INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STUDIES
and the UNITED NATIONS

The Role
of the United Nations
in Forming Global Norms

Written by Joe Sills

Jean Krasno, editor
Roseann Iacomacci, assistant editor

Foreword

Joe Sills retired from the United Nations in January 1999. Prior to joining the Secretariat, he was Vice-President of the United Nations Association of the United States of America. During his 17 years at the United Nations, he was Associate Spokesman for Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Spokesman for Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and Director of the UN Information Center in Washington, D.C. He was also responsible for the information programs of the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (1987) and the Conference on Environment and Development (1992). Since leaving the Secretariat, he has been a consultant to the UN Compensation Commission, the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, the International Labour Organization, the American Council for the United Nations University and the UN Foundation. He also co-chaired the Corporate Council on Africa's task force on HIV/AIDS in southern Africa.

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I have come to understand that the United Nations' influence derives not from power but from the values it represents. It has played an important role in setting and sustaining global norms in the field of human rights, equality, environment, crime prevention, and in many, many other important fields. We must now continue to build on global norms set and sustained by the United Nations, especially by insisting on the rule of law....[1]

H.E. Tarja Halonen
President of Finland and
President of the Millennium Assembly,
September 2000

Introduction: Setting Global Norms

There is one, universal organization in the world today that can set globally accepted standards and norms of behavior. That is the United Nations. And its normative power resides not only in the Organization as a whole, but in its individual agencies, programs, funds, and the international agreements that fall under its auspices.

A case in point is the statement of Gro Harlem Bruntland, Director-General of the World Health Organization and former Prime Minister of Norway. When asked in an interview what the most important role of the World Health Organization might be, Bruntland replied simply: "To set standards and norms."[2]
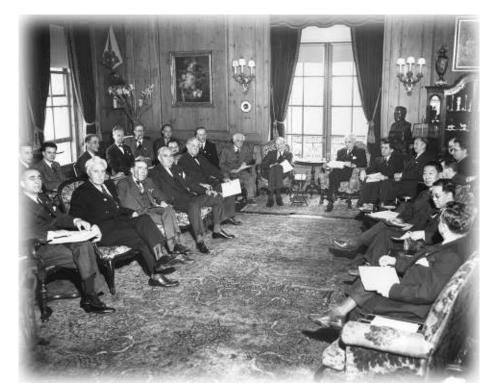
The intent of this essay is to describe and evaluate the role of the UN system[3] in establishing these global norms. This will be done through a *tour d'horizon* of the principal organs, programs, and specialized agencies which comprise the system.

A norm is an accepted behavior, or set of behaviors, which can differ from society to society. It is necessary to distinguish between "global" and "local" norms; the inherent difficulty lies in establishing global norms that can transcend the great diversity within the world's cultures. For example, while polygamy in some cultures is an established norm, it is unacceptable in others. Norms are legitimized to the extent that members of the group practice the behavior without question.[4] Norms set the standards for our daily activities. But norms can change. Some assert that there is an evolutionary tendency toward self-preservation and welfare of the whole, if not a moral sense of fairness. If this is true, then the evolution of norms *may* be toward developing a greater sense of stewardship toward the planet and its peoples. But there is much evidence to the contrary. In the more basic sense, global norms can bring order to what might be chaotic in the absence of standards. As we share information and become more broadly aware of a more universal sense of preservation, we may see the need to reorder our norms and abandon others in the interest of the whole.[5] The United Nations is the forum where much of this debate is played out.

Treaty norms are the most concrete, understandable and probably the most important international standards; however, the efforts and accomplishments of the United Nations go far beyond treaty norms. Indeed, these efforts might usefully be considered as a spectrum ranging from a treaty legally binding on those states that ratify it to the assertion of broad, largely rhetorical and clearly unobtainable goals, such as "a world free of drugs." In between, there is a sizable array of methods utilized by the organizations in the UN system to facilitate

and, on occasion, regulate relations among states and to influence their behavior. Taken together, they make possible what has been termed "… the superordinate function of the United Nations in setting, monitoring, and enforcing standards,"[6] which one close observer has called the United Nation's "biggest historical achievement."[7] Sets of rules and the bodies organized to enforce norms around a particular issue like arms control or environmental concerns are known as regimes.

In the words of Thomas Franck:

> Love them or hate them, however, international regimes are likely only to increase their importance in the governance of humanity. International regimes are necessarily normative and administrative solutions to international problems. No amount of wishful thinking can justify a state "opting out" of regimes that regulate trade, the environment, communications, transportation, human rights, collective security, arms or disease control.[8]

Delegates of the major powers meet in San Francisco between April 25 and June 26, 1945, to work on the Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the New International Court of Justice. At this meeting of the "Big Five" on May 29, members of the US delegation are seated at left.
(UN Photo: A/ARA)

At the Beginning

When representatives of 50 nations met in San Francisco in 1945 to establish a new world organization,[9] their primary motivation, as articulated in the Preamble to the UN Charter, was "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war …." The outcome of their efforts, the Charter, is the continuing basis for the standards and norms created by the United Nations itself and, to a significant extent, by the organizations of the UN system. The Charter is an international treaty binding on all states that are parties to it: as of this writing, 189 members (shortly to become 191 when Switzerland and East Timor join). In terms of US jurisprudence, Nina Schou has described the Charter as "the most solemn and universal of the US treaties," which, as the supreme law of the land, "the President is required faithfully to execute." She continues: "By agreeing to respect a treaty norm, states consent to conform their practice to the treaty standard, notwithstanding domestic legal or constitutional provisions to the contrary."[10] And Christopher Joyner writes: "The UN Charter furnishes the fundamental constitutional law for operating the only general-purpose, near-universal organization operating in the world today."[11]

Certain specific norms regarding conflict were laid out in the Charter. While war and aggression by name were not specifically outlawed in the Charter, it was stated that "armed forces shall not be used, save in the common interest." The UN Charter was thereby laying the groundwork for creating a norm of peaceful settlement of disputes rather than resorting to war. However, the use of force for self-defense is protected as an accepted norm in the international system. Other norms, such as self-determination and independence, are set forward in the Charter as goals for all states, important features anticipating decolonization.

Nevertheless, the attention of the San Francisco conference was focused primarily on creating a structure for the Organization, and deciding questions of membership and the functions and powers to be allocated to its various parts. With the notable exception of human rights, where pressure from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was a major factor, the conference did not devote significant attention to the role of the United Nations in articulating and encouraging the development of non-treaty-based norms.[12] However, it opened the door for the creation of norms in the years to come.

International Court of Justice meets in The Hague.
(UN/DPI Photo: A. Brizzi, UN 186850 c)

The United Nations and International Law

T he International Court of Justice (ICJ) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. Its statute, which is annexed to the UN Charter, forms an integral part of the Charter. All UN Member States are *ipso facto* parties to the ICJ statute (Charter, Articles 93 and 94). The statute is almost totally concerned with the operations of the Court: organization, competence, procedure, advisory opinions, and amendment. Article 59 states: "The decision of the Court has no binding force except between the parties and in respect of that particular case." Nevertheless, the Court tends to apply the legal principles contained in its decisions and advisory opinions in later cases, and its views are given substantial weight by other international tribunals.

However, the few and comparatively unimportant issues with which the Court has dealt over the years, largely through no fault of its own, have rendered it of marginal importance in the development of international law.

Therefore, the United Nations' considerable achievements in the development and codification of international law have come primarily from directions other than the legal decisions of the ICJ. Since 1945, the United Nations has exercised the central role in the development and codification of a body of international law which has become the basis of law applicable to relations among nations. The Organization achieved this through the initiation of over 500 multilateral agreements, which address mutual concerns and are legally binding for the nations that ratify them.[13] This frequently pioneering work has tended to focus on problems that have become increasingly more international in scope: the environment, the oceans, crime, drugs, and terrorism are examples. In areas such as human rights, environmental law, and crime prevention, "soft law" resolutions of the General Assembly and of global conferences have contributed substantially to the growth of international customary law.

Charlotte Ku has described two sets of functions of international law: One is the operating system and the other is normative, but "the separations between the operating and normative may not always be clear."[14] The two functions are interactive and mutually reinforcing. If the norm development is weak, the functional operations also will be weak, because much of international law by its nature is self-enforcing through consent. Therefore, the United Nation's role in building consensus on norms is key to the observance of, and compliance with, international law. Ku also explains that the major powers need to be brought along with the process. Law cannot get ahead of the will of the key players or it simply will not be observed. Domestic civil society plays an important role in building the expectation of normative behavior on such issues as human rights

and environmental protection. This is an ongoing process. When addressing the UN treaty process, it is important to heed Charlotte Ku's observation:

> In other words, the operating and normative systems of international law must remain in alignment, so that the normative needs of the community can be met through existing but adaptable legal frameworks.[15]

The International Law Commission (ILC), which was established in 1947 by the General Assembly, is significant in this process. It is comprised of 34 experts, representing the world's principal legal systems, who serve in their personal capacities. Charged with promoting the development and codification of international law, the Commission focuses on preparing draft treaties or agreements dealing with subjects either chosen by the Commission or referred by the General Assembly. When the Commission finishes a draft, the General Assembly normally convenes a conference of UN Member States where the draft is converted into a treaty open to state signature.

