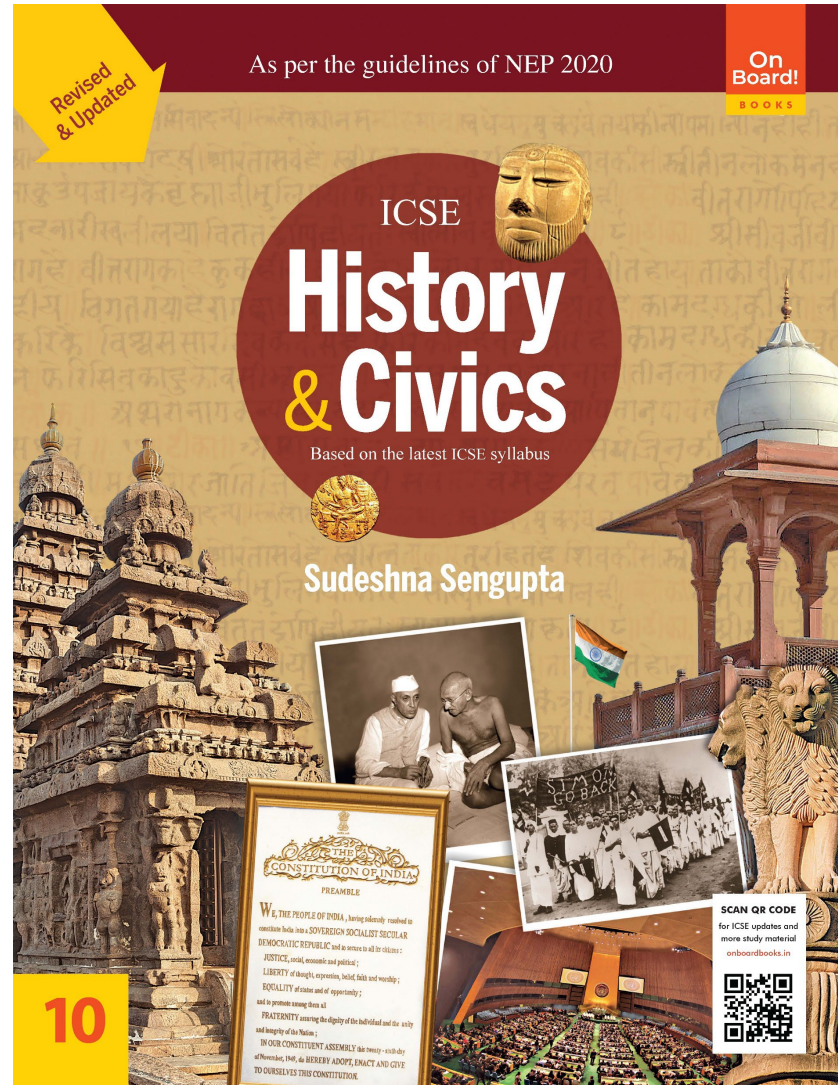


# On Board!

**B O O K S**

# ICSE History and Civics 10



# Section B: History

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# Chapter 12 The United Nations Organization

The United Nations Organization (UNO) was founded to replace the discredited League of Nations, which had failed in its quest for world peace. The aim of the founders of this world body was to preserve peace and to remove the cause of conflict by encouraging economic, social, educational and cultural progress throughout the world, especially in underdeveloped nations.

## FACTORS LEADING TO THE BIRTH OF THE UNITED NATIONS

### Destruction of life and property

This legacy of misery caused by the two World Wars was felt across the globe. Cities and towns were obliterated from the face of the earth. The dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan was a reminder of the magnitude of devastation that such wars could cause. The losses were irreparable and incalculable.

### Failure of the League of Nations

The League of Nations had been totally ineffective in resolving crisis or averting war which was realised by the world leaders.

- Japan, still a member of the League, attacked China.
- Italy under Mussolini launched an attack on another League member Abyssinia
- Hitler sent his troops into the demilitarized zone of Rhineland
- The epitaph on the tombstone of the League of Nations was already written when Hitler marched into Poland on 1 September 1939.

