

---

## UNITED NATIONS (UN)

### OVERVIEW

**Established:** 1945

**Membership:** 192 States

**Secretary-General:** Ban Ki Moon (2007- )

**Deputy Secretary-General:** Asha-Rose Migiro (2007- )

In 1945, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter. Those delegates deliberated on the basis of proposals worked out by the representatives of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States at Dumbarton Oaks, United States, in August-October 1944. The Charter was signed on June 26, 1945 by the representatives of the 50 countries. Poland, which was not represented at the Conference, signed it later and became one of the original 51 member states.

As mandated by its [Charter](#), preserving the world peace is the central purpose of the [United Nations](#). Although reference to nuclear weapons is not directly reflected in the Charter, as it was created before their use, halting the spread of arms, reducing, and eventually eliminating all weapons of mass destruction are major goals of the United Nations. Since its establishment, the UN has been an ongoing forum for nonproliferation and disarmament treaties, negotiations, and studies. The principal United Nations organs dealing with international peace and security, arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation are the UN [Security Council](#) (UNSC), the [General Assembly](#) (primarily via its First Committee), and the United Nations [Office for Disarmament Affairs \(UNODA\)](#).

The [United Nations Security Council](#) (UNSC) under Article 26 of the UN Charter is tasked with the “establishment and maintenance of international peace and security, including through disarmament and the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.” Composed of 15 member states including the permanent five with veto powers (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the Security Council can determine a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and may recommend, or decide what meas-

ures to take, whether economic, political, or those involving use of force, to maintain or restore international peace and security. As such the Security Council is the only international body that can enforce punitive measures such as sanctions or military action against a state. In the area of nonproliferation, the UNSC has authorized mandatory sanctions against Iraq, the DPRK, and Iran; created the Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) in Iraq; and established other important sanctions committees such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee pursuant to Resolution 1373 (2001) and the 1540 Committee pursuant to the landmark resolution 1540 (2004), which addresses the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. For more detail on the Security Council and recent developments in the nonproliferation field, see the [Security Council](#) section hereunder.

The [United Nations General Assembly](#) (UNGA) is the only truly representative international body that is tasked to consider disarmament and international security issues. On January 24, 1946, the very first General Assembly session passed [resolution 1\(1\) “Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy.”](#) which addressed the concerns of the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Since then, the body annually adopts resolutions and decisions on nonproliferation, disarmament, arms control, and security on recommendation by its First Committee. Some of the most notable decisions related to disarmament, nonproliferation, and arms control include the endorsement of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968; the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) in 1972; the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1992; and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. The General Assembly has also held three special sessions on disarmament (SSOD) in 1978, 1982, and 1988. For more detail on the General Assembly and recent developments in the nonproliferation field, see the [General Assembly](#) section hereunder.

The [United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs](#) (UNODA) was originally established as the Department of Disarmament Affairs (DDA) in 1982 upon the recommendation of the General Assembly's sec-

UN-1

ond special session on disarmament (SSOD II) and functioned as a department until 1992. From 1992-1997 it functioned as a Centre under the Department of Political Affairs. The DDA was re-established in 1998 as part of the Secretary-General's program for reform in accordance with his report A/51/950 to the General Assembly. In 2007, the name was changed to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

The UNODA promotes the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the strengthening of the disarmament regimes in respect to other weapons of mass destruction—chemical and biological weapons. It also promotes disarmament efforts in the area of conventional weapons, especially land mines and small arms, which are the weapons of choice in contemporary conflicts. It has five branches: Conference on Disarmament Secretariat & Conference Support Branch, the Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, the Conventional Arms Branch, the Regional Disarmament Branch, and the Monitoring, Database and Information Branch. For more detail on the department's role in nonproliferation and disarmament, see the [United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs](#) section hereunder.