



EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT ON THE UNITED NATIONS PREPARED BY THE STAFF OF THE INTERIM



The featured theme for this month is the United Nations Organization. An assumption is made that the reader has a passing familiarity with the UN's original mandate. The material is appropriate for high school grades, in particular for teachers of World Issues, world history, law, economics, and religion.

The material is organized into: questions based on the articles appearing on pages 4, 9, 11, 20, 21, and 22 of *The Interim*; excerpts from a number of documents; additional questions, as well as assignments, and classroom activities for further research; finally, a list of web sites which deal with UN-related issues. The sites are not all of the same quality, but, they do represent conflicting viewpoints. Learners are urged to be critical in researching the sites. One site (<http://www.global-challenges.org/01change-prospects.htm>) is of particular value as a bibliographical resource, while another, www.lifesite.net gives daily briefings on UN developments as these impact on life issues.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did the UN come into being in 1945? What was its original mandate or mission? Has it strayed from that mandate in recent decades? (see p.4 editorial and p.22 article)
2. (a) What explains the reluctance of many nations to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court of Justice? (b) Explain the serious reservations of some Canadian groups re this new international court (see *Interim* article, p.11). Should Canada have signed on?
3. (a) What are NGOs? Why do they exist? List a few of them and describe their agendas.(b) Are they anti-democratic in their structure and spirit? Why does Bloedow conclude that the UN lacks accountability? (see p.9 article "Accountability and the UN")
4. (a) The UN has been criticised as taking an anti-life

- stance when it comes to population control. (See the Gosgnach article in the October issue of *The Interim*, pps. 20-21). Why, how and when did the UN come to have a population control agenda?(b) What, if any, evidence is there that UN agencies have adopted such an agenda? (c) Investigate the claim made by some groups that the UN and radical NGOs are dictating Canadian social policy.(see *Interim*, p.4 editorial comment)
5. Why has the Vatican withdrawn its symbolic annual contribution to and support for UNICEF, one of the UN's principal agencies dealing with the welfare of children?
 6. Lorne Gunter of the *Edmonton Journal* accuses the Canadian federal government of using the UN to help "engineer" domestic and international policies. What does this refer to and briefly summarize three examples of his "evidence".(see p.21 of *Interim* article)

THE UN AT A CROSSROADS

The United Nations is at a crossroads... evaluating its past and looking towards its future... and what the United Nations will be is intimately linked to the reality of international relations.... With the end of the Cold War, a new era of world affairs was announced. Optimism abounded over the possibilities of a multilateral approach to international relations and particularly of implementing a system of collective security centred on the United Nations.... Today, insecurity, fear and pessimism have to a large extent replaced those hopeful visions and more and more states are once again retreating behind their borders.

The United Nations has a primary role to play in the maintenance of peace and security. Through the decisions of the Security Council, the UN can help to prevent and mediate conflicts, establish peacekeeping operations and begin the difficult tasks of post-conflict peace-building.... But the greater focus of the work of the UN sys-

tem is on economic and social development... which includes promoting and protecting democracy and human rights; saving children from starvation and disease; providing relief assistance to refugees and disaster victims; countering global crime, drugs and terrorism.
<http://www.library.yale.edu/un/un3d2.htm>

1. Even if the UN is at a "crossroads" is it still relevant to the well being of the world community of nations?

EARTH CHARTER RADICALISM?

The Earth Charter demands that we adopt "sustainable development plans and regulations" (i.e., to subordinate human needs to global fads enforced by environment dictators), and that the UN "manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products, and marine life... [to] protect the health of ecosystems" (i.e., not the health of mere humans).

The Charter affirms that "all beings are interdependent" (i.e., personal freedom is irrelevant) and "every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings" (i.e., animals, plants and insects). The Charter demands that we "ensure universal [i.e., global] access to health care that fosters reproductive health [i.e., abortion and contraception] and responsible reproduction [i.e., UN-dictated population control]."

The Charter exhorts us to affirm "gender equality" and "eliminate discrimination in... sexual orientation" (i.e., adopt the feminist and gay agendas). The Charter demands that we "integrate into formal education [i.e., assign a UN nanny to monitor our schools] ... skills needed for a sustainable way of life [i.e., indoctrination in how we must subordinate sovereignty to the UN dogma of sustainability]."

http://www.unisevil.com/fs_earth_charter.htm

- 1. Is the Earth Charter a revolutionary document or a simple case of "reason run amok"? Assess the validity of its claims/program as a blueprint for world peace and justice.**
- 2. Is the UN fiscally hampered in carrying out its mandates? Should it have the power to tax? How would this prospect be received by sovereign states?**

THE UN AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

The American people want the UN to serve the purpose for which it was designed. They want it to help sovereign states coordinate collective action by 'coalitions of the willing'; they want it to provide a forum where diplomats can meet and open channels of communication in times of crisis; they want it to provide to the peoples of the world important services, such as peacekeeping, weapons inspections and humanitarian relief.

