** Introduction to the United Nations**

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization whose stated aims are to facilitate cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress, human rights, and achieving world peace. The UN was founded in 1945 after World War II to replace the League of Nations, to stop wars between countries and to provide a platform for dialogue.

There are currently 192 member states (2008), including nearly every recognized independent state in the world. From its headquarters on international territory in New York City, the UN and its specialized agencies decide on substantive and administrate issues in regular meetings held throughout the year. The organization is divided into administrative bodies, primarily:

1. The General Assembly (the main deliberative assembly).
2. The Security Council (decides certain resolutions for peace and security).
3. The Economic and Social Council (assists in promoting international economic and social cooperation and development).
4. The Secretariat (provides studies, information, and facilities needed by the UN).
5. The International Court of Justice (the primary judicial organ).

Additional bodies deal with the governance of all other UN System agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The UN’s most visible public figure is the Secretary-General, currently Ban Ki-moon of South Korea, who attained the post in 2007. The organization is financed from assessed and voluntary contributions from its member states, and has six official languages: Arabic, Mandarin, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

**General Assembly**

The General Assembly is the main deliberative assembly of the United Nations. Composed of all United Nations member states, the assembly meets in regular yearly sessions under a president elected from among the member states. Over a two-week period at the start of each session, all members have the opportunity to address the assembly. Traditionally, the Secretary-General makes the first statement, followed by the president of the assembly. When the General Assembly votes on important questions, a two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required. Examples of important questions include: recommendations on peace and security; expulsion of members; and budgetary matters.

Our Model United Nations members will each deliver and address an issue to the General Assembly. See the assignment guidelines in the activity handout in Session Two.