## MILESTONES IN THE FORMATION OF THE UN

DECLARATION/ CONFERENCE	YEAR	REPRESENTED BY	IMPORTANCE
<b>The London Declaration</b>	June 1941	Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa	The first proposal to establish an international organization to maintain peace.
<b>The Atlantic Charter</b>	August 1941	British PM Winston Churchill and American President FD Roosevelt	Settle disputes in a peaceful manner, recognize the need for freedom and sovereignty, collaboration between nations for economic progress, assurance given to all men that they can live their lives in freedom from fear and want.
<b>The Washington Declaration</b>	January 1942	26 states	Promise to continue war against enemy collectively and no separate peace treaties to be signed.
<b>The Moscow Declaration</b>	October 1943	Foreign Ministers of Britain, the United States, the USSR and China	Decision taken to establish a world organization that would recognize the sovereign equality of all peace-loving nations.
<b>Dumbarton Oaks Conference</b>	Autumn 1944	Britain, the US, the USSR and China	The draft proposal for the new international peace organization prepared.
<b>Yalta Conference</b>	February 1945	Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin and FD Roosevelt	Agreement on all aspects of the Charter including the membership procedure. It was ready to be adopted.
<b>San Francisco Conference</b>	April 1945	50 countries (Poland joined a day later so the original number became 51)	The signing of the UN Charter and the decision that the UN would be established when ratified by the member-nations.

## A constructive organization for peace needed

The world leaders realized that another war would annihilate the mankind and a strong peace-keeping and conflict-management mechanism was therefore the urgent need of the hour. This urgent need found fruition in the San Francisco Conference where a Charter for a permanent international organization for peace was drafted.

### THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

On 24 October 1945, the United Nations Organization, popularly called the UNO or UN came into being. 24 October is celebrated as the UN Day every year.

#### Objectives and purpose of the UN

- To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.
- To maintain international peace and security and to take effective measures for removal of threats to peace.
- To develop faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of human beings.
- To develop conditions under which justice and respect for international law and treaties can be maintained.
- To achieve international cooperation in solving problems of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character.
- To be the centre for harmonising the actions of nations in attaining these common ends.

## Membership

The original membership of the UN was 51. By the end of 2011, the total membership has increased to 193. The membership is open to all peace-loving States who accept the obligations mentioned in the Charter and who in the estimate of the organization are willing to carry out their obligations. The Security Council plays a very important role in admitting or refusing admission to any state. On the recommendation of the Security Council, the membership of a state can also be suspended.

## Headquarters

The headquarters of the UN are in New York, USA. The European office is at Geneva, Switzerland. The UN flag is light blue in colour with a polar map of the world, hemmed in by twin olive branches, in white at the centre, forming the emblem.

## Finance

The UN is financed by the voluntary contributions of member-states. The members contribute to the expenses as determined by the General Assembly each year.



## Principles of the UN

The UN has laid down the following seven principles, for achieving its objectives and purpose.

- Sovereign equality of all member-states of the UN.
- The member-states shall fulfil their obligations and duties according to the UN Charter.
- All member-states shall solve their mutual disputes through peaceful means.
- No member-state shall use force in solving its mutual problems, and also refrain from use of threats.
- All members shall be morally bound to offer unconditional services, military or otherwise for preventive or enforcement action undertaken by the UN. It should also refrain from helping any nation against which the UN is taking preventive action.
- The UN shall ensure that even non-members work for the peace and security of the world and act in accordance with these principles.
- The UN shall not interfere in the internal matter of any member-states.

## Principal organs

There are six principal organs of the UN. These are:

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

# General Assembly

**Composition** The General Assembly may be called the World Parliament. Every member-state of the UN sends a delegation of five members to it. It elects its own President for one year. It meets once a year in September but special sessions can be called by the members themselves or the Security Council whenever a crisis arises. Its headquarters are in New York.

## Functions

- To admit new members to the UN on the recommendation of the Security Council.
- To appoint the Secretary General of UN on the recommendation of the Security Council.
- To elect the ten temporary members of the Security Council.
- To receive and discuss the reports of the main organs and agencies of the UN and take decisions on the same.
- To discuss any matter falling within the Charter of the UN, e.g. security, international cooperation and development.
- To draw the attention of the member-states to provide human rights to their citizens.
- To consider and pass the annual budget of the UN and estimate the contributions of the member-states who together bear the expenses of the UN.
- To draw the attention of the Security Council whenever it finds that world peace is endangered by the action of one or more states.
- To amend the Charter of the UN by a two-thirds majority of the total members.
- According to the Uniting for Peace Resolution of 1950, if the Security Council is unable to take suitable action due to the use of veto by any one or more of the permanent members, the General Assembly can deal with the problem directly.

## Security Council

**Composition** There are two types of members of the Security Council, namely, permanent and non-permanent. The five permanent members are USA, UK, France, Russia and China (People's Republic). The other ten non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected by the General Assembly for two years on regional basis.

