

**With examples, explain the most important functions of the United Nation?**

(20 marks)

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation whose aims are to aid cooperation in international law, security, economic development, social progress, human rights and ultimately world peace. The UN was founded in 1945 after World War II to replace the League of Nations, to stop wars between countries and to provide a platform for dialogue. The UN has five main functions. They are Peacekeeping and peacemaking; economic and social development; exercising international law; promoting and protecting human rights; and not least of all humanitarian affairs.

Of these I believe the most important functions of the UN to promote world stability and peace are Peacekeeping and peacemaking, promoting and protecting human rights and also ensuring humanitarian aid.

Firstly, the UN, after approval by the Security Council, sends peacekeepers to regions where armed conflict has recently ceased, or has paused so that peace can be enforced and discourage combatants from resuming hostilities. Due to the fact that the UN does not have its own military force, peacekeeping forces are provided voluntarily by the UN member states. The UN was founded so that the organisation would act to prevent conflicts between nations and make future wars impossible, however the outbreak of the Cold War made peacekeeping agreements extremely difficult due to the sudden bipolarity of the world. With the end of the Cold War, there were again calls for the UN to become the organisation it once was, to achieve world peace, what with the several ongoing conflicts that continue to rage round the world.

Although this function of the UN has to be one of *the* most important to attain world peace, it would seem that the UN is not doing a very good job. Recently however, it seems there has been one success story with regards to peacekeeping in the world. East Timor gained a bitter independence from Indonesia in 1999. The UN was successful in securing the independence and also allowing presidential elections to take place.

Another important function of the UN in bringing about stability and peace in the world is the promoting and protection of human rights. It was the pursuit of such an ideal that created the UN. World War II atrocities and genocide led to an agreement that the new organisation would have to work to prevent any similar tragedies in the future. The UN Charter obliges all member nations to promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights" and to take joint and separate action where needed. The UN and its agencies are central in upholding and implementing the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They provide technical assistance in ensuring free and fair elections take place; improving judicial system in the country, help draft constitutions, train human rights officials and also transform armed movements into political parties. This has contributed enormously to the democratisation of the world.

And last but not least, for an organisation to bring about world stability, it needs to ease the suffering around the world. And that is why the UN has put such a massive emphasis on Humanitarian Affairs.

The United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs was created to organize and manage the efforts of the international community, in particular the UN member states, to meet in an appropriate manner, the needs of those exposed to human suffering and disasters and emergencies. "This involves reducing vulnerability, promoting solutions to root causes and facilitating the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development." It does this by working with a number of NGO's such as the Red Cross. The UN provides food, drinking water, shelter and other humanitarian services to populace suffering from famine, displaced by war, or afflicted by other disasters. Major branches of the UN that oversee such activity are the World Food Programme, which helps feed more than 100m people a year in 80 countries, and also the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, with projects in over 116 countries, as well as peacekeeping projects in more than 24 countries.

In conclusion, it is my belief that though it may seem the UN is doing a terrific job around the world, this is all what the UN would like to do. In reality, many of its peacekeeping efforts have resulted in failures. Most notably, Somalia in 1992 and of course the Arab/Israeli dispute which has been raging on from 1947. However, though there peacekeeping efforts leave a lot to be desired, their humanitarian aid and the protections of Human Rights have been much more successful. East Timor and Liberia are the UN's success stories. So although the UN is a long way away from achieving its original goals, it looks increasingly like it is slowly but gradually getting ever closer to fulfilling those lofty ideals that would surely bring about world stability and peace.