

The United Nations at 50 : 1944-1995

How it All Began: A Chronology

Inter-Allied Declaration
Signed in London on 12 June 1941, the Inter-Allied Declaration "to work together, with other free peoples, both in war and peace" was the first of a series of steps which led to the establishment of the United Nations.

Atlantic Charter
On 14 August 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom proposed a set of principles for international collaboration in maintaining peace and security. The document, signed during a meeting "somewhere at sea," came to be known as the Atlantic Charter.

Declaration by United Nations
On 1 January 1942, the representatives of 26 nations that were fighting against the Axis proclaimed their support for the Atlantic Charter

by signing the "Declaration by United Nations." This document marked the first official use of the term "United Nations," which was suggested by President Roosevelt.

Moscow and Tehran Conferences
In a declaration signed in Moscow on 30 October 1943, the Governments of the USSR, UK, US and China called for an early establishment of an international organisation to maintain peace and security. That goal was reaffirmed at the meeting of the leaders of the US, USSR and UK at Tehran on 1 December 1943.

Dumbarton Oaks Conference
The first blueprint of the UN was prepared at a conference held at a mansion known as Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC. During two phases of meetings which ran from 21 September through 7 October 1944, the representatives of the USSR, UK,

US and China agreed on the aims, structure and functioning of a world organisation.

Yalta Conference
On 11 February 1945, following their meetings at Yalta, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Stalin declared their resolve to establish "a general international organisation to maintain peace and security."

San Francisco Conference
On 25 April 1945, delegates of 50 nations met in San Francisco for the conference known officially as the United Nations Conference on International Organisation. The delegates drew up the 111-Article Charter which was adopted unanimously on 25 June 1945. The next day they signed it in the auditorium of the Veterans' Memorial Hall.

30 September 1960
UNICEF convenes World Summit for Children with 71 heads of state/government which adopts Plan of Action.

31 May 1991
A cease-fire in the 16-year civil war in Angola is negotiated, then administered by UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM).

31 December 1991
Agreement signed at UN Headquarters through the good offices of the Secretary-General between the Government of El Salvador and FMLN (national liberation front) leads to a cease-fire and peace accord after a 10-year war.

31 January 1992
Security Council holds its first ever meeting at the level of heads of state and government.

June 1992
The UN Conference on Environment and Development, the "Earth Summit," is held in Rio de Janeiro attended by 104 heads of state or government and other leaders, the largest intergovernmental gathering in history, resulting in Agenda 21, a plan of action for sustainable development.

17 June 1992
Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali issues "an Agenda for Peace" on preventive diplomacy, peace making, peace-keeping and peace-building.

May 1993
The United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea contributes to the declaration of Eritrean independence and the country's admission to the United Nations. UN-supervised elections in Cambodia lead to the drafting of a new constitution and the establishment of the new government, ending nearly 15 years of strife in the war-torn country.

June 1993
World Conference on Human Rights is held in Vienna, during the International Year for Indigenous Peoples.

6 May 1994
In response to the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General produces a report on "An Agenda for Development," a blueprint for improving the human condition.

12 September 1994
The United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo adopts a landmark Programme of Action.

March 1995
The Social Summit, the largest gathering of world leaders in history, meets to renew the commitment to resolving poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

September 1995
The Fourth World Conference on Women meets in Beijing to focus on persistent problems common to women from all parts of the globe.



MESSAGE

In the course of the past half-century, the Charter of the United Nations has become the legal and moral foundation of international relations. Despite the vast changes we have witnessed, the principles of international cooperation enshrined in the Charter have lost none of their validity. Today, the Charter is an indispensable instrument for international cooperation for peace and progress.

While the Charter expresses universal principles and aspirations, it allows for flexibility and pragmatism in their implementation. The vision of the drafters — to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, to establish conditions under which democracy may be achieved, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom — must be constantly reapplied in the light of changing conditions.

Today the international age is giving way to the global age. We are seeing that the principles of international cooperation are closely interrelated, and must be pursued together. A comprehensive vision of development is essential if the underlying causes of conflict are to be effectively addressed. And the cycle of conflict which affects the world today must be contained; only then can development — our primary task — receive the attention it must have.

The Charter is a great human achievement. It is a document of historic dimension, and a priceless asset for humanity. Its very existence is a matter for celebration.