The ILC's work has often been criticized for being tedious, and its drafting process may go on a decade or more. But it has had some major successes, among them its draft instruments for the four 1958 Geneva conventions on the Law of the Sea, which entered into force in the 1960s. Its most recent success has been its work in preparation for the statute creating an International Criminal Court, agreed to in Rome in June 1998. The Court went into force on April 11, 2002, with 66 ratifications, surpassing the 60 needed to activate the statute.

In addition, the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), established by the General Assembly in 1966, is the primary UN legal body on this issue with a mandate to develop conventions, model legislation and rules, and guidelines on elaborating and harmonizing international trade law.

The Security Council

T he Security Council, established by the Charter as one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (Article 7, Section 1), is assigned "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" and all UN Member States "agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf" (Article 23, Section 1). Further, they "agree to accept and carry out decisions of the Security Council ..." (Article 25).

These Charter provisions give the Council authority that goes far beyond making recommendations and setting standards or goals. The Council is empowered to take decisions which, given the status of the Charter as a binding international treaty, all members of the United Nations are obligated to honor, even though they may not have participated in making the decisions (if they did not happen to have been one of the 15 members of the Security Council), or may even have opposed the decisions. The five Permanent Members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – whose concurrence is necessary for decisions by the Council (Article 27, Section 3),[16] are also bound by a decision of the Council once it has been passed.

The Council's powers to maintain international peace and security are defined in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. Chapter VI empowers the Council to act to encourage, assist and recommend actions that call for peaceful solutions to a dispute. However, Chapter VII, entitled, "Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," is a different matter. The Council can decide upon actions short of the use of armed force, including "complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations" (Article 41). If the Council deems these measures inadequate, "it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace or security" (Article 42). This includes the use of military force.

The reality of the deployment of UN forces, as it has evolved and become known worldwide as UN peacekeeping, is not explicitly covered in the Charter.[17] It is now accepted that participation of UN Member States in peacekeeping operations is totally voluntary. Indeed, a frequently recurring fact of UN life is the spectacle of the Secretary-General, following approval by the Security Council of a peacekeeping mandate, pleading with Member States to make available the forces required to implement it.

All Member States have an obligation, once a peacekeeping force is deployed, based on a decision of the Security Council, to support it. However, members, especially those who have a direct interest in the dispute at question, sometimes disregard this obligation and may even work to thwart the United Nations' efforts. For example, the United States looked the other way in regard to the arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia, allowing weapons to come over the border into Bosnia and Croatia to help arm those fighting against the Serbs. In the case of East Timor, the Indonesian government was either unwilling or unable to control militias who were violating UN Security Council mandates, or was even instructing them to do so. Sanctions – especially economic ones – established by the Council against certain states, are also frequently circumvented. For instance, Jordan continued to trade with Iraq after sanctions were imposed in 1990, and various West African leaders participated in illegal diamond and arms deals, which continued to finance brutal civil wars in the region. Consistently damaging to the authority and credibility of the United Nations as an institution are the frequent occasions where resolutions of the Security Council are simply ignored, such as early resolutions outlawing *apartheid* and numerous resolutions calling for an end to violence in the Middle East.

The effect of this is to convert what should be binding decisions of the Security Council into exhortations, thus rendering them little more than recommendations. Implicitly recognizing this, in recent years the Council has turned increasingly to statements rather than resolutions, agreed to in closed meetings (referred to as "consultations"), which are then read out by the president of the Council and issued afterwards as UN press releases. Taken collectively, however, Security Council decisions, like case law, may on occasion set standards, or norms, for future decisions. For example, intervening in states for humanitarian purposes, once considered beyond the reach of the United Nations, has gradually become something acceptable for discussion, if not practice, by the Council. However, intervention has been carried out on a case-by-case basis, rather than being considered a generic norm. Unlike case law, precedent is not as decisive in decisions of the Council, which is a highly political body.

There is an additional area where the Security Council has taken actions that have led to the creation of new norms and standards. Chapter X, Article 29, empowers the Council to "establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions." Most notable among recent exercises of this authority under the Chapter VII mandate to maintain international peace and security has been the creation of the *ad hoc* tribunals: the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Member States are thus obliged to cooperate with the tribunals as "a universal legal obligation of the highest order. In addition to this general obligation to cooperate, the Statutes of

the Tribunals impose specific obligations on Member States to surrender fugitives, gather evidence, conduct searches and seizures and locate persons at the request of the Tribunals."[18] These *ad hoc* tribunals have both contributed to setting norms for international justice and provided the main experiential base for the International Criminal Court whose statute establishes a new level of norm-setting on such concepts as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, which are punishable under the Court.

The UN Compensation Commission (UNCC) is a subsidiary body of the Security Council established to evaluate and pay claims resulting directly from Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990-'91. Among other claims, the UNCC is engaged in a precedent-setting activity of processing those for environmental losses valued by claimants at some US $50 billion. This represents the world community's first deliberate assessment and valuation of the environmental consequences of war.

The procedures of the UNCC are establishing new standards for compensation tribunals. The nonadversarial nature of the proceedings and emphasis on swift results will provide a model for future tribunals, especially those dealing with environmental disasters.[19]

Sadly, the tribunals and Compensation Commission demonstrate that Security Council decisions are, to a large degree, case-by-case and enforceable only against relatively small and weak or defeated states, and only then when the Permanent Five choose to exert the necessary pressure. Thus, the actual powers of the Council, debated at length in San Francisco and spelled out in the Charter, only sporadically come into play as envisaged, and even then often in a weakened and compromised fashion, a far cry from what was foreseen at the creation of the United Nations.

Members of the Security Council are seen approving establishment of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) on February 8, 1995. (UN Photo 189133: E. Schneider)

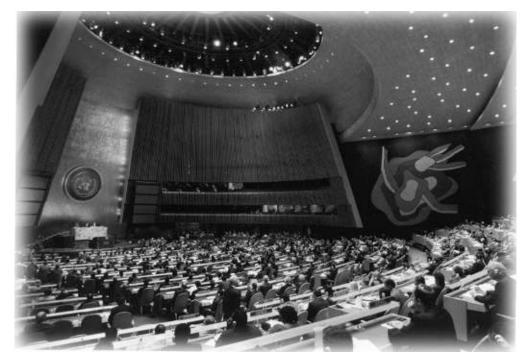## The General Assembly & Economic and Social Council

The General Assembly was created as the primary deliberative organ of the United Nations, with each Member State having one vote, and with its decisions (other than on the budget and administrative matters) only recommendations to the Member States. Certainly intended, if not explicitly stated, by the Charter was that, given the moral authority and weight of the Organization behind them, actions of the Assembly would be central to the establishment of new international guidelines in all their forms.

Although General Assembly resolutions are nonbinding, they have often been the beginning of conventions and treaties drafted under UN auspices. According to Joyner, "General Assembly 'declarations,' largely because of their bold assertive quality, have demonstrated the greatest likelihood of evolving into conventions adopted by the international community."[20] He goes on to say that, "declarations by the General Assembly can function as instruments to distill and crystallize into tangible form the international community's consensus regarding a customary norm."[21] The landmark 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the Assembly, is the best example. What started as a General Assembly resolution (albeit one whose exceptional nature was recognized at the time) has become the foundation of future UN efforts in the field of human rights. Other examples of conventions that have evolved out of General Assembly declarations are the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1968 Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the 1971 Seabed Arms Control Treaty. All sought to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction to new geographic areas.

An example of a series of actions by the Assembly relating to a specific issue is that of persons with disabilities. In 1975, the Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, aimed at setting standards for equal treatment and access in order to facilitate integration into society. The International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) and the UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) led to the adoption by the General Assembly in 1993 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which serve as guidelines for policy and a basis for technical assistance. These UN efforts, and those of NGOs, academics, and professional societies in various countries, created standards, as well as goals, and aided in building national capacities to assist citizens with disabilities.[22]

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was created to be the principal organ to coordinate the economic, social, and other work of the various organizations and bodies (other than the five other principal organs) of the UN

system. It is also empowered to initiate studies and reports and make recommendations on economic, social, health, educational, and related matters, and to assist in planning, organizing, and promoting a coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in its areas of competence.

