



Unit 1

Introducing the United Nations

Teacher Primer #1

The United Nations is an organization divided into 6 main parts. The **General Assembly**, the **Security Council**, the **Secretariat**, the **Trusteeship Council**, and the **International Court of Justice** all focus on various areas that help promote peace and social progress in the world.

Each of the 6 organs has a different purpose. The **General Assembly (G.A.)** is the central organ of the United Nations where representatives from all member countries meet to discuss pertinent international issues and to decide on a budget for the United Nations. When the UN was formed in 1945, there were 51 Member States. Today, that number has grown to 192 Member States. Every member country of the UN has an equal vote in the General Assembly no matter what the country's size. The general Assembly meets for about 3 months starting in September of every year at the UN headquarters located in New York City.¹ However, the land on which the United Nations was built is not a part of the United States. The land, divided on the east and west by the East River and First Avenue and on the North and South by 42nd Street and 48th Street, is international territory. The area is entirely independent of New York City, complete with its own post office and fire department.

The **Security Council (S.C.)** is the part of the UN that deals with peacekeeping. There are 15 members on the Security Council. Five are permanent, and 10 are voted to the council by the General Assembly for 2-year terms. France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, China, and the United States are the 5 permanent members. These five members hold veto power on the council. In order for the Security Council to pass a decision, all 5 of the permanent members must vote for it. The Security Council works to get countries to negotiate with each other to come to an agreement. In the case of civil war, the Council cannot intervene unless the war poses a danger to the rest of the world. Peacekeeping soldiers, called Blue Helmets, are sometimes sent to help initiate negotiation. They are neutral and do not fight.²

The **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** works to improve world economic problems. They focus on human development, women's issues, children, environment, food, and many more social issues. Because the job of ECOSOC is so huge, it works with smaller organizations in order to be able to address the various issues with which it is

1. ABCs of the UN (New York: UNA, 1995)

2. A World In Our Hands, (Berkeley: Tricycle Press, 1995) 30-32

involved. ECOSOC works with commissions such as the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Commission for Social Development. Specialized Agencies, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), work to help ECOSOC. Other UN Programmes that work with ECOSOC are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).³

The **Secretariat** is an organizational body of the UN. It makes sure that the other organizations are doing their jobs. The Secretariat is run by the Secretary-General who is elected by the General Assembly to serve a five-year term. Currently, the Secretary-General is Ban Ki-Moon from South Korea.

The **Trusteeship Council** works to bring independence to colonies protected by the UN called Trust Territories. When the Trusteeship Council was formed there were 11 such territories. In 1994, the last territory, Palau, became independent. Because of this, the council no longer meets annually as it did in the past; instead, it meets "as occasion requires." The fate of the Trusteeship Council is still being debated – it is said that the Council is currently "on sabbatical," but it has by no means been dissolved. While this situation is being decided, the Trusteeship Council meeting room is now used for general meetings of any committee or organization.

The **International Court of Justice** is made up of 15 judges who make decisions on disagreements between countries. Individuals cannot bring cases before the International Court of Justice – only countries can do that.

These 6 organs of the United Nations make up what is often referred to as the UN family.⁴

Although the **International Criminal Court** (ICC) is not a branch of the United Nations, their activities are very closely linked with the UN. The ICC was established in 1998 with the Rome Statute. Many UUs and members of the UU-UNO were involved in the writing of that document! The International Criminal Court handles international violators of human rights, such as leaders who commit war crimes, aid in genocide, or commit crimes against humanity.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are another major aspect of the UN structure. As you will read later, without NGOs, the United Nations would never be able to carry out the amount of work that it does.

The **Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office** is one such non-governmental organization. The UU-UNO promotes the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all, as reflected in the United Nations Charter. Through targeted education, advocacy and outreach, we engage Unitarian Universalists in support of international cooperation and the work of the United Nations.

As part of the UU-UNO mission, the "Every Child is Our Child Program" focuses on children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS and works toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of universal primary education, fighting HIV/AIDS, reducing hunger and poverty, and promoting gender equality. This effort is guided by our partnership with the Queen Mothers Association in the Manya Krobo region of Eastern Ghana.

3. What's the United Nations? (New York: United Nations, 1993).

4. A World In Our Hands. (Berkeley: Tricycle Press, 1995) 39.

Unit 1: Introducing the United Nations

Goal: The purpose of this unit is to orient students to the United Nations. Students will learn to recognize the United Nations symbol, gain a rough idea of the structure of the United Nations, and start forming questions about the various jobs the United Nations performs throughout the world.