As matters now stand, many Americans sense that the UN has greater ambitions than simply being an efficient deliverer of humanitarian aid, a more effective peacekeeper, a better weapons inspector, and a more effective tool of great power diplomacy. They see the UN aspiring to establish itself as the central authority of a new international order.

The UN must respect national sovereignty. The UN serves nation-states, not the other way around. This principle is central to the legitimacy and ultimate survival of the United Nations, and it is a principle that must be protected.

The American people will never accept claims of the United Nations to be the 'sole source of legitimacy on the use of force' in the world.

<http://www.capitalismmagazine.com/2000/june/helms.htm>

- 1. According to its critics how has the UN been conducting a drive for global governance? (see Gosgnach article in October *Interim*, p.20)**
- 2. Why do Americans and many of her leaders resent the UN as an institution? What did U.S. Senator Jesse Helms have to say about the UN? Are the Americans justified in having this "hostile" position? How has their concern been expressed?**

NEW MANDATES NEEDED

And in fact, the real problem at the United Nations, as in many governments in the post-Cold War era, is less "waste, fraud, and abuse" than outdated mandates and programs that the organization finds hard to abandon or adjust because of vested interests.

Like the U.S. government, the United Nations is full of programs that may be reasonably managed but whose time has passed.

In the post-Cold War environment, the UN needs to refocus its program on priority areas: peace and security, humanitarian assistance, and human rights and democracy.

In the peace and security area, the United Nations needs to develop a new strategy for dealing with a post-Cold War world. Its traditional contribution of "peacekeeping" between two warring parties... is no longer relevant to many of the crises that face the world, most of which involve civil conflict within societies... The answer will have to be a combination of early intervention diplomatically and development of specially designated troops who would volunteer for such assignments where they made sense. Those troops could be "earmarked" within national armies and trained for this duty.

Finally, the United Nations has an important role in the field of human rights and democratic freedoms... Here again, the world must be prudent. The United Nations is not a global government. It cannot impose standards on states. But it can make the issue of how the world's citizens are treated a much more transparent matter. It can work with governments to help establish the rule of law and to encourage them to respect the basic standards of civilized behavior toward their citizens.

<http://www.cosmos-club.org/journals/1997/maynes.html>

- 1. Does the "UN need to be fixed"?**
- 2. "The UN should stick to humanitarian goals."
(a) What is meant by the term humanitarian? Give a few examples of humanitarian goals. Research and report in some detail on a UN success in this humanitarian field.
(b) Is this the only real mandate of a reformed UN?**
- 3. In what ways could the UN be reformed and be given new, more realistic mandates to justify its continued existence? (see also *Interim* article, p22)**

GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY NETWORKS

"If we are to get the best out of globalization and avoid the worst, we have to learn to govern better, and know how to govern better together. That does not mean world government or the eclipse of nation states. On the contrary, States need to be strengthened...by working together within common institutions based on shared rules and values... like global policy networks.

Global policy networks share a number of characteristics; they are non-hierarchical and give voice to civil society. They help set global agendas, frame debates and raise public consciousness. The UN can play different roles at different times in global policy networks:

The organization can act as convenor by, for example, organizing meetings on issues where conflicts occur across the North-South divide

Staff can act as social entrepreneurs, using the skilled leadership of United Nations officials but also focusing on inclusion, effectiveness and results at the operational level.

United Nations agencies can act as norm entrepreneurs in such areas as sustainable human development, human rights, and disarmament.

<http://globalpublicpolicy.net/UnandGPP.htm>

- 1. Look up the "global compact" signed in July of 2000? Who were the signatories, what motivated them, and what did they commit to do? Why did some social and environmental groups like Greenpeace not sign the accord?**
- 2. What are "global public policy networks"? Give an example of one in action. What are some potential benefits of these networks?(see article on p.22 of *Interim*)**

THE UN AND MULTINATIONALS

However a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) project, the Global Sustainable Development Facility (GSDF), has come under some stern criticism because some of the corporations involved in this partnership are known to have had negative impacts on human rights and the environment. It is feared that this project offers the ability for these corporations to obtain a cheap way to improve their image by portraying themselves to people as conscientious and accountable (it would just cost \$50,000 for a corporation to take part in the project).

The issue is not so much that the UN should not be involved with corporations. It should; it should work to ensure that corporations also abide to universal human rights principles that nation states and citizens are obliged to observe. However, the choice of multinational corporations that the UN has started with, and that many of them have had very bad human rights records, is what is causing the controversy.

<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/UNandDevelopment.asp>

- 1. Is the UN in danger of being dominated by money and power and resulting in the real marginalization of the great majority of its membership?**

THE UN AND POPULATION CONTROL

A new UN report studying the effects of population growth on the environment provides information that challenges some of the most fundamental assumptions of population control, assumptions used to justify sterilization, abortion and contraception. "World Population Monitoring 2001," prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, emphasizes that many of the most dire predictions about the consequences of population growth have proven unfounded, and remain unlikely to occur even if the world population rises to 8.9

billion by 2050.