Over the years, ECOSOC has been widely viewed as falling short in exercising its anticipated roles in the UN system, especially as regards effective coordination of the large numbers of UN agencies and programs, and there have been numerous studies and proposals on "making ECOSOC more effective." Most of these have foundered in large part on the substantial autonomy enjoyed by entities such as UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and the UN Development Programme, the complete legal autonomy of the 14 specialized agencies, and the desire of all to protect their independence and freedom of action. In addition, "over the years the council was perceived as not being fully equipped to coordinate the activities of the vast number of UN system organizations effectively or to guide the work of its subsidiary machinery sufficiently. Recently, however, a renewed effort has been made to revitalize ECOSOC's performance in both areas, especially as they relate to conference follow-up."[23]

The United Nations General Assembly opens its 53rd Session on September 9, 1998.
This is a general view of the delegates at General Assembly Hall.
(UN/DPI Photo: Milton Grant)

The Secretary-General

T he sixth principal organ of the United Nations is the Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General, not only the United Nations' chief administrative officer but the spokesman for, and symbol of, the Organization. The Secretary-General of the League of Nations had been almost totally an administrator, and that was the primary role envisaged by the San Francisco conference for the UN Secretary-General.[24] Over the years, however, the office has developed in a number of ways which have expanded its scope and stature, especially as an articulator of the principles and goals of the United Nations.

The San Francisco conference decided to give a limited political dimension to the office by enabling the Secretary-General to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security" (Article 99). In fact, this provision has had little impact. Of far greater importance has been the provision in Article 98 that the Secretary-General "shall make an annual report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization."[25] Successive Secretaries-General have increasingly utilized this report, issued at the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly each September, to identify what they felt were the major issues and concerns facing the Organization, thus seeking to define its future agenda and to influence the establishment by the United Nations of norms and goals.

Former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali toured Bosnia in December of 1992, accompanied by peacekeepers from Egypt.
(UN Photo 50.146)

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992-1996), in addition to his annual reports, issued *An Agenda for Peace*, which analyzed ways of strengthening the United Nations' capacity for peacemaking and peacekeeping.[26] This study was done at the request of the Security Council, meeting on January 31, 1992, at the level of heads of state and government. The Secretary-General subsequently added in 1994 a companion volume entitled *An Agenda for Development*, which would "complement *An Agenda for Peace* by addressing the deeper foundations of global peace and security in the economic, social and environmental spheres."[27]

The current UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (1997-present), in a clear effort to shape the United Nations of the future, issued what is surely the most comprehensive analysis and series of proposals emanating from that office: *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century,* which appeared on the occasion of the Millennium Summit of the General Assembly in 2000. In it, he characterized the United Nations as "the only body of its kind with universal membership and comprehensive scope, and encompassing so many areas of human endeavor. These features make it a uniquely useful forum for sharing information, conducting negotiations, elaborating norms and voicing expectations, coordinating the behavior of states and other actors, and pursuing common plans of action."[28] He then delineated a set of priorities for the United Nations (including many involving other bodies of the UN system) far more comprehensive in scope and detail than those emanating from any previous Secretary-General.

Another area in which the Secretaries-General have attempted to influence matters has been using the office as a "bully pulpit." The second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld , was known for his analytical, cerebral speeches, which were broadly admired.[29] However, Secretary-General Annan discovered the perils of the bully pulpit when, in an address to the General Assembly, he referred to the "developing international norm in favour of intervention to protect civilians from wholesale slaughter."[30] This was broadly interpreted as asserting the right of the international community to intervene in such cases with or without the approval of the sovereign state involved, a proposition many do not accept.

Over the years, however, Secretaries-General have not been without controversy. The Soviet Union was very displeased with first Secretary-General Trygve Lie because of the UN role in Korea in the early 1950s and demanded the resignation of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld over UN involvement in the Congo, which appeared to serve Western interests. When Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash in Africa, the major powers agreed upon a far less controversial figure in the quiet diplomat who represented Burma, U Thant. Nevertheless, Hammarskjöld had ushered in the new concept of peacekeeping and established a set of norms for the deployment of troops from contributing countries to keep the peace in regions of the world emerging from conflict. It was the United States' turn to express disapproval when it blocked the re-election of Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The importance of the office reached a new level of international recognition with the announcement of the 2001 Nobel Peace prize to both the United Nations and Kofi Annan as Secretary-General.

The Specialized Agencies

T he 14 specialized agencies, along with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), play major roles in establishing norms and standards for the world community.[31] Broadly, they do this in four ways:

1) They are the focal points, and frequently the impetus, for the negotiation and execution of binding international instruments in their respective areas of competence.

2) Their research, statistical work, and monitoring functions provide the basis for intergovernmental agreements, understandings, and working agreements which, though falling short of binding treaty status, are widely-accepted norms.

3) They provide extensive and valuable advice and assistance to Member States, especially developing countries, assisting them in planning and implementation, including adherence to treaty obligations.

4) They facilitate the creation of networks, both formal and informal, among practitioners, including NGOs and, increasingly, corporate sector representatives whose concerns parallel those of the agencies.

Groups of Agencies and Their Functions

Six agencies are concerned with specific functional areas in which they are mandated to set international standards and regulations. They deal with ideas, issues, and day-to-day working arrangements that cross borders, and are thus dependent on international regimes for their successful functioning.

- *The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)* sets international standards for the safe and efficient operation of air transport and facilitates cooperation among nations in civil aviation.

- *The International Maritime Organization (IMO)* sets standards for shipping safety and the prevention of marine pollution from ships. Almost all the world's merchant fleets are bound by three key IMO conventions on safety at sea. Around 40 conventions and protocols and 800 codes and recommendations have emanated from the IMO and have been widely implemented.

- *The International Telecommunications Union (ITU)*, founded as the International Telegraph Union in 1865, has 189 Member States and nearly 600 members from nongovernment sectors: corporate entities,

communications operators and broadcasters, and regional and international organizations. The ITU develops standards facilitating the interconnection of national communications infrastructures into global networks, and international regulations and treaties governing the sharing of the radio frequency spectrum and satellite orbital positioning. ITU recommendations have been the basis for electronic signatures in e-commerce.

- *The Universal Postal Union (UPU)* has created and monitors a system in which every member agrees to transmit the mail of other members by the best means used for domestic mail. The UPU sets indicative rates, weight and size limits and conditions of acceptance of various mailed items, including small packages.

- *The World Meteorological Organization (WMO)* monitors global weather conditions, provides scientific information about weather-related matters, and develops agreements on standards, codes, measurements, and communications.

- *The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)* works to protect intellectual property, comprised of industrial property and copyrights. WIPO administers 15 international treaties on industrial property and six on copyrights. A central part of WIPO's program is the development and application of international norms and standards, particularly to keep up with new technologies. Since 1999, WIPO's Arbitration and Mediation Centre has helped resolve disputes in the generic top-level domains of the Internet (.com, .net, and .org).

Three UN agencies are lending institutions:

- *The World Bank Group* is comprised of five institutions whose mandate is financing development in less-developed nations. The Bank Group has been described as part of the UN system *de jure* but not *de facto*. In fact, in recent years, the Bank has been more closely involved in cooperative programs with other bodies in the system through such programs as UNAIDS and in cooperative efforts to eliminate poverty.

- *The International Monetary Fund*, like the Bank in years past, has only limited involvement with other parts of the UN system (other than the World Bank, with which it works very closely). The Fund focuses on international monetary cooperation, promotes orderly exchange arrangements, and provides credits to members to alleviate balance-of-payments problems.

- *The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)* was established in 1977 as an outgrowth of the 1974 World Food Conference. It

provides loans and grants to improve food production and nutrition; many other regional and financial institutions co-finance IFAD projects.

Five specialized agencies combine research, standard-setting and assistance to developing countries. Two of the five are:

- *The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)*, the newest of specialized agencies (1985), works with governments and businesses to create sustainable industrial development in developing countries and countries in transition (former Soviet republics now independent).
- *The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* was established in 1946 to address issues of education; the natural, social and human sciences; culture; and communication. Much of UNESCO's work involves establishing norms and standards in these areas and providing technical assistance to developing countries to meet them. In recent years, UNESCO has been particularly active in promoting press freedom and the free flow of information.

Three of the five are known informally as the "big three" due to their size and worldwide influence in their areas of competence.

- *The World Health Organization (WHO)* is the major player in the global effort to improve health norms and standards around the world. An important part of this is carrying out research and field programs to control and eradicate disease. By working with governments, especially those in developing countries, to develop appropriate health policies and systems, WHO is central to efforts to improve health worldwide.
- *The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO).* FAO's goals are to promote agricultural development and food security, especially in rural areas of developing countries. Its research and data-collecting, and worldwide network, enable it to function as an international forum for food and agricultural issues.
- *The International Labour Organization (ILO)* was established in 1919 (its Constitution was Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles) and in 1946 became the first specialized agency of the United Nations. From its inception, the ILO has established and monitored standards for work-related issues that have been adopted into national legislation of almost all countries.

