

in the Council is by simple majority; each member has one vote.

#### INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

The International Court of Justice is the main UN organ for handing down legal judgments. Only countries, not individuals, can take cases before the Court. Once a country agrees to let the Court act on a case, it must abide by the Court's decision.

#### THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is the staff of the United Nations, carrying out its day-to-day operations. The Secretary-General is the chief officer of the United Nations.

#### THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

When the United Nations began, there were some parts of the world where the people could not choose their own governments. Those areas were placed under special protection of the United Nations and were called Trust Territories. With the last Trust Territory—Palau, formerly administered by the United States—having achieved self-government in October 1994, the Council has formally suspended operations after nearly half a century. It will meet only on an extraordinary basis, as the need arises.

*Extracted from Basic Facts About the United Nations, United Nations Publications, New York, NY.*



## TO SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS:

As the millennium approaches, what were once local and regional matters are becoming ever more global. Political upheavals in apparently distant parts of the world have international repercussions; financial transactions in one country affect those in all countries; environmental degradation knows no national borders; and human rights violations in one location are the responsibility of people in all locations. Electronic networks forge new links among people around the world. We are so tightly wired that a short circuit anywhere can fry us all.

For more than fifty years, the United Nations has tried to cope with many global issues. Tackling the most difficult of problems, under circumstances where not all governments are likely to support its efforts, the UN has had its share of failures, but also a quite remarkable string of successes. Indeed, the world is clearly a better place with the UN than without it. We believe that in the future an even more effective UN can help us join with other nations to confront and overcome the world's most pressing challenges. That's why we believe that teaching about the UN in our nation's schools today is absolutely essential.

While the UN's importance is recognized in almost every social studies curriculum framework and standard, many history and civics teachers fail to teach about it. Some teachers may not have all the information they need to teach the UN's history, while for others, international organizations simply fall at the end of a textbook too packed with other things. Still others prefer not to teach about the UN to avoid potentially controversial issues.

The experiment called the United Nations, founded by the Allies at the end of World War II to prevent further wars, to promote human rights, and to build a better world, is a fact: this organization of governments has had a profound effect on the international scene for the entire second half of the twentieth century. We believe that it is not possible to teach American history, world history or civics adequately without teaching about America's role in the world, including its membership in international organizations and its participation in the activities conducted by the UN. Now that the Cold War is over and a new era of multilateralism has begun, we believe that it is even more important for students to acquire an in-depth understanding of the United Nations, its strengths, its weaknesses, its opportunities, and its limitations.

As this publication demonstrates, numerous printed, audiovisual and Internet resources are available to help teachers and students learn about the United Nations itself. We hope all teachers will take advantage of these resources to add the United Nations and other international organizations to their courses. But there is more: The United Nations and its specialized agencies have developed superb resources and materials for those interested in teaching about the world. Many are on-line and can be easily accessed by teachers and students. There are available UN resources to teach about most global and international issues and topics.

There are many organizations that can help you and your students learn about the United Nations, and we urge you to contact them for assistance. These include local and regional United Nations Associations, World Affairs Councils and global education projects.

Humphrey Tonkin  
Chairman,  
*The American Forum for Global Education*

Andrew F. Smith  
President,  
*The American Forum for Global Education*