The Fiftieth Anniversary year is an occasion for reflection and renewal. As the Peoples of the United Nations contemplate an uncertain future, the Charter is an instrument which can chart the way forward. The ideas of the Charter must be rekindled. Capacities to meet new challenges must be strengthened. The enduring validity of the Charter's principles calls upon each new generation to renew its promise with creativity and a commitment to human solidarity.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary-General

New York City Kicks off Celebrations for UN50



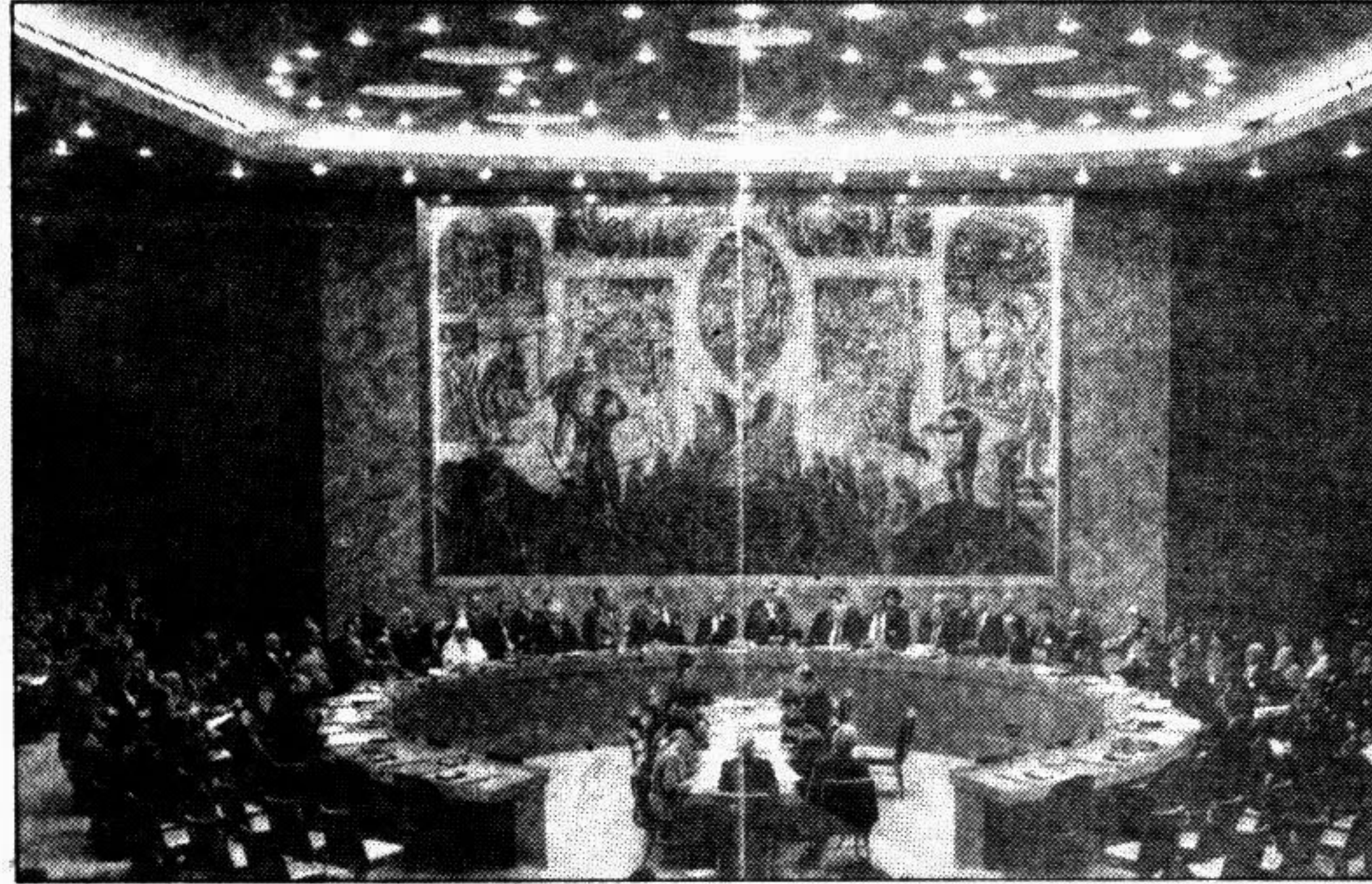
President and CEO of Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, comprises major New York business, civic and cultural leaders in such fields as finance, entertainment, news media and real estate.

In March, the Host Committee and the Mayor kicked off the Committee's year of activities with a reception at the American Museum of Natural History for more than 400 international students who participated in the United Nations International School/UN Conference.

New York City activities take place throughout the year, culminating on UN Day, 24 October. They will showcase New York as the "home" of the United Nations and will include an interfaith celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and a special dinner for heads of state at the World Financial Center.

