

The United Nations: building peace

In this lesson you will be learning about the United Nations Security Council. The Security Council is responsible for maintaining peace, and tries to settle conflicts that threaten international security. It can set up peacekeeping operations to protect civilians and help the parties to a conflict to resolve their differences peacefully. You will be learning about peacekeeping operations and applying this learning to a serious conflict that is currently taking place in Darfur, Sudan. Peacekeeping is a difficult but essential job, so be prepared!

Learning objectives for today

- To explore the role of the UN Security Council in keeping peace around the world
- To make an action plan for peace in Darfur

The main aims of the UN are

1. Secure international peace
2. Eliminate poverty
3. Protect human rights



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THE UN BUILDS PEACE

The UN has helped to prevent many violent conflicts from becoming full-scale wars. It has also played a major role in helping warring parties to reach peaceful solutions through discussions and negotiation. The Security Council is the UN body tasked with maintaining international peace and security.

What is the UN Security Council?

The Security Council is one of the most important parts of the United Nations. It is made up of 15 of the UN's member states. Five of these countries are permanently on the Security Council: China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA. The other 10 members are elected every two years. All UN member states must abide by the decisions of the Security Council.

How does the Security Council try to prevent and resolve violent conflict?

When a particular conflict is brought before the Security Council, it usually first asks the parties involved in the conflict to reach agreement by peaceful means, for example, through negotiations. If fighting breaks out, continues or gets worse, the Council tries to secure a 'ceasefire'. It might send a peacekeeping mission to the troubled area to restore peace and protect civilians. Peacekeepers must remain neutral at all times and should only shoot in self-defence.

Peacekeeping missions

Since it was founded in 1945, the UN has sent 67 peacekeeping and observer missions to the world's trouble spots. At present, there are 16 peacekeeping operations around the world, carried out by some 120,000 brave men and women from 118 countries. Currently, there are missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Syria and Sudan.