

# Is The United Nations Still Relevant Today?

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Since its birth, in the midst of World War II, the United Nations has been at the forefront of discussing and addressing global challenges. As the world faces unprecedented health crises, climate change, geopolitical conflicts and mass displacements, the relevance of the UN in modern international relations continues to be a vital question. The UN's effectiveness in addressing global issues is evident through its recent initiatives and responses, which serve as case studies for evaluation.

The COVID-19 pandemic called for a global coordinated response. It highlighted the UN's fundamental role in managing international health emergencies through research, coordination of efforts, and deployment. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) collaborated with the World Health Organisation (WHO) in strengthening healthcare facilities and developing logistical functions in vulnerable regions. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the UN drew lessons from past health crises such as Ebola, HIV and SARS. Further, the UN established the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund to support national health plans and essential services, which include vaccines and maternal health services. These actions underline the UN's capacity to direct resources towards crisis mitigation, showing its relevance in global health governance, and other global issues.

Climate change remains a pressing global issue. The UN plays a critical role in fostering international cooperation to mitigate its impacts. The integration of climate response with sustainable development goals (SDGs) has been a strategic focus since 2015. The UN's goal is to achieve at least 70% of the 17 SDG goals by 2030. The UN's efforts in hosting forums like the 2024 Adaptation Forum also emphasize its role in promoting sustainable development that addresses both climate resilience and achievements. According to the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, The seventh Adaptation focused on the theme of “promoting solutions toward achieving the global goal on adaptation: opportunities for action and collaboration.” Participants reflected on needs, challenges and corresponding opportunities for action and collaboration across all four stages of the iterative adaptation cycle. This shows the organization’s adaptability to evolving global needs.

According to the European External Action Service, The UN’s peacekeeping mission and conflict resolution is where its relevance is most challenged today. In response to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine, which was backed by 141 nations against only 5. Unfortunately, this resolution is not legally enforceable. Still, it moves public opinion and in turn, creates pressure on states to comply with majority international opinion. Therefore, the resolution highlights how the UN has the means to globally display public opinion, but it falls short in action. This result provokes many to question the UN’s efficacy in addressing these issues. If countries like Russia choose to ignore the opinion of a staggering majority of 141 to 5, and there’s no collective institution to hold it accountable, in essence, international anarchy reigns. Unfortunately, that has become the silent perception of many today.

The UN’s ability to coordinate a global response to COVID-19 is proof that it is able to mobilize help across the globe, yet its structure holds it back. Especially in matters of international law, the UN can display a landslide in international opinion, but lacks the enforcement mechanisms to truly act.

Therefore, the UN’s relevance and efficacy cannot be measured solely by its successes or failures in immediate conflict resolution or by the enforceability of its resolutions. Rather, it ought to be seen in its ability to uphold international cooperation and adapt its methodologies in the face of the ever-evolving geopolitical landscape. It must address the criticism of inefficiency and ineffectiveness by altering its internal structures to increase its enforcement capabilities in such cases of unanimity. While the UN may seem like a

relic of an older era, its fundamental role as a forum for international engagement remains indispensable. The objective today ought not to be questioning the United Nations' relevance, but renewing its mission, ensuring that the UN remains a relevant symbol of international unity.

## Anecdotes from Mx. Amore

### On International Cooperation and Crisis Management:

According to Mx. Amore, international cooperation remains of vital importance, even if it's not always easy to achieve. They acknowledge that the UN's work can be slow and impeded by bureaucracy or states holding disproportionate power. Despite imperfections in the current system, they emphasize that response to climate change and other global crises affecting the world would only be possible with collaborative efforts.

### On the limits of UN Enforceability:

Mx. Amore points out the global emphasis on state sovereignty. When the General Assembly passes a resolution, it carries symbolic influence and falls short of enforceability under international law, which is primarily due to states being selective of which laws to adopt within their own borders. While there are treaties that create certain legal obligations, those are only to states that have signed and ratified them. Mx Amore further points that pooled sovereignty has seen success in regional entities like the European Union, but such experiments have remained regional and have not been able to appear on a global scale.

### On the UN's Continued Relevance:

Despite these challenges, Mx. Amore insists the UN remains relevant. They highlight the UN's symbolic influence and power to shape public opinion and diplomatic outcomes. Therefore the UN is able to be an effective platform for dialogue and debate, consensus-building and global cooperation.

## Bibliography

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