UNIT 12 ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS*

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will be studying about the United Nations. This Unit would enable you to understand:

- The objectives/purposes, principles and the principal organs of the UN
- Role of the UN in international politics
- Its major achievements and failures
- Need for democratization of UN System through reforms and
- Future prospects of the UN

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) was established on 24 October 1945. It is the only truly universal and global intergovernmental organization created to date. It was founded with 51 nations; UN now consists of 193 states as its members. The UN continues to be the only global international organization and actor that has an agenda encompassing the broadest range of governance issues. As the world’s only truly global organization, the UN has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries; and, which cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone – no matter, how mighty. It is a complex system that serves as the central site for multilateral diplomacy, with the UN’s General Assembly as the center stage. Three weeks of general debate at the opening of each annual session of General Assembly in the month of September draws foreign ministers and heads of state and government from small and large states to take advantage of the opportunity to address the nations of the world and to engage in intensive diplomacy. All these years, the UN has played a significant role in world affairs. Without it, the world we live in today would have been totally different. It has prevented breakout of another major war after the 2nd World War.

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Its role may not be highly satisfactory to every person in maintaining international peace and security, but its active role succeeded in cooling off tensions between Super Powers and other major Powers in the world, particularly during the period of Cold War. However, its role in creating human rights norms, undertaking humanitarian activities and tackling refugee problems, to name only few, are laudatory. It is not like a world government expected to solve all major problems in the world, and with power to enforce its orders. However, it does provide the means to help resolve international conflicts and formulate policies on matters affecting humanity. The UN is a forum where all countries meet to discuss, elaborate and extend international law in areas such as as human rights, international trade, freedom of navigation and uses of the seas, and the fight against terrorism.

12.2 OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES, AND ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

As set forth in its Charter, the UN has four purposes:

- To maintain international peace and security
- To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- To cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and
- To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these common ends

In other words, the UN is mandated to safeguard peace and security; “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights; to uphold respect for international law; and to promote social progress and better standards of life. UN’s original vision was built on four pillars; the first three – peace, development and human rights – have become increasingly intertwined and support a consistent and integrated framework of national and international priorities. The UN’s fourth founding pillar – sovereign independence – although largely achieved during the UN’s first two decades through decolonization, is now under scrutiny because of a concern for ‘reasonable limits’ on state sovereignty. The United Nations acts, to pursue its objectives, in accordance with the following principles.

- It is based on the sovereign equality of all its members
- All members are to fulfill in good faith their Charter obligations
- They are to settle their international disputes by peaceful means and without endangering international peace and security and justice
- They are to refrain from the threat or use of force against any other state
- Neither they nor any member or the UN should interfere in domestic matters of any State

To enable the UN to achieve its stated purposes and objectives the organization has been equipped with following six main organs.
12.2.1 General Assembly

The General Assembly, perhaps the closest approximation of a world parliament, is the main deliberative and legislative body. It is designed to utilize the time-honoured technique of resolving problems by free and frank discussions and as per the provisions of the customary international law. It is to function as the world’s permanent forum and a meeting place. It is created on the assumption that “war of words” is better than war fought with bombs and weapons. All the UN Members are represented in it; and each has one vote on the basis of sovereign equality. Decisions on ordinary matters are taken by simple majority. Important questions require two third of the votes. The Assembly has the right to discuss and make recommendations on all matters within the scope of the UN Charter. Its decisions are not binding on member States, but they carry the weight of law, ethics and world public opinion. Thus, it does not legislate like national parliament. But in the meeting rooms and corridors of the UN, representatives of almost all countries of the world – large and small, rich and poor, from diverse political and social systems – have a voice and vote in shaping the policies of the international community.