Activity 1 (20 minutes)

You will need - Appendices 1, 2, 3, and 4.

- Blackboard space or 3 sheets of poster board in order to make 3 lists

Post the pictures of the United Nations logo and the Unitarian Universalist chalice in the front of the room (Appendix 1).

Start by asking why Unitarian Universalists use the chalice as a symbol of their beliefs. How does the chalice symbolize unity? Peace? Knowledge? Make a list of the children's answers. Explain that the UU symbol – a unique combination of the classical chalice and the flame – was designed after World War II by Hans Deutsch during his work with the UU Service Committee. To him, it symbolized sacrifice and love. What does it symbolize to the students?

Then focus on the UN logo. Ask students what they guess about the UN's beliefs and goals from the logo? What can they infer from the name United Nations? Make a separate list of the children's answers.

Draw comparisons between the two lists. How might the Unitarian Universalist goals be similar to those of the United Nations? How does the UU Principle that promotes "the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all"⁵ relate to the United Nations?

Then go on to introduce the United Nations as an organization made up of many countries throughout the world. Explain that these countries that formed the United Nations work to promote peace and justice in the world.

Print out a copy of the 7 UU Principles, the Preamble to the UN Charter, and the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Appendices 2-4). Have the children pass them around and take turns reading the 7 Principles and each line of the Preamble. Ask them questions about the similarities between the two documents. Then have them look through the Declaration. Do any of these articles match with the wording from the other two documents?

Lastly, put the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office symbol in-between the UN symbol and the UU Chalice. How does this symbol combine the ideas of the other two? What might that say about this office? Furthermore, what do you think this office might do to combine the ideas of the United Nations and those of Unitarian Universalists? Explain the mission of the UU-UNO to the students and describe the "Every Child is Our Child" program – information from the Teacher Primer.

Activity 2 (15 minutes) Choose either option 1 or 2.

Option 1 (easy) – Global Juggling



You will need - 3 balls or rolls of masking tape (or anything you can juggle with)

5. UUA Principles and Purposes. (Boston:UUA)

Divide students into 3 groups. Have groups 1 and 2 line up in 2 rows that are facing each other, group 1 on one side, group 2 on the other. Tell group 3 to scatter around the room outside of the 2 lines.

Start passing the first ball down the line, having the students throw the ball to the person across from them so that the ball zig-zags down the line. When it gets to the end of the line, the students should keep it going in the opposite direction. Try to get them to have 3 balls going at the same time.

Explain that when a ball is dropped, no one in groups 1 or 2 needs to worry about picking it up. Tell group 3 that their job is to pick up a ball whenever it falls and hand it to the person who dropped the ball.

After about 5 minutes, stop the game. Ask for the reactions. Did group 3 enjoy the game? Did they think it was fair? Ask them what would make the game more fun.

Add group 3 to the lines. (If there is not enough room, break up the line so that there are 2 sets of lines facing each other.) Try the game again for a few minutes with everyone playing. It is now everyone's job to pick up the balls that were dropped.

Review the game a second time. Talk about how the game was different this time. Was it better?



Option 2 (advanced) - Alien Olympics

You will need - Index card that explain the rules stated below for the 3 groups.

- 1 bag of jellybeans

Divide the class into 3 groups. Explain that each group is a team of aliens representing a different planet at the Alien Olympics. Give each of the groups a card that explains one of the following sets of instructions:

Purplations: You are from the planet Purpla where everyone travels from place to place on tightropes. You have learned to be very careful because the ground is several feet below the tightropes. If you fall off, you could hurt yourself. Even though you are not on your planet now, and you are not walking on tightropes, you still travel as if you were. You must walk very cautiously! The heel of your foot must touch the tip of the toes behind it when you move forward.

Nips: Your planet is Nipey. Nipey is a very small planet where everybody knows everyone else very well. Because of this, every time a Nip is walking down the street, he or she always has to stop to talk to a friend who happens to be walking by. Over time Nips have developed a habit when they walk. Every time they take 3 steps forward, they take one step backward. You must walk this way now because it is the only way you know how to get around.

Viloticks: Your home is Vilotitia where everything happens twice as fast as it does everywhere else. The days pass by rapidly. People eat very quickly. People grow old much more quickly than on Earth. Because of the speed with which things happen on the planet Vilotitia, people need something faster than walking to get from place to place. Instead of walking, they skip to their destinations. Here at the Olympics, you will skip whenever you travel from place to place.

