



Japan and the United Nations

~ The 60th Anniversary of Japan's UN Membership ~



1 Foundation of the United Nations (UN) ... For world peace and prosperity

In Geneva, Switzerland, 1920 after World War I, the League of Nations was established for world peace. The League's activities were a series of trials and errors as the first universal international organization. In part due to the non-participation of the United States, it was not able to perform a sufficient role to prevent World War II from breaking out.

In 1945 after WWII, the United Nations (UN) was established for world peace and prosperity so as to prevent the recurrence of another disastrous war. In light of the League's experience, the US, the USSR, the United Kingdom, France, and the Republic of China took the initiative in establishing the UN, which is headquartered in New York, USA.

The number of Member States, which started at 51, has kept growing, currently standing at 193.

2 Japan's accession to the UN ... 2016 marks the 60th anniversary of Japan's membership of the UN

Due to air raids, atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and ground battles in Okinawa, Japan lay in ruins after WWII. Reflecting on WWII, Japan made a fresh start as a peace-loving nation after the war. In 1951, Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The Allied occupation of Japan ended the following year and Japan regained its sovereignty. In 1956, Japan joined the UN, symbolizing its return to the international community after the war.

With the support of the international community, including UN organizations such as UNICEF, Japan achieved postwar reconstruction. After that, it underwent a high economic growth phase and grew to become an aid provider from an aid receiver, contributing proactively to the international community by extending support to developing countries through ODA. Of particular note is that Japan had almost consistently been the world's biggest donor throughout the 1990s.



Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signs a document of capitulation after WWII on board the USS Missouri (1945)



Nations sign the UN Charter in San Francisco (1945)



Japanese children who received aid from UNICEF after WWII



The Peace Bell donated by Japan in 1954 is installed at the Japanese Garden in the UN Headquarters



Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu witnesses the hoisting of the national flag upon Japan's accession to the UN (1956)



UN Headquarters in New York



3 Organization and Functions of the UN ··· A universal international organization in which 193 nations participate

The UN has the following main organs, which perform their respective roles:

(1) General Assembly (UNGA) ··· With each of the 193 Member States having one vote, all Member States discuss the entire range of the UN's activities and make recommendations. The subjects the UNGA handles are wide-ranging; disaster risk reduction is just one example of them. Recently, Japan has taken the initiative to adopt a resolution that designates November 5 as "World Tsunami Awareness Day". The date is based on an anecdote from when a tsunami hit current Wakayama Prefecture in the western Japan on November 5, 1854 (Edo Period). One of the villagers set fire to his rice sheaves, to warn people to head for higher ground and thus saved their lives.

(2) Security Council (UNSC) ··· The UNSC consists of five permanent members with veto power and 10 non-permanent members (elected for a term of two years). The UNSC assumes the primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security in the international community. For instance, the UN Mission in South Sudan, in which Japan's Self-Defense Forces take part, are based on UNSC's resolutions.

Japan performs its 11th role as a non-permanent UNSC member for two years starting in 2016. It also strives to reform the UNSC to better reflect the reality of today's international community and aims to become a permanent member to further contribute to global peace and security.

(3) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) ··· The ECOSOC discusses economic, social, cultural, development and human rights issues and makes recommendations. For instance, "the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)" was established under the ECOSOC in 1946, which has striven to enhance the status of women since the foundation of the UN.

(4) Secretariat ··· The UN Secretariat performs clerical work, manages and executes projects so that the UN may be able to play the aforementioned various roles under Secretary-General's leadership.

(5) International Court of Justice (ICJ) ··· The ICJ delivers its binding judgment on legal disputes between Member States or renders its non-binding advisory opinion on any legal question. In the past, it has solved numerous disputes between states, including frontier or maritime delimitation disputes, and disputes concerning territorial sovereignty. Mr. Hisashi Owada served as the first Japanese ICJ President from 2009 through 2012. While the abovementioned four organizations are located in New York, the ICJ is situated in the Hague, the Netherlands.



The Floor of the UNGA
At the UNGA, each Member State has one vote regardless of the size of the country, and discusses wide-ranging areas the UN addresses and makes recommendations.



The floor of the UNSC
As the 5 UNSC permanent members (US, UK, France, Russia and China) have veto power, if one of the five makes an objection, the UNSC will not be able to make a decision. This was introduced as the mechanism for the big powers to be united to protect global peace and security. During the Cold War era in particular, however, the confrontation of blocs of East and West caused malfunction in the UNSC.



UN Photo/ICJ/ANP-in-Opracht/Gerald van Daalen

ICJ



Scale of the assessment for the UN regular budget (2016-2018)

	Member State	Percentage
1st	US	22.000%
2nd	Japan	9.680%
3rd	China	7.921%
4th	Germany	6.389%
5th	France	4.859%



Source: The Japan Joint Staff home page



Source: The Japan Joint Staff home page

JSDF takes part in PKO in South Sudan (road construction activities in the capital Juba).



UN Photo/DB

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial registered as UNESCO's World Heritage site



4 Japan's Contribution through the UN ··· Addressing Challenges the International Community is Facing

The UN regular budget is set every two years, which is called the program budget (program budget for the biennium 2016-17 is about 5.4 billion US dollars). The Member States are required to contribute to the regular budget according to the share based on the capacity to pay. Japan's share (scale of assessments) is 9.68%, the 2nd largest after the United States. Besides this, Japan contributes to the budget for peacekeeping operations and other UN-related organizations (including Offices, Funds and Programs, or Specialized Agencies) as well. Japan's contribution is not confined to the financial aspect; Japan is addressing various challenges faced by the world including the following:

(1) UN Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) ··· The UN deploys PKOs by troops voluntarily dispatched by Member States to resolve conflicts and to assist countries in transition to peace in different parts of the world. Since Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) was first dispatched to Cambodia in 1992, it has participated in UN PKO missions in many parts of the world, contributing to promoting global peace and security. JSDF is currently participating in PKO in South Sudan to help develop infrastructure for local population and is highly appreciated by the international community.

