

## General Assembly

The United Nations General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN), the only one in which all member nations have equal representation, and the main deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the UN. Its powers are to oversee the budget of the UN, appoint the non-permanent members to the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General of the United Nations, receive reports from other parts of the UN and make recommendations in the form of General Assembly Resolutions.

The General Assembly currently meets under its president or secretary-general in annual sessions at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York City, the main part of which lasts from September to December and resumed part from January until all issues are addressed (which often is just before the next session's start). It can also reconvene for special and emergency special sessions. Its composition, functions, powers, voting, and procedures are set out in Chapter IV of the United Nations Charter. The first session was convened on 10 January 1946 in the Methodist Central Hall in London and included representatives of 51 nations.

The Assembly is empowered to make recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has also initiated actions—political, economic, humanitarian, social and legal—which have affected the lives of millions of people throughout the world. The landmark Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, reflect the commitment of Member States:

- to reach specific goals to attain peace, security and disarmament along with development and poverty eradication;
- to safeguard human rights and promote the rule of law;
- to protect our common environment;
- to meet the special needs of Africa; and
- to strengthen the United Nations.

The first session of the UN General Assembly was convened on 10 January 1946 in the Methodist Central Hall in London and included representatives of 51 nations. The next few annual sessions were held in different cities: the second session in New York City, and the

third in Paris. It moved to the permanent Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City at the start of its seventh regular annual session, on 14 October 1952. In December 1988, in order to hear Yasser Arafat, the General Assembly organized its 29th session in the Palace of Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland.

The General Assembly (GA) is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority. Decisions on other questions are by simple majority. Each country has one vote. Some Member States in arrear of payment may be granted the right to vote. See the list of countries in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions. The Assembly has adopted its own rules of procedure and elects its President and 21 Vice-Presidents for each session.

The General Assembly votes on many resolutions brought forth by sponsoring states. These are generally statements symbolizing the sense of the international community about an array of world issues. Most General Assembly resolutions are not enforceable as a legal or practical matter, because the General Assembly lack enforcement powers with respect to most issues. The General Assembly has authority to make final decisions in some areas such as the United Nations budget.

General Assembly Resolutions are generally non-binding on member states, but carry considerable political weight, and are legally binding towards the operations of the General Assembly. The General Assembly can also refer an issue to the Security Council to put in place a binding resolution.

## Members

All 193 members of the United Nations are members of the General Assembly. Further, the United Nations General Assembly may grant observer status to an international organization, entity or non-member state, which entitles the entity to participate in the work of the United Nations General Assembly, though with limitations.

## References

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