The most common argument against population growth is that the earth has a "carrying capacity, a threshold number of humans beyond which civilization will descend into chronic famine, disease, poverty and civil strife. According to the report, however, "over the period 1961-1998, world per capita food available for direct human consumption increased by 24 per cent, and there is enough being produced for everyone on the planet to be adequately nourished." Also, general advances in technology and industry have resulted in a dramatic growth in average material well-being."From 1900 to 2000, world population grew from 1.6 billion persons to 6.1 billion. However, while world population increased close to 4 times, world real gross domestic product increased 20 to 40 times, allowing the world to not only sustain a four-fold population increase, but also to do so at vastly higher standards of living."

Population control advocates also argue that growth will strip the world of nonrenewable resources like oil and minerals, thereby throwing economies into disarray. But, the Population Division report says, "During recent decades new reserves have been discovered, producing the seeming paradox that even though consumption of many minerals has risen, so has the estimated amount of the resource as yet untapped."

The latest argument concerns the environmental effects of population growth, including pollution, habitat destruction and the extinction of species. The report contends that population growth may contribute to some of these problems, especially fisheries depletion and water contamination, but "In general, population growth appears to be much less important as a driving force of such problems than is economic growth and technology." Even global warming will be ".mainly due to modes of production, not to the size, growth and distribution of population."

The report advances no specific policy initiatives, but it emphasizes that population is only one of a number of complex, interrelated issues affecting the environment and human development. When famine occurs, for instance, it can be because "People have inadequate physical and/or economic access to food as a result of poverty, political instability, economic inefficiency and social inequity," not simply because there are too many people. The report brings into question the ever-constant UN goal of decreasing birth rates worldwide. The Population Division, which makes all UN predictions about population growth, is seen as mostly non-ideological.

The Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute produced the preceding report:

www.c-fam.org/

<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2001/sept/010907.html>

- 1. What are the chief arguments in favour of population control according to the proponents of such policies? What statistics appear to belie those arguments?**
- 2. How does this most recent report of the Population Division of ECOSOC on the issue of population growth present paradoxes?**

THE SKEPTICS

There is no great issue facing the world today that can't be made worse by having a UN conference on it. But even so the grand comedy at Durban this week has effortlessly surpassed all expectations.

Mark Steyn, *National Post*, Sept 6, 2001

1. Is the UN bankrupt of ideas and moral standing as Mark Steyn suggests in his comments regarding the recent Durban Conference on racism?

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND STUDY

1. Choose a recent UN peacekeeping effort (between 1980-1998) and analyze it from these aspects:(a) how and why the UN took on the mandate; (b) what difficulties it met in carrying it out; (c) what it achieved.
2. What developments or key factors are creating the pressures for the UN to be reformed or restructured?
3. Should the veto power of certain permanent members of the Security Council be eliminated? Why or why not?
4. Discuss the opportunity and grave challenge which the UN faces in the current war against terrorism.
Is there a useful role for the UN in the current war against terrorism?
5. According to some apologists why was the UN Security Council helpless in preventing war in Kosovo?
6. The UN was given the responsibility for monitoring Saddam Hussein's efforts to build weapons of mass destruction. Assess the success of the UN in carrying out this particular mandate.
7. Research the background and purpose of the World Federation of UN Associations. Where does it operate? How is the organization financed? How does it accomplish its aims?
8. Maintain a log of articles (dealing with the UN) which appear in your daily newspaper over a three week period. Assess the stories as to their attitude toward the UN and its work.
9. The UN issues a Human Development Report every year. Canada was ranked number 1 for a number of years. What does the Report base its rankings on? Is it a meaningful standard? Should Canadians be concerned that Canada is no longer ranked number one?
10. How are UN activities and projects financed? What would motivate people like Bill Gates(Microsoft) and Ted Turner(CNN) to donate billions of dollars to the UN? What has the money been spent on?
11. Should the new International Criminal Court try international crimes of terrorism? Would this be a practical way to avoid the escalation of wars between individual nations?
12. Assess the successes and failures of either the World Food Organization or the World Health Organization.

USEFUL WEB SITES

<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2001/sept/010907.html>

<http://www.library.yale.edu/un/un3d2.htm>

http://www.unisevil.com/fs_earth_charter.htm

<http://www.capitalismmagazine.com/2000/june/helms.htm>

[Celebrate Life magazine July Aug 2001](#)

<http://www.cosmos-club.org/journals/1997/maynes.html>

<http://globalpublicpolicy.net/UnandGPP.htm>

<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/UNandDevelopment.asp>

<http://www.un.org/DOCS/SG/SG-Rpt/ch5.htm>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/flashbks/league.htm>

<http://www.corpwatch.org/news/2000/250.html>

<http://www.southcentre.org/publications/unrefg77/unreformg77-02.htm>

<http://www.unfoundation.org/getinvolved/una.asp>

<http://www.ngos.net/changes.htm>

<http://www.global-challenges.org/01change-prospects.htm>

<http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/toulmin/st-1>