   By 2000, the ILO had adopted 183 treaties, eight of which establish core norms for defining, protecting and promoting human rights in the workplace.[32] The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of

Child Labour (1999) illustrates how norms can be established and implemented:

— The treaty codifies the norms;
— the process spreads the norms throughout legal systems around the world;
— signature and ratification of the treaty place these norms into national law; and
— treaty mechanisms, with ILO assistance and education programs, implement and monitor the standards.

As of September 26, 2001, one hundred ILO Member States had ratified the Convention. The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), which had been founded in 1992, has recently received voluntary funding from 25 donors, has projects totaling more than $200 million underway in some 70 countries, and has created a statistical information and monitoring program.

The ILO has utilized "time bound programs" to facilitate and evaluate progress in eradicating the worst forms of child labor. The treaty sets the standards. The ILO works with the government to build partnerships with civil society, business, and workers to meet specific goals over a set time, usually 10 years, with measurable benchmarks along the way. This program began in June of 2001 in El Salvador, Nepal, and Tanzania; as many as 20 countries are expected to develop such programs in the next few years.[33]

These and other agencies cooperate on such interagency projects as UNAIDS and the Codex Alimentarius:

• Founded in 1996, *UNAIDS* is perhaps the most visible example of a cooperative effort within the UN system, one which creates valuable guidelines and standards for the world's efforts to eradicate AIDS.

WHO has joined with UNICEF, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UNESCO, the UN Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the ILO, and the World Bank to cosponsor UNAIDS, a special program which operates as a catalyst and coordinator of action, rather than a direct funding or implementing agency. UNAIDS and WHO, working with medical institutions and specialists, have implemented a global, country-by-country, standardized surveillance system for tracking HIV/AIDS. World AIDS Day, December 1, is designated to raise AIDS awareness.

Finally, by collecting and evaluating worldwide best practices, UNAIDS is able to inform countries of the best models available for HIV prevention.

*   *The Codex Alimentarius*, or "food code," dates from 1961 and is a joint project of WHO and FAO. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, while nonbinding on Member States, has played a significant role in formulating and harmonizing standards for consumers, food producers and processors, and for both national food control agencies and international trade in food, including the development of codes governing hygienic processing, and makes recommendations on compliance with them. The Codex standards have become a worldwide benchmark against which national food measures and regulations are evaluated.

The UN Secretariat Building is lit to resemble a giant AIDS ribbon in June of 2001.
(UN/DPI Photo: Evan Schneider)

Finally, there is one more organization to note:

*   *The International Atomic Agency (IAEA)* is an autonomous agency, which operates under the aegis of the United Nations. Its main areas of work are verification, safety, and technology. The Agency develops guidelines and norms for its member countries in regard to the safety of civilian nuclear programs. It also establishes basic standards, regulations and codes of practice for radiation protection, including the transport of radioactive materials.

    The 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), extended in 1995, calls for states party to the treaty to accept IAEA nuclear safeguards and for non-nuclear states to refrain from building nuclear weapons.

Eleanor Roosevelt examines a Universal Declaration of Human Rights poster in November of 1949.
(UN Photo 23783)

Human Rights

T he largest survey of public opinion ever conducted – in 1999 by Gallup of 57,000 adults in 60 countries – showed that, worldwide, the protection of human rights was regarded as the most important task facing the United Nations. Further, the younger the respondent, the greater the importance assigned to this goal.[34]

The promotion of human rights norms in international behavior has been a primary goal of the United Nations from its inception. The major impetus for the creation of the Organization was the tragedy of World War II, which included the greatest systematic violation of human rights in recorded history: the Holocaust.

The Preamble to the Charter puts forth as a purpose of the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, [and] in the equal rights of men and women," and Article 1 states that friendly relations among nations should be "based on respect for the equal rights and self-determination of peoples …."

Today, virtually every organization in the UN system is involved in the protection of human rights. Indeed, when Secretary-General Kofi Annan reorganized the Secretariat into four key areas – peace and security, development, humanitarian assistance and economic and social affairs – he designated human rights as a fifth, "cross-cutting" theme that served to unify the United Nations' work in the four areas.

However, including these human rights provisions in the Charter was not easily done, and only the active lobbying of 40 or so NGOs in San Francisco, strongly aided by support from Latin American delegations, persuaded the conference to include specific human rights language in the Charter.[35]

It was recognized in the early stages of the drafting of the Charter that a proposed international bill of human rights, patterned on the US Bill of Rights, could not be binding on all states without effective sanctions, particularly if a state were charged with violating rights of its own citizens which were supposedly guaranteed. Historian Ruth Russell notes further:

> The [drafting] subcommittee reported that it has also considered
> proposals that the Organization "assure" or "protect" fundamental
> human rights, rather than merely "promote" and "encourage respect
> for" them. It thought, however, that "assuring or protecting" such
> human rights should be primarily the concern of each state. But if such
> rights and freedoms were grievously outraged so as to create conditions

> that threaten peace or to obstruct the application of provisions of the
> Charter, then they cease to be the sole concern of each state.[36]

While this paragraph presages many of the issues regarding human rights that have concerned the United Nations over the years, it is significant to note that the drafting group's view was that to cease being the sole concern of the state, human rights violations had to threaten peace or obstruct the application of the Charter.

While time alone would have made it impossible to draft an international bill of human rights at San Francisco, it was clear that the delegates were nowhere close to agreement on how to do so. It is likewise obvious that the nations assembled in San Francisco did not comprehend the potential of the language on human rights they had embedded in the Charter.

The cornerstone of contemporary human rights law was laid when the General Assembly on December 10, 1948 – a day now observed worldwide as Human Rights Day – approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The declaration covers (Articles 3 to 21) civil and political rights, such as right to life, freedom from slavery and torture, the right to judicial remedy, and freedom of religion and the right to peaceful assembly and association. It then enumerates (Articles 22 to 27) economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to work, to form trade unions, to enjoy an adequate standard of living, and to participate in social security, education, and cultural life.

The UDHR was remarkable not only in its provisions, but in that it provided a common statement of mutual aspiration from countries with very different cultural and legal backgrounds, and at varying stages of development.

The impact over the years of the Declaration has been considerable. It basically established and defined the norms the United Nations has subsequently embraced in realizing one of the Organization's great achievements: the creation of a comprehensive body of human rights law. However, as a resolution of the General Assembly, it constituted only recommendations to Member States. Much work remained to be done. As one scholar observed: "Even if human rights are thought to be inalienable, a moral attribute of persons that the state cannot contravene, rights still have to be identified – that is, constructed – by human beings and codified in legal systems."[37] The UDHR has played this role of identifying rights; it has served as the inspiration for some 80 conventions and declarations.[38]

In 1946, ECOSOC established the UN Commission on Human Rights, one of nine functional commissions of the Council. The Commission is responsible for overall policy guidance, research and studies, the development of international norms and standards, and worldwide monitoring of human right conditions. Many of the approximately 2000 NGOs that have consultative

status with ECOSOC are concerned with matters related to human rights; the Commission gives them, as well as Member States, a forum in which to express their views and advocate their particular interests.[39]

Subsequent to 1948, a number of important conventions were approved or set into motion within the United Nations. Six not only created legally-binding norms; they also established expert groups that monitor and report on the compliance of states party to the obligations they have assumed under them:

- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- Convention Against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)[40]

In 1966, eighteen years after the Universal Declaration was adopted, the General Assembly approved the two international covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights. These came into force in 1973 and 1976, respectively. Even though many regarded the UDHR, through the wide acceptance of its provisions, as having the status of customary international law, the covenants were necessary to convert the provisions of the Declaration into binding norms for those states that ratified them.

Another significant development was the establishment by the Assembly in 1993 of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The High Commissioner has the overall responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights and encouraging and coordinating actions on human rights within the UN system. Internationally, the High Commissioner is tasked with providing education, information, and advisory services and technical assistance on human rights, as well as promoting the ratification of treaties. The office is also charged with responding to serious violations of human rights, drawing on a field and monitoring presence in some 30 countries.[41]

The decision to create the Office of the High Commissioner evolved from the World Conference on Human Rights earlier that year. At the opening session, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali observed that, with the end of the Cold War, the issue of human rights was of paramount importance, reflecting the fact that "human rights, by definition, are the ultimate norm of all

politics." In this speech, the Secretary-General made several controversial pronouncements. He noted that the pursuit of human rights, by its very definition, does away with the distinction traditionally drawn between international order and internal order. Also, he proposed that, in the future, international organizations should take action when states infringe upon the rights of their citizens.[42]

Since it was founded, the United Nations has devoted to the cause of human rights many of the tools at its disposal: world conferences, covenants, declarations, monitoring, technical assistance, and education. This effort has created a body of standards and norms, as well as a continuing agenda. However, the United Nations is devoid of the necessary power to enforce these standards of behavior. Many nations continue to ignore these norms, resulting in a world full of blatant violations of human rights. Thus, while there remain some *lacunae* in the legal structure for the protection of human rights, the overwhelming task faced by the world community is compliance with the extensive norms, treaty-based and others, that are in place.

