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### Peace and the United Nations: Upholding Global Stability

Peace is often defined as simply the absence of war, but genuine and lasting peace encompasses much more: the rule of law, functional institutions, human dignity, and cooperation among and within states. Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has served as the world's leading international institution tasked with promoting and preserving peace. Despite challenges such as limited resources, competing national interests, and complex conflicts, the UN has demonstrated that peace can be maintained and built through coordinated diplomacy, humanitarian action, and security operations. Through its peacekeeping missions, development and institution-building programs, refugee and humanitarian efforts, and disarmament initiatives, the UN upholds peace in meaningful ways.

One of the most impactful examples of the UN's work in maintaining peace is its peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping missions deploy uniformed and civilian personnel from member states to conflict and recovering zones with mandates to provide security, monitor cease-fires, support political transitions, protect civilians, and help rebuild institutions. For more than seventy years, UN peacekeeping has built up an impressive record of achievements. For example, peacekeeping has helped societies transition from war to peace and reduces the risk of violence returning by over 50%. In 2024 alone, approximately 72,000 peacekeepers from approximately 120 countries served in eleven missions, helping to maintain cease-fires and provide stability even as conflict related deaths reached very high numbers.

Specific missions such as those in Mozambique (1992-94), Namibia (1989-90), Cambodia (1992-93) and Sierra Leone (1999-2005) can be used as examples where peacekeepers helped demobilize combatants, oversee elections, rebuild institutions, and facilitate the return of displaced people. For instance, in Sierra Leone the UN supported the disarmament of large numbers of combatants, creating conditions for sustainable peace. All recorded data implies that where peacekeepers are deployed, conflicts are less likely to recur. The strength of this program is in its neutrality, the legitimacy gained by broad international participation, and the integrated approach combining security and civilian tasks. While not perfect, the overwhelming evidence suggests that UN peacekeeping operations are effective most of the time.

Peace cannot be sustained by security alone. The UN also promotes peace by addressing the underlying drivers of conflict such as poverty, weak governance, injustice, and inequality. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is central in this regard. In post conflict societies like Rwanda and Sierra Leone, UNDP helped rebuild local governments, train civil professionals, support elections, and promote access to education. These initiatives strengthen democracy, promote human rights, and thereby create the conditions for lasting peace.

For example, missions have supported political transitions and helped support fragile new state institutions. This reflects the idea that durable peace emerges not simply when guns are silent, but when societies can govern themselves, deliver services, uphold justice, and provide opportunities to their citizens. By assisting with early peace building support the UN plays a key role in shifting societies from war time dynamics to peace time stability.

Another pillar of the UN's contribution to peace is its humanitarian and refugee protection work. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assists millions of displaced persons, offering shelter, education, healthcare, and protection. Conflict

driven displacement not only causes human suffering but also threatens the stability of many regions and can regenerate cycles of violence. By providing for the most vulnerable, the UN helps to restore dignity, reduce resentment, and support social cohesion. Furthermore, when refugees return safely and with resources, they contribute to rebuilding their societies rather than fueling further conflict. This demonstrates that peace is not simply the absence of armed conflict, it is also the presence of futures, opportunities, and human security.

Prevention of conflict is as important as resolving it. The UN's role in disarmament and arms control, through the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and related treaties, helps create the structural conditions for peace. Weapons and arms proliferation disrupt regions, prolong conflicts, and increase the risk of mass violence. For example, the UN highlights how disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, support transitions to peace. Treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) also reflect the UN's long term commitment to reducing the means of war. When both state and non state members are constrained by arms-control frameworks, the threshold for violence increases and the space for diplomacy grows.

While the UN's record is strong, acknowledging challenges and limitations is important for furthering development. The nature of modern conflict makes peace keeping and peace building more complex. Funding shortfalls, gaps in political ideologies among member states, and issues of mandate implementation often slow or undermine successful missions. For example, some analyses note that mission success depends on legitimacy and consent, robust mandates, and sufficient resources. The systems are not without fault as certain missions have struggled or failed and accountability issues remain serious concerns. Nevertheless, these challenges do not define the UN's overall contribution and they are reminders of ongoing work

and improvement. Despite the setbacks, the UN continues to deliver peace-related outcomes in many varied contexts.

In an era of rising global tensions, multiple overlapping crises, and renewed competition among states, the role of the United Nations as the premier international institution for peace remains paramount. Through its peacekeeping missions, it stabilizes war-torn societies and prevents conflict relapse. Through its development arm, it rebuilds institutions and addresses root causes of violence. Through its humanitarian efforts, it protects and empowers displaced persons and through its arms-control work, it helps reduce the means of war. While peace building is never easy and will never be perfect, the evidence shows that the UN upholds peace effectively in many contexts. The world, despite currently being more unsettled than ever before, still benefits from this institution's reach and resilience. In short, the United Nations reminds us that peace is not a final destination, but a continuous, collective effort, one that depends on courage, cooperation, and the will to build a better future together.

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