After the teams have had time to read their cards, explain the event. Tell students that they will all line up at the back of the room. The first entire team to get to the jelly beans wins the candy for their planet. On the count of 3 tell them all to go.

After the 1st race, ask the teams what they thought about the competition. Who won? Was it obvious from the beginning that a certain team would win? Brainstorm how the race could be fairer.

Try it again with the solutions the students come up with (possibly giving the Nips and the Purplations a head start). Talk about how this race was different. Was it better?

At the end of class divide the candy evenly among the students.

Activity 3 (5 minutes)

Defining Justice

Write the word justice on the blackboard. Explain that justice is another word for fairness. Explain that one of the things the United Nations does is work for justice for people in every part of the world. The United Nations works to create a world in which everyone's rights are honored, where people have equal chances.

Ask the student how they feel about fairness. How did it feel to be treated unfairly? How did it feel when everyone had an equal chance? Is it true that everyone has the right to an equal chance?

For further discussion talk about some ways in which people's rights are not honored in the world. Ask for examples of people being treated unfairly. Discuss how racism and prejudice make it impossible for everyone to have equal opportunities.

Activity 4 (15 minutes)

United Nations Body

You will need - a copy of Appendix 5 for each student (It's two pages, so try to double-side it!)

- 6 pieces of paper each with one of the names of the 6 main bodies of the United Nations.

Write at the top of each page: The General Assembly, The Secretariat (led by the Secretary General), The International Court of Justice, The Economic and Social Council, The Trusteeship Council, and the Security Council.

Refer to page 7 to explain the function of the 6 groups that make up the body of the United Nations. Then have them divide quickly into 6 groups. Give each group one of the papers. Have them decide what part of the human body their section would be. They should draw this body part with pens or markers on the sheet of paper. Paste the sheets of paper together somewhere in the classroom to create the United Nations Body.

Discuss what each group decided after they have pasted the papers together. Is there more than one body part that each of the divisions of the United Nations could be? If two groups picked the same part of the body, discuss why that happened. How many of these groups act like the brain? The heart? See the next page for an example of what may happen in class.

Before dismissing class, review the day's lessons and activities. Ask the students to go over the six main branches of the UN and how they can help people all over the world, and discuss briefly how the activity made them feel about justice.

Don't forget to pass out the homework before they leave class if you desire to do so!

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

Preamble to the United Nations Charter

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

- to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and
- to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and
- to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
- to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS

Appendix 3

The Seven Unitarian Universalist Principles

The inherent worth and dignity of every person

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations
and in society at large

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Appendix 4

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to the same rights without discrimination of any kind.

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security.

Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6: Everyone has the right to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7: Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection of the law.

Article 8: Everyone has the right to justice.

Article 9: No one shall be arrested, detained, or exiled arbitrarily.

Article 10: Everyone has the right to a fair trial.

Article 11: Everyone has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Article 12: Everyone has the right to privacy.

Article 13: Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and to leave and return to one's country.

Article 14: Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution.

Article 15: Everyone has the right to a nationality.

Article 16: All adults have the right to marry and found a family. Women and men have equal rights to marry, within marriage, and at its dissolution.

Article 17: Everyone has the right to own property.

Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Article 20: Everyone has the right to peaceful assembly and association

Article 21: Everyone has the right to take part in government of one's country.

Article 22: Everyone has the right to social security and to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for dignity.

Article 23: Everyone has the right to work, to just conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to equal pay for equal work, to sufficient pay to ensure a dignified existence for one's self and one's family, and the right to join a trade union.

Article 24: Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.

Article 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services.

Article 26: Everyone has the right to education.