The World Conferences

For many centuries, intergovernmental conferences have taken place, frequently following wars and with a goal of defining the post-war milieu. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which ended The Thirty Years' War, was one of the first such conferences. Other conferences in Europe focused on river navigation and health issues after international outbreaks of diseases like cholera. The Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 were the first to call for ongoing international legal agreements on a number of issues, including disarmament. "The Hague system introduced the concept of general long-term commitments by all states – not just important states – to restrict their behavior in order to ensure self-preservation."[43] Following World War I, the 1919 Treaty of Versailles created the League of Nations, which formally ceased to exist when the United Nations officially came into existence on October 24, 1945. The San Francisco conference in June of 1945 established the United Nations. In the early days, these conferences were held to establish specific legal instruments. Little thought was given to utilizing the methodologies of conferences to define global problems and suggest global solutions. International leaders had not yet come to realize that, in addition to treaty-based norms, these gatherings could create other norms that were nonbinding but widely accepted. In addition, leaders could mobilize public opinion and civil society to influence states to honor the norms. Using conferences as a basis for establishing norms – identifying problems and suggesting solutions – was to become a regular practice of the United Nations.

UN Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

Among the oldest and most far-ranging UN standards and norms are those in the crime prevention and criminal justice field, most of them emerging from the quinquennial UN congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, begun in 1955. These include Standards of Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, as well as the noninstitutional treatment of offenders, treatment of juvenile delinquents, basic rights of victims of crime and abuse of power, and prevention of criminality.

Basic principles have also been agreed upon for various professions, such as independence of the judiciary and the roles of prosecutors and lawyers.

Model treaties have also been adopted to facilitate mutual cooperation in criminal matters, the exchange of prisoners, and the transfer of criminal proceedings.

In December 2000 in Palermo, Italy, 124 of the United Nations' 189 Member States signed a new UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and close to 80 also endorsed two protocols on trafficking in women and children and smuggling of migrants. The rapidity with which this treaty text was completed – less than two years – demonstrated the awareness of governments that they could not successfully combat global crime without strong new standards.

The norms and guidelines in the prevention and criminal justice field have provided a yardstick to facilitate harmonious action by states with different systems, promoted legislative reforms, and furthered regional and international cooperation against crime.[44]

1972: The Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment

The series of global conferences that have affected so significantly the work of most parts of the UN system began with the 1972 Stockholm Conference. This conference is credited with bringing global environmental concerns "front and center" on the international agenda. It was clearly recognized by the leadership of the conference that this was the essential first step for the desired creation of new international norms for environmental issues. The foundation of the conference was the growing realization that "many of the causes and effects of environmental problems are global: this is, beyond the jurisdiction and sovereignty of any nation-state …. Global frameworks and other institutions are necessary in order to help organize and coordinate international action."[45]

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which was created at Stockholm, has a central goal of focusing world attention on emerging environmental problems through research and synthesis of information leading to a number of international conventions, including:

- the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985) and the Montreal Protocol (1987) and its Amendments, which ban the production and sale of chlorofluorocarbons, which deplete the ozone layer; and
- the 1992 Framework Convention on Global Climate Change, which deals with the emission of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases," which are largely responsible for global warming, and The Kyoto Protocol (1997) on global warming.

The scientific basis of global warming has been firmly established by the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was organized

by UNEP and WMO (World Meteorological Organization) in 1988, and which constitutes a worldwide network of 2,500 scientists and experts.

- The 1992 UN Convention on Biodiversity and the 2000 Protocol dealing with the safe use of genetically modified organisms have established norms in this area of growing international concern.

Over the years, the international community has also increasingly recognized that environmental issues can have consequences for general global security and should be accorded a corresponding significance. For instance, local environmental problems such as urbanization, deforestation, and natural resource scarcity can exacerbate underlying ethnic and social tensions and produce refugee flows. Recognition has grown that environmental degradation can have a significant negative effect on political, economic, and social progress in developing countries. For example, desertification, the process of degrading usable land into unproductive desert (caused by overgrazing and clearcutting forests) removes large areas of land each year from productive development.

The success at Stockholm set a process in motion which led to, among other things, conferences in the 1970s on population (1974), human settlements (1976), primary health care (1978), and science and technology for development (1979). UN-sponsored conferences in the next decade included: aging (1982), women (1980 and 1985), population (1984) and drug abuse and trafficking (1987).[46]

Increasingly, the developing countries, which numerically dominate the United Nations, insisted that these conferences be firmly linked to development, and that the agendas and the plans of action emanating from them be organized around this linkage, including significant provisions for transfer of resources.

UN World Conferences in the 1990s

The major global conferences of the 1990s included:

- World Summit for Children, New York, USA (1990)
- World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand (1990)
- UN Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1992)
- World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, Austria (1993)
- World Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, Egypt (1994)
- World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark (1995)
- Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China (1995)
- Second UN Conference on Human Settlements, Istanbul, Turkey (1996)
- World Food Summit, Rome, Italy (1996)

A gathering at the 1997 Ottawa Convention under Canadian auspices produced the Landmines Treaty; in 1998, a UN-sponsored conference in Rome produced the ICC statute; and the conference in Kyoto produced the 1997 protocol. A global conference focused on racism took place at Durban, South Africa, in 2001,[47] and the United Nations conference on Financing for Development was held in Mexico in March 2002. The World Summit on Sustainable Development will take place in Johannesburg in September 2002.

Masumi Ono observes:

> The major United Nations global conferences of the 1990s focused international attention on key aspects of global change and development …. These conferences generated bold pronouncements and, with much fanfare, set forth ambitious internationally agreed goals and commitments. But it is the implementation of these goals that will determine whether each conference is ultimately a success or failure. The United Nations, to play its part in the implementation, has had to adapt to a major change in development strategies.

The broadened definition of development, which emanated from the global conferences of the 1990s, has led to an emerging consensus "that economic development, social development, and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of what is now commonly termed 'sustainable development'.... The themes of each conference … are all interrelated, integral pieces of the jigsaw that makes up sustainable development."[48]

UN world conferences serve the building of global norms in a number of ways:

1) They attract media attention to the issue, which allows the consciousness-raising message on new norms to spread to concerned individuals and groups and to the general public.

2) They provide a forum for reaching consensus on universal standards. The conference sessions and preparatory meetings bring together ideas that are continuously refined until agreement is, in most cases, reached.

3) Their declarations provide a moral authority which strengthens grassroots efforts to build support for normative behavior. Declarations set the new norms of behavior as standards.

4) They bring into the process the power of civil society, not only to shape norms but also to provide a constituency for consent and implementation. The involvement of NGOs throughout the process inserts normative ideas in the agreements, and with this sense of ownership NGO representatives take them home for promotion.

5) They also offer language through the declarations that can be used in

the eventual codification of international norms in the form of treaties and conventions and of national laws adopted by parliaments.

UNICEF's Experience in Implementation

Perhaps no example better illustrates the value of setting goals and then rigorously measuring progress toward meeting those objectives than UNICEF's, following the World Summit for Children in 1990. Prior to the Summit, UNICEF had launched a "Child Survival and Development Revolution," which addressed the major causes of child mortality. UNICEF built on the widespread success of this initiative by adopting at the Summit additional goals for improving the lot of children in the 1990s.[49]

This process demonstrates a "best case scenario" of a successful UN effort. Research and field experience combine to define the problem and outline reachable solutions. When intergovernmental mechanisms come into play, leaders must avoid setting goals at the lowest common denominator if their decisions are to have any value. In the case of UNICEF, it was just the opposite: The goals were very ambitious and were also expressed in quantitative and measurable terms. These goals became the basis for national plans of action, with the relevant agencies and programs providing advice in drafting or revising the plans, technical assistance in implementing them and, where available, funding. Targets were set – Richard Jolly, former acting director of UNICEF, characterizes them as "baseline human goals" – and, over subsequent years, assessments were made of progress toward goals undertaken.[50]

A Somali mother and her children wait for medical treatment in the doorway of a clinic run by UNICEF in October of 1992. (UN Photo 159385: M. Grant)

General norms were set on health and education for children, and promoting equality for boys and girls. Specifically, the eradication of polio was a major goal, one toward which there has been significant progress. Preventive medicine is also promulgated through immunization, providing vitamin supplements, clean water, promoting breast-feeding, and training community health workers to provide prenatal care and hygienic delivery practices.