The decisions in the Security Council are taken by a majority vote. But if any permanent member disagrees to a decision and gives a negative vote, no decision on that particular matter can be taken, even if all the other fourteen members agree. This is called the veto power of the Big Five permanent members.

### Functions

- It can investigate disputes and recommend ways and means for peaceful settlement.
- It can impose an embargo or economic sanctions (i.e. stoppage of trade) on nations that do not act according to the directions of the Security Council.
- It can order military action by air, land or sea against a nation, which persists in disturbing the peace and security of the world.
- It elects the judges of the International Court of Justice jointly with the General Assembly.
- It recommends the name of a person for appointment as the Secretary General of the UN.
- It also recommends the admission of new members to the UN to the General Assembly.
- In case of a war, the Security Council may call for ceasefire to stop aggression.
- If ceasefire is ordered and agreed to by the nations, a UN peace-keeping force consisting of troops from member-states may be sent to the troubled areas.

## International Court of Justice

**Composition** The International Court of Justice is the judicial wing of the UN. It consists of fifteen judges. They are elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Court elects its own President and Vice President for a three-year term. The headquarters of the International Court of Justice are at The Hague in the Netherlands.

### Functions

- If the treaties so provide, then it can hear cases of disputes between two or more nations and reach a decision on them.
- Disputes between nations relating to interpretation of international law are heard by it.
- In case a dispute is filed by one country against another and the respondent nation appears before the Law Court, then it can hear it.
- The General Assembly, the Security Council and other UN organs and agencies may ask the Court to give its advisory opinion on any dispute/legal question within the scope of its activities.
- It codifies the international law by thoroughly examining the international conventions, customs, judicial decisions and general principles of law.
- It evolves the procedure of peaceful settlement of disputes.
- Each country is obliged to comply with the decision of the Court in any dispute to which it is a party.

The other three organs of the UN have their specific roles to play as envisaged by the Charter.

### **Economic and Social Council**

Its members are elected for a three-year term by the General Assembly. It organizes projects, initiates studies and submits reports concerned with health, education and other social, economic and cultural matters. Its objective is to free the world from 'want'.

### **Trusteeship Council**

This is an improvement on the mandate system under the League. Its function was to work for the trust territories and make them self-governing for ultimate independence.

### **Secretariat**

The Secretariat looks after the administrative work, preparing minutes, translations and information for specific use. It is headed by the Secretary General who is the Chief Administrative Officer of the Secretariat. The Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a term of five years.

## To Remember

**Factors leading to the birth of the UN** – Destruction of life and property, failure of the League of Nations, a constructive organization for peace needed.

**Milestones in the formation of the UN** – The London Declaration, the Atlantic Charter, the Washington Declaration, the Moscow Declaration, Dumbarton Oaks Conference, Yalta Conference, San Francisco Conference.

**The UN** – Membership, headquarters, flag, official languages, finance.

**Objectives and purpose of the UN** – To save succeeding generations from war, to develop faith in human rights and their dignity, justice and respect for international law, international cooperation, a common platform to find solutions.

**Principles of the UN** – Sovereign equality of all states, to fulfil duties as detailed in the UN Charter, to settle disputes through peaceful means, to give unconditional help when required, ensure cooperation from non-members, non-interference in internal matters.

**Principal organs of the UN** – General Assembly, Security Council, International Court of Justice, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, Secretariat.

**General Assembly** – World Parliament, a deliberative body, comprises all members, five representatives from each member-state but one vote, admits new members, appoints the Secretary General, elects non-permanent members of the Security Council, passes annual budget, amends the Charter, according to the Uniting for Peace Resolution of 1950, it can use force to establish peace if the Security Council is unable to reach a decision.

**Security Council** – Executive or enforcement wing, five permanent and ten non-permanent members, the big five enjoy the veto power, it investigates disputes and finds peaceful solutions, can impose embargo or sanctions, can order military action, can order for expulsion of a member, appoints the Secretary General along with new members of the General Assembly.

**International Court of Justice** – Judicial wing, consists of fifteen judges, nine-year term, no two judges can be nationals of the same country, judges can be re-elected, decides on disputes between member-states, codifies international law, advises other organs on legal matters, members have to abide by the decisions taken, Security Council can intervene if members do not follow orders of the International Court of Justice.

**Economic and Social Council** – Its members are elected for a three-year term, organizes projects, initiates studies and submits reports related to social, economic and cultural matters.

**Trusteeship Council** – An improvement on the mandate system under the League, redundant since 1994.

**Secretariat** – Looks after the administrative work, is headed by the Secretary General.

**Thank You**