12.2.2 Security Council

The Security Council is the organ to which the Charter gives primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It can be convened at any time, even at midnight when peace is threatened. Member States are obligated to carry out its decisions. It has 15 members. Five of these – China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK, and the US – are permanent members, known as P5; they are also the nuclear weapons states. The other 10 are elected by the Assembly for a two year term. A decision cannot be taken if there is “no” or negative vote by a permanent member (known as “veto”) on substantive questions. In common parlance, veto is known in the UN Charter as “Great Power unanimity” rule. When a threat to peace is brought before the Council, it usually first asks the parties to reach agreement by peaceful means. The Council may undertake mediation or set forth principles for settlement. It may request the Secretary General to investigate and report on a situation. If fighting breaks out, the Council tries to secure a ceasefire. It may send peace-keeping units (observers or troops) to troubled areas, with the consent of the parties involved, to reduce tension and keep opposing forces apart. Unlike the General Assembly resolutions, its decisions are binding and it has the power to enforce its decisions by imposing economic sanctions and by ordering military action under the principle of “collective security”.

12.2.3 Economic and Social Council

Absence or prevention of war does not automatically ensure a peaceful international system. To diminish the underlying causes of future conflicts that might lead to such threats to the peace or breach of peace, the founding fathers of the UN also provided mechanisms for economic and social progress and development and to promote higher standards of living. This job has been assigned to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - third main organ of UN. The ECOSOC has 54 members. It usually holds two-month long session each year. It coordinates the economic and social work of the UN and other specialized agencies and institutions – together known as the UN Family or simply as the
UN System. It recommends and directs activities aimed at, among others, promoting economic growth of developing countries, administering development and humanitarian assistance projects, promoting the observance of human rights, ending discrimination against minorities, spreading the benefits of science and technology, and fostering world cooperation in areas such as better housing, family planning and crime prevention.

Let us elaborate what constitutes the UN System. It consists of the UN, its 15 Specialized Agencies, and its various programmes. Following Specialized Agencies are part of the UN System: ILO (International Labour Organization), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), WHO (World Health Organization), IBRD (International Bank Reconstruction and Development – the World Bank), IMF (International Monetary Fund), ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization), IMO (International Maritime Organization), ITU (International Telecommunication Union), UPU (Universal Postal Union) WMO (World Meteorological Organization), WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization), UNWTO (World Tourism Organization).


It must be noted that the Specialized Agencies and UN Programmes and Funds work under ECOSOC and report to it.

### 12.2.4 The Trusteeship Council

The Trusteeship Council was created to supervise the administration of 11 Trust Territories and to ensure that Governments responsible for their administration take adequate steps to prepare them for self-government and independence. It is gratifying to note that all these territories had attained independence by the end of 1994 and now this body has little work.

### 12.2.5 The International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice consists of 15 judges who are elected concurrently by the General Assembly and the Security Council. It resolves legal issues and interprets international treaties.

### 12.2.6 The Secretariat

The Secretariat is the sixth main organ of the UN. It consists of a Secretary-General and other staff and personnel who run the UN administration and carry
out day-to-day work of the UN. Staff members are drawn from 193 members of UN. As international civil servants, they work for the UN as a whole, and pledge not to take or seek instructions from any government or outside authority. Calling upon some 41,000 staff members worldwide, the Secretariat services the other principal organs of the UN and administers the programmes and policies established by them. At its head is the Secretary-General, who is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. Till now the office of the Secretary-General has been occupied by nine incumbents: Trygve Lie (Norway), Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden), U. Thant (Myanmar), Kurt Waldheim (Austria), Javier Perez de Cuellar (Peru), Boutros Boutros Ghali (Egypt), Kofi Annan (Ghana), Ban Ki-moon (Republic of Korea) and Antonio Guterres (Greece).

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Why the United Nations has been established by the international community?

