

Taking on the Worlds Institutions

This module will explore the world's major decision-making institutions in order to familiarise students with them and empower them to engage with these institutions.

Introduction – Decision Making and Planning: The Major Players

Objectives

To familiarise students with the nature and roles of a few major decision-making bodies.

Previous Preparation

This module can be done on-line or off-line

Teachers may wish to add or replace some of the institutions on the resource sheet as they see fit, according to their subject and interest.

Copies of the resource sheet on taking on the world's institutions (this will also be available on the Gemin-i Plus website).

Each individual or small group will need access to the questions, preferably in a form that they can write on and keep.

Introduction (20%)

Whole group *Explanation by teacher*

Read through the names of the organisations and types of organisations that are being introduced in this module to see if the students recognise them.

Explain that all of them have great influence on how individuals, societies and nations conduct their affairs and that this module is a short introduction to the basic facts.

Development (60%)

Individuals or Small group *Worksheet Scanning for information*

Answer the following questions by reading the information on decision-making bodies:-

Which organisations act without government control?

Which organisation includes most of the countries of one continent?

Which organisation includes most of the countries in the world?

Which organisation includes the richest countries in the world?

Which organisation has doubled in size since 1995?

Which organisation provides loans and advice to aid the economic development of countries?

Which 2 organisations have a particular interest in trying to eliminate corruption?

Which organisation provides a legal and administrative framework for people to live within?

National Governments are always democratically elected. TRUE or FALSE

All country members of the United Nations have equal influence. TRUE or FALSE

The Group of Eight discusses other issues as well as finance. TRUE or FALSE

All members of the EU have agreed to the same degree of participation. TRUE or FALSE

The AU promotes economic development and good governance in Africa. TRUE or FALSE

NEPAD wants member countries to be accountable for the aid they receive. TRUE or FALSE

NGOs always have the same aims as governments and businesses. TRUE or FALSE

The World Bank now accepts that free market policies are not the only answer for poor countries. TRUE or FALSE

Conclusion (20%)

Whole group *Feedback led by teacher*

Check through and correct the answers of the questions.

Extension

These questions can be finished for homework if there is not enough time to complete the exercise in the lesson.

Teacher Evaluation:

Comments on the class:

Pupil specific comments:

Observation and evaluation of the class:

Resource Sheet : Taking on the World's Institutions

Decision-making Organisations

National Government

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government>

A government is an organization that has the power to make and enforce laws for a certain territory. In its broadest sense, "govern" means the power to administrate, whether over an area of land, a set group of people, or an association.

Government can be defined as the dominant decision-making arm of the state. Government can also be defined as the political means of creating and enforcing laws.

Government can be defined as an organisation that attempts to maintain control of a territory in the form of collecting taxes, controlling entry and exit to the state, preventing encroachment of territory by neighbouring states and preventing the establishment of alternative governments within the country.

Governments concern themselves with overseeing and administering many areas of human activity, such as economics, education, health, science, international relations, transport, environment, housing, work and war within a country and have appointed ministers or secretaries in charge of departments dealing with each area.

Governments maintain the established order with police and military forces, making agreements with other states, and maintaining support within the state by providing infrastructure for justice, administration, transport, social welfare etc., holding elections for important posts within the state, limiting the power of the state through laws and constitutions and appealing to nationalism.

United Nations (UN)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations

The United Nations is an international organization established in 1945 and now made up of 191 states. With the exception of the Vatican, the sole permanent observer state, all internationally recognized independent countries are members. Other political entities, notably the Republic of China (Taiwan), Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), and Palestine, have de facto independence and/or some international diplomatic recognition from selected states, but are not UN members. The founding members were China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and United States and these countries (Soviet Union having been replaced by Russia) are the permanent members of the Security Council and retain a veto to block resolutions.

The main purpose of the United Nations is the promotion of international peace and security.

UN membership is open to all "peace-loving states" that accept the obligations of the UN Charter and, in the judgment of the organization, are able and willing to fulfill these obligations.

The General Assembly determines admission upon recommendation of the Security Council.

The organization's headquarters is in New York City, USA.

The United Nations System is based on six main organisations:-

- UN General Assembly

- UN Security Council

- UN Economic and Social Council

- UN Trusteeship Council

UN Secretariat
International Court of Justice

Some of the areas of concern and action of the United Nations include arms control and disarmament, peace-keeping, humanitarian assistance, human rights and the upholding of international agreements.

Group of Eight (G-8)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G8>

The Group of Eight (G-8) is the coalition of eight of the world's leading industrialized nations: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Russia (not participating in all events), as well as the European Union. Every year there is an economic and political meeting (G-8 Summit) of the heads of government with international officials, though there are numerous subsidiary meetings and policy research. In July 2005 at the Gleneagles Summit in Scotland, China, India, Brazil and South Africa (as major developing economies), have been invited to participate in some of the talks. Two important foci of this summit will be climate change and debt relief for poor developing countries.