Non-Governmental Organizations: Civil Society

While NGOs have played a role in the United Nations' activities since the San Francisco conference in 1945, it was, with some exceptions, a relatively marginal role – with most UN Member States happy to keep it that way – until the advent of UN global conferences. About 300 NGOs were present at the Stockholm conference on the environment in 1972. By 1992 in Rio, that number had grown to 1,400.[51] NGOs, particularly those oriented toward advocacy, have been essential parts of the preparations for and follow-up to the conferences, as well as being active participants in the hour-by-hour unfolding of events as they progressed. As a result, NGOs are playing an increasing role in the permanent UN organs and bodies focusing on social and economic issues. They are also central to building support for and monitoring the implementation of UN decisions. In 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio, NGOs organized their own parallel conference, the "NGO Forum," a few miles away from the official intergovernmental gathering. Many NGO representatives moved back and forth between the two, carrying ideas and progress reports. NGO secretariats operated like think tanks on environmental issues, preparing data analyses and statistics on environmental problems under discussion.

After Rio, the tradition of holding an NGO forum parallel to the official meeting became the norm. NGOs like Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), an organization of members of parliament (MPs) from some 100 countries, have a leg in both the NGO forum and the intergovernmental meeting because the MPs are members of PGA and also frequently official members of governmental delegations. At the Social Summit in Copenhagen (1995), PGA carefully wrote language for the official declaration that was hand-carried by the MPs into the official discussions. Other NGOs were busy doing the same thing.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine the recommendations of the global conferences coming to fruition without the leadership, rather than just the participation, of civil society. This view is not always shared by diplomats, especially as regards policy-making at world conferences. Most diplomats would prefer NGOs to present their views quietly, let the diplomats decide on their fate, and then aid governments in implementation with their direct constituencies. But this attitude is, truly, living in another world. The world's problems are simply too large and complex for governments to solve by themselves.[52]

Spurred on by the global conferences has been the creation of what Secretary-General Kofi Annan has termed "global policy networks." He states: "These networks – or coalitions for change – bring together international institutions, civil society, private sector organizations, and national governments in pursuit of common goals." They "help set global policy agendas, frame debates and raise public consciousness … they make it easier to reach consensus and

negotiate agreements on new global standards, as well as to create new kinds of mechanisms for implementing and monitoring these agreements."[53]

An example of this kind of network is the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, which established a clearinghouse for NGO advocacy work on the Court. This pooling of effort and ideas keeps concerned NGOs informed on one another's work, successfully utilizing the Internet and e-mail to inform the network in real time.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Observation

The sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations has observed:

> The UN world summits of the 1990s emerged as a wholly new factor for achieving change on the world stage. A bitter critic of these conferences described them accurately: "UN meetings are not just talkathons. They are opportunities to seed international law with new norms and rights, many of them hidden in apparently routine language. Though not immediately binding on any nation, after some time they may be cited as 'customary' international law and acquire some legal force …. UN conferences now have a precise use in hard-ball international politics." Although some have criticized the conferences as a way of circumventing national parliamentary or congressional politics, they were in fact democratic in a larger sense and the beginning of a new form of people's control of their own destinies on issues too large or too suppressed by special interests to be handled by domestic national politics.[54]

Those who are fearful of having to support financially and politically the emerging norms on such matters as human rights, population control, and sustainable development, foresee and often fear the consequences of these norms taking hold. But, as Boutros Boutros-Ghali states, these gatherings are the closest we have come to global democracy.

The United Nations and Terrorism

T he United Nations reacted quickly and decisively to the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the opening day of the 56th General Assembly. The Secretary-General immediately condemned them in the strongest terms. The Security Council met within 24 hours of the collapse of New York City's Twin Towers to consider and approve unanimously a French-drafted resolution "that would define the framework for the international response to the terrorist attacks."[55] Resolution 1368 said that the attacks posed a "threat to international peace and security" and called on the world community "to combat by all means" this threat, thus raising the possibility of Chapter VII enforcement action and clearly sanctioning the use of military force. Jeffrey Laurenti observes: "Never before had the Council recognized military 'self-defense' as applicable against actions perpetrated by non-state actors...."[56]

On September 28, a second resolution (1373) was adopted unanimously by the Council, one which Laurenti states "astonished international law experts with its boldness in requiring specific actions of Member States in their domestic legislation in order to combat the threat the Council identified to international peace and security."[57] Resolution 1373 created for states a new legal obligation to cooperate against terrorism, including in bringing the perpetrators, organizers, and sponsors of terrorism to justice. It stressed the accountability of those aiding, supporting or harboring those responsible for acts of terrorism. The Council established a Counter-Terrorism Committee and required that all UN Member States submit national reports on their actions to ensure the full implementation of the resolution.

Prior to September 11, the main thrust of United Nations action against terrorism had been the drafting and adoption by the United Nations and its specialized agencies of a network of international legal instruments related to such topics as aircraft hijacking, hostage taking, the physical protection of nuclear material, actions threatening maritime safety, and plastic explosives.[58] In addition, UN efforts had already begun to formulate both a comprehensive convention against terrorism as well as a convention against nuclear terrorism.

An aspect of the Security Council resolutions that is especially interesting as regards treaty-based norms is raised by the fact that some binding provisions in Resolution 1373 were taken from the 1997 Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the 1999 Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The first is in force, but with only 29 ratifications; the second has only four ratifications, and is not in force. "The Council's action

made these provisions effective immediately for all states, not just those that choose to ratify [the two conventions]."[59]

Following the Security Council actions, the General Assembly devoted a week to a previously scheduled debate on terrorism. One hundred and sixty-eight representatives and observers spoke, the most ever to address an agenda item.

The United Nation's office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention's Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) was founded in April 1999 to carry out research and facilitate technical cooperation. To date, the TPB has focused on analysis; it maintains an extensive data base on terrorist incidents and related information. A global terrorism survey is underway, and TPB has been mandated by the Crime Commission to assist Member States in the promotion and implementation of UN conventions against terrorism.

The current and pending treaties and protocols are the basis for the United Nations' norms and standards in the battle against terrorism. The actions of the Security Council have provided both a framework for the international response to terrorist attacks and international legitimacy for that response. And, the prompt and unanimous response by UN Member States has created a strong international consensus which the Chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council, Sir Jeremy Greenstock (UK), stated must be nurtured and translated into global participation if the international effort against terrorism is to succeed.[60]

Globalization

Try to imagine what globalization can possibly mean to the half of humanity that has never made or received a phone call.

Kofi Annan
quoted on "BBC News Online"
January 28, 2001

*Secretary-General Kofi Annan.
(UN Photo 9906-1702)*

The United Nations has been an organization that is constantly evolving to meet the challenges of a world in perpetual flux. However, this ability to respond to a new situation is being challenged as never before by globalization, which is described as "an inevitable, technologically driven process that is increasing commercial and political relations among people of different countries."[61]

Through advances in technology and telecommunications and the fall of trade barriers, material goods, information, money, and ideas move around the world at a speed and in a volume that is unprecedented. For example, the transfer of "back office" information technology facilities to India in recent years has enriched a significant number of Indians. In contrast, the globalization of financial markets severely exacerbated the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98. The swift flight of capital away from countries in Southeast Asia thrust millions of people into poverty almost overnight. In Indonesia, for instance, following the financial crisis, poverty levels rocketed from 8.6 percent to 19.2 percent.[62]

An inextricable part of globalization has been the growing insistence from developed, donor countries that a market-based economy is the *sine qua non* of economic development. Indeed, for many, insistence on market-based economies is inextricably linked to democratic systems of governance. The problem with this is clear: Globalization and market-based economics treat both countries and people quite unequally. As globalization takes hold, the gap between the wealthy and the poor, both among and within countries, is widening rather than narrowing. Globalization is most certainly *not* a tide that raises

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all ships. Dr. Rolf Bruer of the Deutsche Bank observed: "We have learned, however, that uncontrolled market forces left to build up or destroy in the their own, almost instinctive manner, may not, in fact, be capable of making globalization work for everyone."[63]

Nearly half the world's six billion people must live on less than $2 each day. Some 1.2 billion – 500 million of whom live in South Asia and 300 million in Africa – struggle to survive on less than $1 daily.[64] Globalization may, in the future, contribute significantly to the livelihood of these desperate people; to date, it has done very little to help them.

Secretary-General Annan has addressed extensively the challenge of globalization and the role the United Nations can play in establishing norms which will ameliorate its negative impacts. He states, "The problem is this: The spread of markets outpaces the ability of societies and their political systems to adjust to them, let alone to guide the course they take .… Globalization operates on Internet time." He has argued that development should be placed at the heart of globalization, rather than globalization being allowed to determine the fate of development.[65]

To help close this gap, the Secretary-General proposed a Global Compact. Following a series of consultations, the Compact was launched in July 2000 with senior executives from some 50 major companies, along with leaders of labor, human rights, the environment, and development organizations.