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12.3 ROLE OF THE UN SYSTEM IN ACHIEVING PEACE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In spite of the careful framing of the UN Charter, the UN was unable to solve many problems of the world due to the Cold War between the US and the former USSR. On the other hand, it played an important role in a number of international crises by arranging ceasefires and negotiations, and by providing peacekeeping forces. Its successes in non-political work care of refugees, protection of human rights, economic planning and attempts to deal with problems of world health, population and famine have been enormous. The Security Council of the UN is its principal organ to maintain international peace and security. The Council works on the principle of “collective security”. This concept treats the aggression of one state against the other States as an attack on all member States of the UN. It allows the Security Council to take action against the aggressor only when five of its permanent members (which are great Powers) the US, USSR, France, China and Britain are unanimous on such action. Any negative vote (veto) will prevent such action. Any veto will kill the concept of collective security. The Council was paralyzed many times by use of veto during the Cold War (1945-1991). In order to secure some action in case of a veto by one of the P5 countries, the General Assembly (GA) (at the time of the Korean War in 1950) introduced the “Uniting for Peace” Resolution. This resolution stated that if the Security Council’s proposals were vetoed, the GA could meet within 24 hours and decide
what action to take, even military intervention if necessary. In cases like this, a
decision by the Assembly would only need a two-thirds majority. Again this new
rule was not incorporated in the UN Charter, and the USSR, which exercised
more vetoes than any P5 states, always maintained that a Security Council veto
should take precedence over a GA decision. Nevertheless, the Assembly acted in
this way many times, ignoring Russian protests.

How successful has been the UN as a peacekeeping organization? Although it
has had mixed success, it is probably fair to say that the UN has been more
successful than the League of Nations in its peacekeeping efforts, especially in
crises which did not directly involve the interests of the great powers, such as the
civil war in the Congo (1960-64). On the other hand, it has often been ineffective
like the League in situations where the interests of one of the great powers –
were involved (e.g., the 1956 Hungarian crisis and the 1968 Czech crisis). The
best way to illustrate the UN’s varying degrees of success is to examine some of
the major disputes (both during the Cold War and post-Cold War) in which it has
been involved.

A) **Palestine (1947 – Till Present):** The dispute between Jews and the Arabs
in Palestine was brought before the UN in 1947. After an investigation, the
UN decided to divide Palestine, setting up the Jewish state of Israel. This
was one of the most controversial UN decisions, and it was not accepted
by the Arab states. The UN was unable to prevent three Arab-Israeli wars (1948-
49, 1967 and 1973) over the question of Palestine. However, it did useful
work arranging ceasefires and providing supervisory forces, and caring for
the Arab refugees. Due to strong US support to Israel and the disunity among
Arab states, the UN has not been able to resolve the Palestine issue till date.

B) **The Korean War (1950-53):** This was the only occasion on which the UN
was able to take decisive action in a crisis directly involving the interests of
one of the superpowers. When South Korea was invaded by communist
North Korea in June 1950, the Security Council immediately passed a
resolution condemning North Korea, and called on UN members to send
help to South Korea. However, this was possible because the USSR was
boycotting UNSC meeting in protest at the failure of allow PRC to join the
UN. Although the Russian delegates returned soon (to cast its veto), it was
too late for them to prevent action going ahead. Troops of 16 countries
were able to repel the invasion and preserve the borders between the two
Koreas along the 38th parallel. Though this was claimed by the West as a
great success, it was in fact very much an American operation the vast
majority of troops and the Commander-in-Chief, General MacArthur, were
American, and the US government had already decided to intervene with
force the day before the Security Council vote was taken. Only the absence
of the Russians enabled the USA to turn it into a UN operation. When the
USSR started vetoing further resolutions against North Korea, the General
Assembly passed its famous resolution, “Uniting for Peace”, as discussed
above.

C) **The Suez Crisis (1956):** On the sudden nationalization of Suez Canal by
President Nasser of Egypt in 1956, Egypt was attacked by Britain and France
(which owned shares in Suez Canal Company) and Israel. When the Security
Council resolution condemning use of force by Britain and France was
vetoed, the General Assembly under “Uniting for Peace” resolution not
only condemned the invasion (by majority of 64 to 5) but also called for a withdrawal of troops. In view of the weight of opinion against them, the aggressors agreed to withdraw, provided the UN ensured a reasonable settlement over the Canal and kept away the Arabs and Israelis from slaughtering each other. The UN General Assembly sent UN Peace Keeping forces (5000 peacekeeping soldiers) to Egypt to supervise ceasefire agreement. The Canadian diplomat, Lester Pearson, had invented the idea of Peacekeeping. He received Nobel Peace Prize later for his contribution to world peace. The UN was quite successful in maintaining peace in the region, though Russian and American pressure was also important in bringing about ceasefire. However, the UN was not so successful in the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict.