In addition, several annual New York City events this year will carry the United Nations 50th Anniversary theme.

The Host Committee, chaired by John Chalsty,



The Security Council

The Milestones

24 October 1945
United Nations is created as its Charter is ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the majority of other signatories and comes into force.

10 January 1946
First General Assembly, with full membership of 51 nations represented, opens in Central Hall, Westminster, London.

17 January 1946
Security Council meets for the first time in Westminster, London, adopting its rules of procedure.

24 January 1946
General Assembly adopts its first resolution. It mainly focus: peaceful uses of atomic energy and the elimination of atomic and other weapons of mass destruction.

1 February 1946
Trygve Lie of Norway becomes first Secretary-General.

June 1946
First UN observer mission established in Palestine. The UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO).

10 December 1946
General Assembly adopts Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

7 January 1949
A UN envoy, Dr Ralph Bunche, secures cease-fire between the new state of Israel and Arab states.

24 October 1949
Cornerstone laid for present UN Headquarters in New York City.

27 June 1950
Security Council, acting in the absence of the Soviet Union, calls on Member States to help southern part of Korea repel invasion from the north.

27 July 1953
Korean Armistice Agreement is signed by the UN Command and the Chinese-North Korean Command.

6 November 1956
First Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly meets on the Suez Canal crisis, establishing the first UN peace-keeping force, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF).

September 1960
17 newly independent states, 16 of them African, join the United Nations, the biggest increase in membership in any one year.

18 September 1961
Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld dies in an air crash while on mission to Congo.

7 August 1963
Security Council votes voluntary arms embargo against South Africa.

4 March 1964
Security Council approves dispatch of peacekeeping force to Cyprus.

25 October 1971
General Assembly seats representatives of the People's Republic of China.

June 1972
First UN Environment Conference is held in Stockholm, leading to the establishment of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) headquartered in Nairobi.

13 November 1974
General Assembly recognises the Palestine Liberation Organization as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

June-July 1975
International Women's Year is marked by conference in Mexico City.

4 November 1977
Security Council adopts mandatory arms embargo against South Africa.

May-June 1978
General Assembly convenes special session, for the first time on disarmament.

18 December 1979
General Assembly adopts a Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, covering political, economic, social, cultural and civic values.

8 May 1980
Three years after the last case was reported, World Health Organization officially declares smallpox eradicated.

25 November 1981
General Assembly adopts Declaration on Elimination of All forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

10 December 1982
New United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is signed by 117 States and two entities, the largest number of signatures ever affixed to a treaty on its first day.

December 1984
Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar sets up office for Emergency Operations in Africa to help coordinate famine relief efforts.

10 December 1984
General Assembly adopts a Convention Against Torture.

July 1985
Thousands meet in Nairobi for closing conference on UN Decade for Women.

September 1987
Efforts of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) lead to the signing of a Treaty on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, known as the Montreal Protocol, the first global environment protection agreement.

April 1989
UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) is deployed throughout Namibia to monitor South Africa's withdrawal and provide electoral assistance; Namibia becomes an independent country four months later.

2 September 1990
Convention on the Rights of the Child comes into force.

Looking Ahead

Reuter reports from United Nations

FIFTY years after its founding, the United Nations is in a state of flux, seeking new ways to meet the challenges of the 21st century after sloughing off the shackles of the cold war.

Heads of state and government from more than 160 countries have gathered at UN headquarters for a three-day session that began on Sunday to celebrate the world body's anniversary, praise its achievements and chart its future.

But if the United Nations is to survive, it must first find a solution to the worst financial crisis in its history.

caused by the failure of members — especially the United States and Russia — to pay regular dues and peacekeeping arrears to the tune of well over three billion US dollars.

One of the buzzword of the current general assembly session is reforms, how to make the organisation function in an era in which membership has soared from 51 to 185 and wars are increasingly waged within nations rather than across borders.

A particularly contentious issue is how to expand the 15-nation Security Council, whose five permanent members — the United States, Russia, Britain, China and France — are the main Second World War victors, but do not include such economic giants as Germany and Japan.

Developing countries also want a bigger say in the decisions of the top UN security body.

over UN peacekeeping in the Congo.

Decolonization, one of the UN's main achievements, resulted in a growing third world majority that Moscow, immune to any dismantling of its own empire, was often able to harness against the west.

"Damage control" became the best the United States and its allies could hope to achieve and US representatives coined such phrases as "the theater of the absurd" and "the tyranny of the majority" to describe the atmosphere in the assembly.