The compact is not a regulatory instrument or code of conduct; it utilizes transparency and dialogue to identify and disseminate best practices. This has, indeed, been a source of criticism from some who argue that there should be a binding code on corporations. Why not such a code? Professor John Ruggie, who in his previous post at the United Nations was instrumental in bringing the compact to fruition, wrote:

> Why did the Secretary-General choose this approach rather than propose a regulatory code, complete with monitoring and compliance mechanisms? First, the probability of the General Assembly's adopting a meaningful code anytime soon approximates zero.... Second, the logistical and financial requirements for the UN to monitor global companies and their supply chains, let alone small and medium-sized enterprises at national levels, far exceeds its capacity.... Third, any UN attempt to impose a code of conduct not only would be opposed by the business community but would also drive progressive business leaders into a more uniform anticode coalition.[66]

The Global Compact encompasses nine principles, drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ILO's Fundamental Principles for

Rights at Work, and the Rio Principles on Environment and Development:

- support and respect for the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights,
- noncomplicity in human rights abuses,
- freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining,
- the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labor,
- the effective abolition of child labor,
- the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation,
- a precautionary approach to environmental challenges,
- greater environmental responsibility, and
- encouragement of the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.[67]

The Global Compact is but one part of what must be an intensive, continuing effort by the entire UN system to meet the challenge of globalization. Through its nine principles, and building on existing strategies and methods, the Compact illustrates well how the UN system can develop norms and standards for today's world.

Conclusions

This study establishes clearly the critical function of norms, standards, and goals in the UN system. They are pervasive throughout the system. In some areas, such as human rights, they are well publicized and known. In others, such as the standard-setting and monitoring done by the specialized agencies, they are largely unknown and unappreciated.

It is useful to visualize these norms as a spectrum, ranging from treaties legally binding on those states that ratify them to broad, largely rhetorical goals. Within this spectrum, there is a broad array of methods available to the organizations of the UN system to facilitate their work. Creating new norms, refining existing ones, and elaborating the regimes created to enforce and sustain them are continuing tasks. The goal is no less than to bring some order to what may be, in the absence of standards, a confusing, even chaotic, international landscape.

The continuing elaboration of norms does not, however, mean that more and more of them are being honored. One of the most striking and discouraging characteristics of today's world is the extent to which agreed-upon norms and standards are ignored and contravened. Why is this the case? Obviously, sovereign nations seek to maximize achievement of their policy goals. While many try to do so within the framework of treaty regimes, others do not. In the absence of treaty regimes, checks on state behavior are lessened. As Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, noted: "The international community has done very well in terms of developing and elaborating norms, standards, and rules against the use of child soldiers. But where we have not been effective is their application on the ground. Words on paper do not save a child in war."[68]

The tools available to the UN system to seek greater adherence to global norms are, as noted, numerous. The UN system establishes norms and standards and seeks to persuade and, on occasion, pressure states into honoring them. However, it cannot force them to do so. Rather, state behavior is monitored and evaluated, and other states and public opinion enlisted to encourage adherence.

The most promising mechanism available to UN agencies and programs is systematic monitoring of adherence to time-bound quantitative goals that states have agreed to, as shown in the UNICEF and ILO examples. A critical element in this process is the provision of assistance to states to aid them in living up to the norms and standards they have accepted. However, the shortage of human and financial resources severely limits the ability of the UN system to provide assistance to developing countries to help them meet their commitments.

Over the last three decades, the series of UN-sponsored global conferences has given a major impetus to the identification and analysis of global problems and suggestions for solutions to them, including the formulation of new global norms. These conferences have also significantly broadened the role of nongovernmental organizations, which have a critical role in helping to produce, interpret, and press for enforcement of norms arising from them.

The Secretaries-General of the United Nations have emerged as a significantly more important factor in developing and advocating norms and standards. Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* and *Agenda for Development,* and Kofi Annan's far-reaching proposals in *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* are landmarks.

Finally, the UN system has faced no greater challenge in the economic and social areas than that posed by globalization. To be successful in the years ahead, the United Nations must play a central role in establishing norms that will ameliorate the negative impact of globalization and, through such devices as the Global Compact, help make globalization work for all the world's people.

Endnotes

[1]Tara Halonen in *United Nations Chronicle*, #2, 2000, p.9.

[2]Interview with *Foreign Policy*, January-February 2002, p.26.

[3]The UN system is made up of the six principal organs – the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council (which is inactive), the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat – the various programs, funds and offices (such as UNICEF and UNDP), and the specialized agencies.

[4]See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: a Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p.56.

[5]See Stephen Korner, *Kant* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982).

[6]Tobias Decibel, "Strengthening the UN as an Effective World Authority: Cooperative Security Versus Hegemonic Crisis Management" in *Global Governance*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.30-31.

[7]Ambassador Vladlen Martynov, Russian academician and director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, *United Nations Chronicle*, #2, 2002, p. 18.

[8]Thomas M. Franck, ed., *Delegating State Powers: The Effect of Treaty Regimes on Democracy and Sovereignty* (Ardsley, N.Y.: Transnational Publishers, 2000), p.12.

[9]See Jean Krasno, *The Founding of the United Nations: International Cooperation as an Evolutionary Process* (New Haven, Conn.: Academic Council on the United Nations System, 2001).

[10]Nina Schou, "Instances of Human Rights Regimes," in Franck, pp.210-211.

[11]Christopher C. Joyner, *The United Nations and International Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.435-436.

[12]Ruth Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1958). This is the definitive work on the creation of the Charter and the San Francisco Conference.

[13]*Basic Facts about the United Nations* (New York: UN Department of Public Information, 2000), p.259. This publication is a valuable source of information about the structure and programs of the various parts of the UN system.

[14]Charlotte Ku, *Global Governance and the Changing Face of International Law* (New Haven, Conn: Academic Council on the United Nations System. 2001), p.7.

[15]Ku, p.35.

[16]This is, of course, the well-known "veto." Over the years, there has been a *de facto* amendment of this provision; the Council now takes decisions when a Permanent Member abstains from the vote, thus replacing the requirement for concurrence with one of nonopposition.

[17]There is a sizable literature on UN peacekeeping, much of it devoted to suggestions to make it work better. See particularly the publications of the International Peace Academy. *Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-Keeping*, published by the United Nations (3rd ed., 1996), is the most comprehensive record of the UN peacekeeping operations.

[18]Kristan Boon, "Instances of International Criminal Courts," in Franck, p.174.

[19]See *uncc.org* for detailed information about the Commission and a comprehensive bibliography.

[20]Joyner, p.443.

[21]*Ibid.*, p.446.

[22]*Basic Facts*, pp.238-240.

[23]Masumi Ono, "From Consensus-building to Implementation: the Follow-up to the UN Global Conferences of the 1990s" in Michael G. Schechter, *United Nations-sponsored World Conferences* (Tokyo, New York and Paris: United Nations University Press, 2001), p.175. See section above on the global conferences.

[24]Krasno, p.31.

[25]The annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization is published each September by the Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York. It is also a General Assembly document, as consideration of it is an agenda item at the Assembly session.

[26]*An Agenda for Peace 1995: Second Edition* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995). This edition contains the text of the report as well as relevant documents and statements.

[27]*An Agenda for Development* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995), p.12

[28]*We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2000), p.6.

[29]See Wilder Foote, ed., *The Servants of Peace: A Selection of the Speeches and Statements of Dag Hammarskjöld* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1962).

[30]Address by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, September 20, 1999. See *The Question of Intervention: Statements by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.* (New York: United Nations, 2000).

[31]*Basic Facts* has useful summaries of the specialized agencies and International Atomic Energy Agency, including contact points at each for additional information. Much of what follows is drawn from that publication.

[32]See *Basic Facts*, p.231. The eight are:

i.)   *On Forced Labour (1930)*, which requires the suppression of forced or compulsory labor in all its forms;

ii.)   *On Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (1948)*, which establishes the right of workers and employers to form and join organizations of their own choosing without prior authorization and lays down guarantees for the free functioning of such organizations;

iii.)   *On the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (1949)*, which provides for protection against anti-union discrimination, for protection of workers' and employers' organizations, and for measures to promote collective bargaining;

iv.)   *Abolition of Forced Labour (1957)*, which prohibits the use of any form of forced or compulsory labor as a means of political coercion or education, punishment for the expression of political or ideological views, or for participation in strikes;

v.)   *Equal Remuneration (1951,* which calls for equal pay and benefits for work of equal value;

vi.)   *On Discrimination (1958)*, which calls for national policies to promote equality of opportunity and treatment, and to eliminate discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin;

vii.)   *Minimum Age (1973)*, which aims at the abolition of child labor, stipulates that the minimum age for employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling;

viii.) *On Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)*, which prohibits child slavery, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography, dangerous work, and forcible recruitment for armed conflict.

[33]*Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour: An Integrated, Time-bound Approach* (Geneva: The International Labour Organization, 1999).

[34]*We the Peoples*, pp.15-16.

[35]See Clark M. Eichelberger, *UN: The First Twenty Years* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp.69-70.

[36]Russell, p.780.