D) The Iran-Iraq War (1980-88): The UN was successful in bringing an end to the long-drawn-out war between Iran and Iraq. After years of attempting to mediate, the UN at last negotiated a ceasefire, though admittedly they were helped by the fact that both sides were close to exhaustion.

E) The 1991 Gulf War: UN action on the war was impressive. When Saddam Hussain of Iraq sent his troops to invade and capture the tiny, but extremely rich, neighbouring state of Kuwait (August 1990), the UNSC wanted him to withdraw or face the consequences. When he refused, a large UN force was sent to Kuwait. In a short decisive campaign, Iraqi troops were driven out, suffering heavy losses, and Kuwait was liberated. However, the critics of the UN complained that Kuwait had received help only because the West needed her oil supplies. Other small states, like East Timor (which was taken over by Indonesia in 1975) did not receive help.

Why the UN is not so successful in enforcing peace in the world? There are five reasons, given below.

- The lack of a permanent UN army
- Lack of unanimity among P5
- Veto power of P5
- Shortage of funds and
- Non-cooperation of member states

Economic and Social Development

Although most people associate the United Nations with the issues of peace and security, the vast majority of the organization’s resources are in fact devoted to advancing the Charter’s pledge to “promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development”. United Nations development efforts have profoundly affected the lives and well-being of millions of people throughout the world. Guiding the UN endeavours is the conviction that lasting international peace and security are possible only if the economic and social well-being of people everywhere is assured. Many of the economic and social transformations that have taken place globally since 1945 have been significantly affected in their direction and shape by the work of the United Nations. As the global centre for consensus-building, the UN has set priorities and goals for international cooperation to assist countries in their development efforts and to foster a supportive global economic environment.
The UN has provided a platform for formulating and promoting key new developmental objectives on the international agenda through a series of global conferences. It has articulated the need for incorporating issues such as the advancement of women, human rights, sustainable development, environmental protection and good governance into the development paradigm. Over the years, the world view of development has changed. Today, countries agree that ‘sustainable development’ – development that promotes prosperity and economic opportunity, greater social wellbeing, and protection of environment – offers the best path forward for improving the lives of people everywhere.

At their Millennium Summit in 2000, member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, which contained a set of wide-ranging goals for the future course of the UN. The Declaration was translated into a roadmap that included eight time-bound and measurable goals to be reached by 2015, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs aim to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and the empowerment of women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. The 2030 Agenda officially came into force on 1 January 2016, marking a new course for the UN towards ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all by 2030. Three other accords adopted in 2015 play critical roles in the global development agenda: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sendai Framework on disaster risk reduction.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
   ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Why the UN has been less successful in promoting international peace?

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12.4 ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES OF THE UN

The United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, protect human rights, maintain international peace and security, and uphold international law. It history is marked with many successes, but also disappointments. We need to look at both sides so that we can make the UN more effective in the future. This section lists some of its achievements and failures.
12.4.1 Achievements of the UN

A) One of the greatest achievements of the UN is its role in the field of decolonization. It gave inspiration to millions of Africans and Asians, who were under colonial rule, to claim the right of self-determination and independence. When the UN was founded in 1945, 80 of the present UN members were colonies. The UN helped many of them, having 750 million people, to achieve independence. With this development the International Relations have been democratized.

B) The UN has an impressive record of resolving many international conflicts. U.N. peacekeepers have, since 1945, undertaken over 60 field missions and negotiated 172 peaceful settlements that ended regional conflicts. Right now, peacekeepers are in 20 hot spots around the world trying to save lives and avert wars.

C) One of the most significant achievements of the UN is the creation of a comprehensive body of human rights law – a universal and internationally protected code to which all nations can subscribe and all people aspire. It has defined a broad range of internationally accepted rights, including civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights. It has International Bill of Human Rights (consisting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, and the two International Covenants on civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, 1966). Besides the International Bill of Rights, it has adopted nearly 80 human rights treaties or declarations. It has also established mechanisms to promote and protect these rights and to assist states in carrying out their responsibilities.

D) More international law has been created through the UN in last seven decades than in the entire previous history of humankind. It has made major contributions towards expanding the rule of law among nations through the codification of international law.