Important work was accomplished by a score of UN agencies dealing with such global issues as food and agriculture, health, civil aviation, the environment, literacy and development. But even those bodies were not always immune from cold war blasts.

of the United Nations to change with the times is the concept of peacekeeping.

A total of 38 operations involving more than 750,000 personnel have been fielded since 1948 and 16 are still active, manned by some 63,000 troops, observers and police.

Security Council authorisation in late 1990 for the use of force to expel invading Iraqi troops from Kuwait led to claims that the United Nations had finally come into its own and was functioning as its founders had intended.

But this ignored the fact that the United States, not the United Nations, was the driving force behind 'desert storm' and that cross-border invasions were not — at least, for now — the kind of problem that would preoccupy the world body. Also Russia was more accommodating to the west in the immediate aftermath of the cold war than it would later become.

The Nobel Peace Prize

The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded five times to the United Nations and its organizations

1954 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, for its assistance to European refugees

1965 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for its work in helping save the lives of the world's children

1969 International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva, for its progress in establishing workers' rights and protections

1981 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, for its assistance to Asian refugees

1988 United Nations Peace-keeping Forces, for its peace-keeping operations

The Nobel Peace Prize was also awarded to:

1945 Cordell Hull, US, ex-Secretary of State, for his leadership in establishing the UN

1949 Lord John Boyd Orr, United Kingdom, first Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

1950 Ralph Bunche, US, UN Mediator in Palestine (1948), for his leadership in the armistice agreements signed in 1949 by Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria

1957 Lester Pearson, Canada, ex-Secretary of State, President 7th Session of the UN General Assembly, for a lifetime of work for peace and for leading UN efforts to resolve the Suez Canal crisis

1961 Dag Hammarskjöld, Sweden, Secretary-General of the UN, for his work in helping settle the Congo crisis

1974 Sean MacBride, Ireland UN Commissioner for Namibia

For much of the post-war period the United Nations was an arena for waging battles rather than solving problems and every crisis was viewed through the prism of east-west rivalry. The two power blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union kept each other in check — and the organisation in virtual paralysis — through the use or threat of vetoes.

UN Secretary General sometimes succeeded in defusing crises, as when U Thant of Burma helped avert a dangerous confrontation in 1962 sparked by the emplacement of Soviet missiles in Cuba. But even they ran afoul of the cold war.

Trygve Lie of Norway drew Moscow's ire over the Korean war and his successor, Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden, ran into Soviet opposition

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In the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Haiti and other troubled spots the focus was on ethnic strife or the disintegration of so-called 'failed states.' UN members found less incentive for intervention in the absence of compelling strategic interests.

Old-fashioned peacekeeping, in which troops are interposed only after a cease-fire is in place, began to escalate into muscular peace enforcement in which UN blue helmets sometimes appeared as only another of the warring factions.

Casualties among UN troops, especially in Somalia, led to soul-searching over whether the world body had the ability or resources to mount that kind of armed intervention and even whether it should recruit its own volunteer 'foreign legion.'

One example of the ability



The Peacekeepers

Celebration Ceremony Pricked by Protests

Masud Hasan Khan writes from New York

IN the history's largest gathering of world leaders, some 200 presidents, kings, premiers and dignitaries Sunday joined the United Nations 50th anniversary celebrations with calls for reinventing the world body for the next century.

At the start of the three-day birthday party, speakers called for rescuing the 185-member UN from the verge of bankruptcy and explore ways to reinvent its mission in the changed world.

Their speeches were mostly optimistic about the future, but some of them had been laced with criticism.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is now in New York leading a 30-member delegation to the UN.

US President Bill Clinton, first leader to speak at the session, defended the UN's role and mission but said it must be streamlined. He also suggested the international organisation to start "doing with less."

"The UN must be able to show that the money it receives supports saving and enriching people's lives — not unneeded overhead," he said.

Washington owes about 40 per cent of the UN debt of US dollar 1.25 billion. The US Congress, which is dominated by the Republican party members, is unwilling to pay the money. Cash-strapped Russia is the second biggest debtor.

In his speech, President Clinton demanded a crackdown on global terrorism, organized crimes and drug trafficking.

A number of speakers pointed out that the UN has so far been dominated by the big and powerful nations. They demanded stronger representation of the smaller countries in the world organisation.

President Fidel Castro, who stepped on the American soil after 16 years with a special US visa to attend the UN session, said the UN has become front for the "new colonialism."

Castro, who shaded off his trademark military fatigue and cheroot, did not name the US but slammed it for the trade embargo. "We lay