(2) Disarmament and Non-proliferation ··· In order to maintain peace and security of the world, it is important for each state to reduce armaments, and prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The UN has worked on disarmament and non-proliferation since its establishment. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings, Japan submits to the UN General Assembly a resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons, which is adopted every year, so as not to repeat the devastation caused by the use of nuclear weapons. Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is a Japanese national. In many ways, Japan leads global discussion on disarmament and non-proliferation.

(3) Human Security ··· The traditional concept of security is that a state protects itself. However, today's international community is exposed to more diverse and complex challenges and threats, including poverty, conflicts, terrorism, infectious diseases, environmental problems and natural disasters. Against this background, "human security" is the concept of building a state and community where people are able to live in freedom and dignity by paying attention to each and every individual, and protect his/her security. Based on this philosophy, Japan contributes to a variety of fields internationally, such as economic development, humanitarian aid, counter-terrorism, health, women, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.

5 Functions of UN-related Agencies · · · Roles performed by various agencies in diverse specialized fields

(1) Examples of agencies established under the General Assembly:

① **UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)** · · · UNICEF supports children in wide-ranging fields including health, hygiene, nutrition and education. After WWII, Japanese children were supplied with powdered skim milk by UNICEF. Japan is UNICEF's main contributor, and these contributions allow children in the developing world to access vaccines, necessary nutrients, and safe water.

② **UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** · · · The UNHCR supports refugees and others who are displaced by conflicts. A Japanese national, Ms. Sadako Ogata, served as High Commissioner, head of this organization, from 1991 to 2000, performing a pivotal role. Japan is a main contributor to the UNHCR, whose contributions are used to provide refugees with tents, blankets and food.

③ **UN Human Rights Council** · · · During WWII, grave human rights violations, including the Holocaust, were committed. Reflecting on the history, the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It has striven to protect human rights energetically by adopting the International Covenants on Human Rights in 1966. The Human Rights Council was established in 2006 by reforming and replacing the UN Commission on Human Rights (established in 1946) to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedom, and to conduct efforts at preventing human rights violation. It also reviews the situation of human rights in individual countries.

(2) Examples of specialized agencies which promote international cooperation in individual fields in collaboration with the UN:

① **UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** · · · UNESCO, which is well-known for its registration and maintenance of World Heritage sites, conducts a wide scope of activities from disseminating education to promoting scientific research. In the preamble to the UNESCO Charter is a famous phrase: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." As this phrase says, the UNESCO is an agency that aims at achieving world peace through intellectual exchange and cooperation, such as education, science and culture; Japan cooperates with UNESCO in various fields, including promoting the protection of cultural heritage in the developing world.

② **World Health Organization (WHO)** · · · The WHO is the agency which aims to improve health standards for people all over the world. In recent years, infectious diseases such as the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and the Ebola Virus Disease have broken out. As globalization gains momentum today, it is impossible for a single country to handle infectious diseases. The WHO responds to the challenges. To fight against Ebola Virus Disease, Japan offered a wide array of support in cooperation with WHO, and also provided medical equipments and protective garments, and deployed experts through bilateral cooperation.



Ms. Sadako Ogata visited numerous areas of conflict as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and devoted herself to supporting refugees.



Japan's first UNESCO World Heritage sites, the world's oldest wooden structure Horyu-ji Temple and the Himeji-jo Castle well-known as the White Heron Castle were registered in 1993.



Thermography cameras offered by Japan at the Côte d'Ivoire Airport. They detected fevered passengers, thereby contributing to preventing the spread of Ebola Virus Disease.

6 How can we realize a better world?

With the slogan “**Strong UN. Better World.**” the UN is ready to contribute to the world more vigorously than ever. Japan obtained its 11th non-permanent seat on the Security Council in January 2016, a year which marks the 60th anniversary of its membership in the UN, and is set to make even greater contributions to the international community through the UN.

The world we live in faces a variety of challenges. To solve them, let’s discuss what we can do by exchanging ideas. For instance, the following challenges need to be addressed:

(1) Poverty ··· According to statistics by the World Bank, there are as many as 1.2 billion people who live on less than 1.25 dollars a day (2012). The causes for poverty are diverse, including political instability due to wars or conflicts, insufficient education, or unequal redistribution of wealth. ⇒ How can we eliminate poverty? Let’s look into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the UN is working on.

(2) Climate Change ··· Greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, contribute to raising the temperature of the earth. Climate change causes abnormal weather and raises the sea level, threatening people’s lives. Meanwhile, we continue to consume energy which leads to the further emission of greenhouse gases. So, how can we reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining our standard of living? Let us also look into the differences of the positions between developed countries and developing countries.

Let’s do some research on other challenges and solutions as well.

7 What would you like to do, if you were a member of the UN?

With the percentage of Japanese people working for the UN falling short of 3%, a larger number of competent Japanese personnel are expected to play an active role at the UN. Let’s check the functions of the UN in the areas where your interests lie. Imagine you work for the UN as a member of staff, together with people from different countries. What would you like to do as part of the team?

Children learning at an elementary school built by Japan’s grant aid in Cameroon.



A Japanese engineer giving technical instructions at a road construction site in Tanzania.



“The Paris Agreement”, a new framework for greenhouse gas reductions, was adopted at COP21 (the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) held in Paris.



Solar panels are installed through Japan’s grant aid for an environmental program at a national hospital in the Marshall Islands, an example of cooperation by taking advantage of Japan’s cutting-edge technology.