E) Today the UN provides food and assistance to 80 million people in 80 countries, supplies vaccine to millions of children and helps save 3 million lives a year, and assists and protects 67.7 million people fleeing war, famine and persecution. It fights extreme poverty, helping improve the lives of more than one billion people. It supports maternal health, helping over 1 million women a month overcome pregnancy risks.

F) It works with 195 nations to keep the global temperature rise below 2°C/3.6 F.

G) UN keeps peace with 104,000 peacekeepers in 14 operations around the world.

H) It tackles the global water crisis affecting over 2 billion people worldwide.

I) It coordinates US $24.7 billion appeal for the humanitarian needs of 145 million people.

J) It uses diplomacy to prevent conflict; assists some 50 countries a year with their elections.

K) UN’s success can be gauged from the fact that 12 Nobel Peace Prize have been awarded to it, its specialized agencies, programmes and staff. This
included an award in 1988 to the UN Peacekeeping Forces in 2001 to the UN and its secretary-general, Kofi Annan. In 2020, Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to World Food Program, a UN special agency that fights hunger around the world.

L) The UN has made progress with its eight Millennium Development Goals, which has been followed by 17 Sustainable Development Goals to enhance social, environmental and economic progress by 2030.

M) Along similar lines, the UN’s International Court of Justice has resolved major international disputes, but the UN’s veto powers have limited its effectiveness at critical times.

12.4.2 Shortcomings of the UN

The UN is not without shortcomings. Following UN failures should be noted.

A) In 1970, when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed by 190 nations, all five superpowers owned nuclear weapons. Later, despite the NPT and Partial Test Ban Treaty, several countries – North Korea, Israel, Pakistan, and India – developed nuclear weapons. This revealed the UN’s inability to enforce regulations on offending nations as well as promote the goal of universal nuclear disarmament.

B) The International Criminal Court, established in 2002, has prosecuted several war criminals – but it has been criticized for prosecuting only African leaders while Western powers too have committed war crimes.

C) Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary-General from 1953-1961, said that the “UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell.” The UN has solved many violent conflicts, prevented wars, and saved millions of lives but it also faced disappointments.

D) In Rwanda, over 800,000 were massacred in 100 days. In 1995, Bosnian Serb forces overran the “safe zone” of Srebrenica and massacred 8,000 Muslim men and boys. In Darfur, an estimated 300,000 Sudanese civilians were killed. In Nigeria, Boko Haram has killed over 13,000 people.

E) A recent report by “Body Count” revealed that “in addition to one million deaths in Iraq, an estimated 220,000 people have been killed in Afghanistan and 80,000 in Pakistan as a result of US foreign policy”.

F) In recent years, Israel attacked homes, schools, hospitals, and U.N. shelters in Gaza killing 2,200 Palestinians. Condemning that action, Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that “Israel was deliberately defying international law in its military offensive in Gaza and that world powers should hold it accountable for possible war crimes.” The UN Security Council (SC) has failed as the United States vetoes any action against Israel.

G) The Arab Spring in the Middle East caused thousands of deaths and regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Libya is devastated with over 40,000 deaths, and the civil war in Syria has killed over 220,000 people. These wars have displaced over 50 million people. Now, ISIS has infiltrated
these countries causing gruesome killings, human rights abuses, and war crimes, at an unprecedented rate. These catastrophic events might have been prevented if the Member States of the UN had the ability to resolutely act in a timely manner. But the UN is not a world government, and it does not have a standing army of peace-keepers ready for deployment. And, it is the Member States that make decisions at the UN. These setbacks clearly reflect the shortcomings of the UN Security Council, and its veto powers that allow some members’ own interests to be placed ahead of the need to end a raging conflict. Navi Pillay, addressing the Security Council, said that “short-term geopolitical considerations and national interest, narrowly defined, have repeatedly taken precedence over intolerable human suffering and grave breaches of – and long-term threats to – international peace and security.”

H) During the last 75 years, geopolitics has changed drastically that call for reform of the UN – to meet global needs and challenges of the 21st century.