[37]David P. Forsythe, *Human Rights in International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3. Quoted in Mohammed Ayoob, "Humanitarian Intervention and International Society" in *Global Governance*, Vol. 7, No. 3, July-September 2001, p.226.

[38]*Basic Facts*, p. 213. This publication's summary of the United Nation's efforts regarding human rights (pp. 215-241) is especially useful. See also *http://www.unhcr.ch.*

[39]There are another 1,400 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information that contribute to the work of the Organization.

[40]*Basic Facts*, pp.219-220.

[41]For a moving account of the difficulties faced by one field officer, see Ben Majekodunmi, "United Nations Human Rights Field Officers," in Yael Danieli (ed.), *Sharing the Front Line and the Back Hills: Peacekeepers, Humanitarian Aid Workers, and the Media in the Midst of Crisis* (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood Publishing Co., 2001), pp.137-146.

[42]Address by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the opening of the World Conference on Human Rights, available at: *http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu5/d/statemnt/secgen.htm.* It is interesting to contrast the responses to Boutros-Ghali's remarks, which were largely ignored, and Secretary-General Annan's observations at the opening of the Millennium Assembly in 2000, which were widely criticized by some and endorsed by others.

[43]See Ku, p.14.

[44]See *Compendium of United Nations Standards and Norms in Crime Prevention* (New York: United Nations, 1992).

[45]Diane Bui, "The Instance of Environmental Regimes" in Franck, p.33.

[46]There is a list of selected UN conference dates from 1947 to 1996 in Schechter, p.4.

[47]The Controversy surrounding the Durban conference – with the United States walking out in protest, largely over attacks against Israel – points up the downside of such conferences. John Manley, Foreign Minister of Canada, observed: "It hasn't been a good experience for the world community. It has not been a good experience for the United Nations and I hope we don't have to see this happen again." However, some felt the outcome was helpful. Reed Brody, Director of Advocacy for Human Rights Watch, stated: "If governments would really put into place what they agreed to here, the world would be a much better place." Rachel L. Swarns, *The New York Times*, September 10, 2001, p.A10.

[48]Ono, pp.169-171.

[49]Richard Jolly, "Implementing global goals for children: Lessons from UNICEF experience" in Schechter, pp.10-28.

[50]See Jolly's valuable list of eleven factors explaining the success of UNICEF's efforts: pp.21-27.

[51]See Women's Conference in Ku, p.30.

[52]For a detailed account of the role of NGOs before, during, and after one major global conference, the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, see Clarence J. Dias, "The United Nations World Conference on Human Rights: Evaluation, monitoring, and review" in Schechter, pp.29-62.

[53]*We the Peoples,* pp.70-71.

[54]Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A U.S.-U.N. Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp.174-175.

[55]Jeffrey Laurenti, "Terrorist attacks yield new United Nations roles" in *The Inter Dependent* (publication of the United Nations Association of the United States of America), vol. 27, no. 3, Fall 2001, p.5.

[56]*Ibid.*

[57]*Ibid.*

[58]See *Basic Facts,* pp.270-271, for a complete list of these conventions and protocols.

[59]Laurenti, p.6.

[60]Press conference at UN Headquarters, Jan. 10, 2002.

[61]Mark Weisbrot, *Globalization: A Primer.* (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 1999) p.1.

[62]*Ibid.*, p.6.

[63]Rolf E. Bruer, Chief Executive Officer of the Deutsche Bank, speaking on Oct. 23, 2001, at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies. On: *http://www.unglobalcompact.org.*

[64]*We the Peoples,* p.19.

[65]Excerpts from speeches given by Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, between January 1999 and July 2000, cited by *The Globalist*, available at: *http://www.theglobalist.com.*

[66]John G. Ruggie, "*global_governance.net*: The Global Compact as Learning Network" in *Global Governance*, Oct.-Dec., 2001, p.373.

[67]*http://www.unglobalcompact.org.*

[68]Norimitsu Onishi, *The New York Times,* May 9, 2000, p.A8.

Suggested Reading

A Global Agenda: Issues before the 56th General Assembly of the United Nations. Annual publication. New York: United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), 2001.

Alger, Chadwick F., ed. *The Future of the United Nations System: Potential for the Twenty-first Century*. Tokyo, New York, and Paris: United Nations University Press, 1998.

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Global Economic Prospects 2002: Making Trade Work for the World's Poor. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2001.

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International Instruments Related to the Prevention and Suppression of International Terrorism. New York: United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, 2001.

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Weiss, Thomas G., and Leon Gordenker, eds. *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.

Journals

There are a large number of journals featuring articles and reviews relevant to the subject matter of this essay. Four that should be particularly noted are:

Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations. Published by Lynne Rienner Publishers in cooperation with the Academic Council on the United Nations System and the United Nations University.

Foreign Affairs. Published by the Council on Foreign Relations.

Foreign Policy. Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

American Journal of International Law. Published by the American Society of International Law.

Selected UN System websites

United Nations: *http://www.un.org*

UN system: *http://www.unsyst.org*

UN Development Programme (UNDP): *http://www.undp.org*

UN Environment Programme (UNEP): *http://www.unep.org*

UN Children's Fund (UNICEF): *http://www.unicef.org*

World Food Programme (WFP): *http://www.wfp.org*

UN Population Fund (UNFPA): *http://www.unfpa.org*

UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP): *http://www.undcp.org*

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: *http://www.unhchr.ch*

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): *http://www.unhcr.ch*

United Nations University (UNU): *http://www.unu.edu*

Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS: *http://www.unaids.org*

International Labour Organization (ILO): *http://www.ilo.org*

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO):
  http://www.fao.org

UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):
  http://www.unesco.org

World Health Organization (WHO): *http://www.who.int*

World Bank: *http://www.worldbank.org*

International Monetary Fund (IMF): *http://www.imf.int*

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): *http://www.icao.int*

Universal Postal Union (UPU): *http://www.upu.int*

International Telecommunication Union (ITU): *http://www.itu.int*

World Meteorological Organization (WMO): *http://www.wmo.ch*

International Maritime Organization (IMO): *http://www.imo.org*

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): *http://www.wipo.int*

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD): *http://www.ifad.org*

UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO): *http://www.unido.org*

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA): *http://www.iaea.org*

Suggested Research Topics and Exam Questions

Setting Global Norms
- What is meant by the term "norms," and what are global norms?
- Describe how treaty norms differ from more generally accepted goals of behavior.
- Describe "regimes" and how they fit into the discussion of global norms.

At the Beginning
- What is the purpose of the UN Charter? When and how was it written? How does the UN Charter begin to establish norms and on what issues?
- What was the main focus of the conference at San Francisco? How did that change in the years following 1945?

The United Nations and International Law
- What is the International Court of Justice; how does it function; and what is its relationship to the United Nations? How has the Court played a role in setting norms?
- What is the role of the United Nations in establishing international agreements? How does the UN General Assembly contribute to the development of international law and agreements?
- What are the two main functions of international law? Describe how they interact and give some examples.
- Describe the functions of the International Law Commission (ILC). What other legal bodies fall under the auspices of the United Nations, and how do they contribute to global norms?

The Security Council
- Describe the functions, makeup, and powers of the Security Council.
- Explain how the use of "precedent" is different in decisions of the Council from those in a court of law.
- How does the authority of the Security Council differ under Chapter VI of the Charter as compared to Chapter VII?
- Describe the creation of the criminal tribunals.

The General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the Secretary-General
- Describe the powers of the General Assembly in creating norms, even though its decisions are nonbinding.

- How effective has ECOSOC been over the years?
- What are the powers of the Secretary-General and how have individuals holding that job interpreted that role? What kinds of controversies have surrounded the position? How can the Secretary-General play a role in establishing norms?

The Specialized Agencies
- Give examples of some of the UN specialized agencies and how they contribute to the creation of global norms.
- What organizations are the "big three," and what is the focus of their work?
- Describe UNAIDS and how it functions within the agencies.

Human Rights
- How important is the promotion of human rights to the United Nations? How were human rights envisioned in the UN Charter?
- Describe the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and why it is considered the cornerstone of human rights law.
- List and describe the important human rights conventions. What has been the effect of these conventions over the years?

World Conferences
- What have been some of the more important world conferences that have been organized by the United Nations?
- How do world conferences serve the building of global norms? Give examples.

Terrorism and Globalization
- How has the United Nations coped with the issue of terrorism? What are some of the important provisions that have developed since September 11, 2001?
- Describe the effects of globalization and what is meant by the term. How does globalization improve or degrade conditions in the world? What role can the United Nations play in establishing norms for globalization? Give some examples. What is the Global Compact?

Conclusions
- How has your view of the United Nations changed after reading this essay? Describe how the United Nations sets standards and norms and what mechanisms are used to convey that to the general public.
- How can the United Nations do a better job of telling the story about the central role it plays in people's lives?
- What do you think is the most important issue for the United Nations in conveying norms and standards for the world's people?