millions of people displaced by famine, armed conflict, or persecution in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.

UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs, organized crime, corruption, human trafficking, and terrorism. The organization helps Member States address these challenges by providing field-based technical support to enhance the capacity of criminal justice systems and adherence to the rule of law, assisting in the implementation of relevant international treaties, and serving as a source of research and information to help guide policy decisions on countering drugs and crime.

UN Population Fund

UNFPA is the largest international source of funding for population and reproductive health programs in the world. UNFPA helps women, men, and young people plan their families, including the number, timing, and spacing of their children, go through pregnancy and childbirth safely, and avoid sexually transmitted infections. UNFPA also combats violence against women and child marriage. UNFPA does not provide, support, or advocate for abortion, nor does it support, promote, or condone coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.

UN Environment Programme

UNEP coordinates the UN's environmental activities, developing international environmental conventions, assessing global environmental trends, encouraging new civil sector partnerships, and strengthening institutions so they might better protect the planet. UNEP covers international environmental issues affecting the U.S. that no one nation working alone can adequately address, such as plastic pollution in the ocean, the transboundary movement of toxic chemicals, and illegal trade in wildlife.

UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

UNRWA provides an array of vital services, including education, health care, economic opportunities, and emergency food assistance to impoverished Palestinians in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank. The organization was founded by the UN General Assembly in 1949 to assist Palestinians who were forced from their homes by the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. More than half of UNRWA's annual budget goes to its schools alone, which provide nearly 525,000 children with a curriculum focused on tolerance, gender equality, human rights, and non-violence.

UN Women

UN Women coordinates the UN response to three issues globally, nationally, and locally: elimination of discrimination against women and girls; empowerment of women; and achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, and peace and security.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO).
Photo Credit: Eskinder Debebe/UN Photo

The UN's **specialized and technical agencies** work with and through the UN to advance international cooperation and progress. Through this work, these agencies promote core U.S. foreign policy, national security, economic, public health, and humanitarian objectives. UN

specialized agencies are funded through their own assessed budgets (which are separate from the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets) and voluntary contributions from Member States.

World Health Organization

WHO serves as a coordinating authority on international public health. It is responsible for orchestrating international collaboration and developing solutions to confront global health emergencies, monitoring outbreaks of infectious diseases, spearheading global vaccination efforts, and leading campaigns to combat polio, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and other life-threatening diseases. WHO has helped lead the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing personal protective equipment and tests, conducting awareness-raising activities, supporting research into treatments, and helping distribute vaccines around the world.

International Atomic Energy Agency

The IAEA works to prevent, detect, and respond to the illicit or non-peaceful use of nuclear material, conducting monitoring and inspection activities in 140 countries to verify compliance with international nuclear safeguard agreements. The IAEA also plays a critical role on nuclear safety issues, and inspectors from the organization are currently deployed to Ukraine to monitor conditions at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and other facilities.

Food and Agriculture Organization

FAO fights hunger worldwide by promoting sustainable agricultural development and supporting efforts to rebuild agricultural livelihoods in the wake of natural disasters. In addition, FAO works to develop global standards for food safety and plant and animal health. These measures help protect American farmers and consumers and facilitate international trade.



Photo Credit: JC McIlwaine/UN Photo

World Bank

The World Bank focuses on poverty reduction and the improvement of living standards worldwide by providing low-interest loans, interest-free credit, and grants to developing economies for education, health, infrastructure, and communications.

International Monetary Fund

The IMF fosters global monetary cooperation, facilitates international trade, promotes high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduces poverty. It offers financial and technical assistance to its members, making it an international lender of last resort.

International Maritime Organization

IMO sets international safety standards for ships, ports, and maritime facilities; develops ship design and operating requirements; and leads global efforts to prevent maritime pollution. Standards promulgated by IMO are central to the health of the U.S. economy, as more than 90%

of all international trade is carried out by ship. IMO also works with Member States to address piracy, terrorism, and other security threats to the international shipping industry.

International Civil Aviation Organization

ICAO enables safe air travel everywhere by setting global standards for navigation, communication, and airline safety. These standards map out airspace jurisdiction and establish “free range” airspace over oceans and seas. The agency also sets international standards for limiting environmental degradation and works to strengthen aviation security by conducting regular audits of aviation security oversight in ICAO Member States

UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNESCO administers an array of programs in five broad areas: education; natural sciences; social and human sciences; culture; and communication and information. UNESCO's work includes promoting freedom of the press, access to primary education for all children, and international Holocaust education.

International Labour Organization

The ILO is responsible for formulating and overseeing implementation of international labor standards. The agency works to promote workers' rights and improved working conditions around the world, seeks to abolish forced and child labor, and supports the creation of greater opportunities for employment.

International Organization for Migration

IOM works to support humane and orderly migration by promoting international cooperation on migration issues and providing humanitarian assistance to migrants.

World Intellectual Property Organization

WIPO encourages innovation and economic growth through the registration and protection of patents, copyrights, and other forms of intellectual property, as well as through adjudication of cross-border disputes on intellectual property.

International Telecommunication Union

ITU facilitates the connectivity and interoperability of the world's telecommunications networks, which is of critical importance to the U.S. telecommunications industry and American defense and intelligence communications capabilities. By allocating radio spectrum and satellite orbits, as well as developing technical standards to ensure that networks connect seamlessly, ITU's work helps make communicating possible even in some of the world's most remote locations.

World Meteorological Organization

WMO facilitates the unrestricted international exchange of meteorological data, forecasts, and warnings, and works to further their use in the aviation, shipping, agriculture, energy, and defense sectors.

Universal Postal Union

The UPU facilitates postal service across the globe, helping Americans conduct business everywhere, from Beijing to London to São Paulo. By setting standards for the worldwide postal system and promoting affordable basic postal services in all territories, the UPU enables U.S. businesses to utilize the postal system to conduct business at low costs.