I) Member States accuse the Security Council of being arrogant, secretive and undemocratic but the veto powers resist change. Meanwhile, violations of the UN Charter by powerful countries continue to erode the effectiveness of the United Nations.

12.5 REFORMING OR RESTRUCTURING THE UN SYSTEM

Since the meeting of the Heads of Government of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, a global debate on the restructuring of the UN System has begun. Many proposals have been made in this regard. The main objective of such reform proposals is to make the UN, specially its Security Council, more democratic, efficient and adaptable to the changing international milieu. Since the UN responsibilities and concerns are world-wide and are now expanding to virtually every conceivable area of human activity, it is imperative to re-design the UN structure so that it can meet the challenges of the 21st century. One of the suggestions included that the Security Council should be expanded from 15 to 23 or 25, out of which 5 should be additional permanent members – two industrialized countries (Japan and Germany), and three large developing countries (Brazil, India and Nigeria). Names of South Africa, Egypt are also discussed for permanent membership of the Council. More than 25 years have passed since the debate of expanding Security Council began but no consensus has emerged among P5 nations to come to any conclusion. However, some administrative reforms were carried out by trimming the Secretariat during the tenures of Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon.

It has been argued that the UN Security Council should be reformed so that it becomes truly democratic. At the moment, only five veto power countries decide the matters related to world politics. These five countries have their own differences due to which they are not able to decide important matters. If the UNSC has to be democratic, there should be more members in it from different parts of the world. The UNSC reflects the reality of 1940s geopolitics when the Second World War was being fought. The UNSC should reflect the contemporary geopolitics in which new powers like India, Japan and Germany have risen and play an important part in international relations. India is part of the G-4 grouping along with Japan, Germany and Brazil which support each other as permanent
members of the UNSC. This group seeks UNSC reform to make it more democratic and representative. India’s claim to the permanent membership of the UNSC is based on following.

- Ancient Civilization with the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Whole World is a Family)
- Pluralist Democracy
- Status Quoist power
- Responsible nuclear power
- Economic Strength
- One fifth of world’s population lives in India. To make the UNSC truly democratic, India cannot be kept out of global decision making institutions.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) List some important achievements of the the UN.

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12.6 LET US SUM UP

History has proved that the UN has become an irreplaceable part of international relations and international community. It has been playing a significant, sometimes historic, role in world politics. Its modest achievements listed in the Unit are testimony to it. It is a fact that, as mandated by its Charter, the UN has prevented another World War. The UN has made impressive and unprecedented progress in all aspects of human development, bringing great benefits to millions of people around the world. Our convoluted world needs the UN. The Security Council must be reformed and strengthened to enable the UN as a whole to confront and resolve complex challenges of our world. Former US President Obama has said, the UN is imperfect, but it is also indispensable. UN’s contribution to ideas, analysis, and policy making in the economic and social arena is one of its most important achievements. UN’s thinking and ideas in these arenas have had a major positive impact in many countries. Success and failures of the UN reflect the strengths and weaknesses of commitment and support from both the member states of the UN and the staff members. Let us conclude our discussion by quoting Jussi M Hanhimaki (The United Nations: A Very Short Introduction) who wrote: In the end, the UN cannot and should not be expected to offer solutions to all of the world’s ills. It does much good humanitarian work and often provides ways of easing tension and solving crises. It often enables people stuck in poverty to improve their lot. The UN is hardly perfect. But it remains an indispensable organization even as its behavior and effectiveness – much like that of individual countries – is in constant need of improvement.
12.7 REFERENCES


12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Your answer should highlight the following points
International Organisations

- The UN has prevented another World War
- Active role in cooling off tensions between Super Powers and other major Powers
- Exemplary role in creating human rights norms, undertaking humanitarian activities and tackling refugee problems
- The UN is a forum where all countries meet to discuss issues important for the world

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your answer should highlight the following points
   - The lack of a permanent UN army
   - Lack of unanimity among P5
   - Veto power of P5
   - Shortage of funds and
   - Non-cooperation of member states

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Highlight the following
   - UN’s role in decolonization
   - Peacekeeping efforts and mission
   - Creation of Human Rights Law
   - Role in fighting hunger and poverty