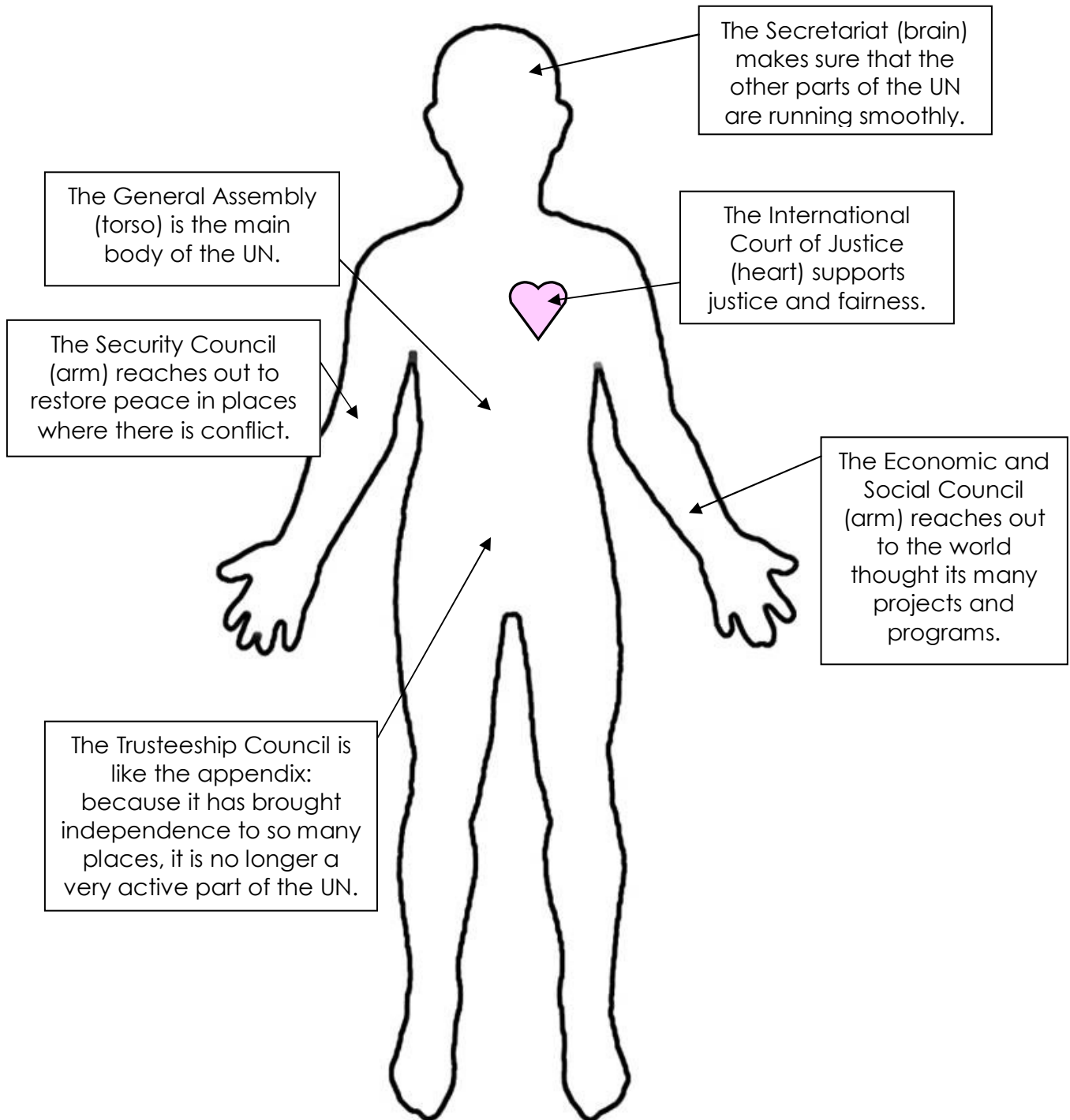
Article 27: Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community.

Article 28: Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which these rights can be realized fully.

Article 29: Everyone has duties to the community.

Article 30: No person, group or government has the right to destroy any of these human rights. No one human right can violate another.

United Nations Body (example)



UN System⁶

The 6 main parts of the United Nations can be compared to parts of the human body. What else can the UN system be compared to? Draw a picture of a machine, an animal, a piece of food, or anything you can think of, and label it with the 6 main parts of the United Nations. (They're listed below to help you out.) Use the bottom of this sheet for design.

Security Council

The Security Council is in charge of keeping peace in the world. There are 5 permanent members on the Security Council: China, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Ten other members are elected to the Security Council for two-year terms.

Secretariat

The Secretariat helps the other parts of the UN complete and organize their projects.

The Secretary-General leads the Secretariat. Currently, the Secretary-General is Ban Ki-Moon.

Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council works on such issues as human rights, population control, and development for women.

Trusteeship Council

The Trusteeship Council helps colonies gain their independence. All of the 11 countries the Trusteeship Council was originally placed in charge of are independent now. This part of the UN may not be needed in the future.

General Assembly

General Assembly is a 3 month long meeting where all of the UN member countries meet to hear reports from the other 5 parts of the UN, to make decisions on international issues and to decide on

The International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice is made up of 15 judges and makes decisions on disagreements between different countries.

6. ABCs of the UN (New York: UNA, 1995)