The presidency of the Group rotates among the member states annually, with the new president assuming responsibility on 1 January. The country holding the presidency hosts a series of ministerial-level meetings leading up to a mid-year three-day summit with the heads of state, and ensures the safety of the participants.

The ministerial meetings bring together ministers in topics such as health, law enforcement, and labor, to discuss issues of mutual or global concern. The best known of these is the G-7, which now refers specifically to the annual meeting of the financial ministers of the G-8 minus Russia, as well as officials from the European Community. However, there also is a briefer "G8+4" meeting for the finance ministers of the full G-8, as well as China, India, Brazil, and South Africa.

The annual summits often are the focus of anti-globalization movement protests, notably at the 27th G8 summit in Genoa in 2001. Critics often refer to the G-8 as an unofficial "world government".

European Union (EU)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union

The European Union or EU is, in part, an inter-governmental and supra-national organisation, made up of European countries, which currently has 25 member states. These are Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands (1952), Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom (1973), Greece (1981), Portugal, Spain (1986), East Germany, recently reunited with West Germany (1990), Austria, Finland, Sweden (1995), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia,

Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia (2004).

There are 3 main institutions: The Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, and the European Commission. Each has a President, and each has a specific role and responsibility. Initially it was just an economic union, but now the European Union's activities cover all policy areas, from health and economic policy to foreign affairs and defence. However, the nature of its powers differs between areas. Depending on the powers transferred to it by its member states, the EU therefore resembles a federation (e.g. monetary affairs, agricultural, trade and environmental policy), a confederation (e.g. in social and economic policy, consumer protection, internal affairs), or an international organisation (e.g. in foreign affairs). A key activity of the EU is the establishment and administration of a common single market, consisting of a customs union, a single currency, the Euro (adopted by 12 of the 25 member states so far), a Common Agricultural Policy and a Common Fisheries Policy.

The current and future status of the European Union is the subject of great political concern within some European Union member states as there are disagreements about the proposals for a new Constitution and the management of the Budget.

African Union (AU)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union

The African Union has 53 members and is composed of all of the African countries except Morocco, due to its disagreements with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara).

The African Union (AU) was launched in Durban on July 9, 2002, by its first president, South African Thabo Mbeki, at the first session of the Assembly of the African Union. The second session of the Assembly was in Maputo in 2003, and the third session in Addis Ababa on July 6, 2004. The Pan-African Parliament opened officially September 16, 2004, in South Africa. As with its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, founded May 25, 1963), the African Union is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It is modelled after the European Union (but currently with powers closer to the Commonwealth of Nations), and aims to help promote democracy, human rights and development across Africa, especially by increasing foreign investment through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme.

Goals for the African Union include an African parliament and a central development bank.

The AU's first military intervention in a member state was the May 2003 deployment of a peacekeeping force of soldiers from South Africa, Ethiopia and

Mozambique to Burundi to oversee the implementation of the various agreements.

New Partnership for Africa's Development Programme (NEPAD)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NEPAD>

New Partnership for Africa's Development is an economic development program of the African Union. The NEPAD was adopted at the 37th session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia. It is meant to develop values and monitor their implementation within the framework of the African Union.

NEPAD focusses on education, health, regional infrastructure, agriculture, market access and preservation of the environment.

NEPAD includes the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). This organisation is voluntary and self-monitoring and is designed to ensure that the policies and actions of the participating countries conform to certain standards in democracy, and transparency and good practice in political, economic and corporate governance. It should also ensure that countries that receive aid demonstrate that it has been used properly and offer practical advice to countries that have problems with corruption and undemocratic practices.

Stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, government and international organisations had the opportunity to discuss the way forward during the NEPAD Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue 22 - 23 October 2004 when a three year review of NEPAD's progress was presented.

NEPAD has embarked upon an "e-schools" program to equip all 600, 000 primary and secondary schools in Africa with IT equipment and internet access within 10 years.

Some people have criticised NEPAD as they think it "allows" the developed countries in the Western World to continue to exploit Africa.

Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) or Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an organization which is independent from the government. Although the definition can technically include for-profit corporations, the term is generally restricted to social and cultural groups, whose primary goal is not commercial.

Some people consider the "NGO" label misleading, as it implies that anything

that is "not government" is NGO. Since NGOs are usually non-profit organizations that gain at least a portion of their funding from private sources, many NGOs now prefer the term Private voluntary organization (PVO).

NGOs exist for a variety of different purposes, usually to further the political and/or social goals of their members. Some example goals include improving the state of the natural environment, encouraging the observance of human rights, improving the welfare of the disadvantaged, or representing a corporate agenda.

NGOs also vary in their methods. Some act primarily as lobbyists, while others primarily conduct programs and activities. For instance, an NGO such as Oxfam concerned with poverty alleviation might provide needy people with the equipment and skills they need to find food and clean drinking water.

The relationship among businesses, governments, and NGOs can be quite complex and sometimes antagonistic, particularly when NGOs act to oppose the activities of governments and businesses. Sometimes Governments contract NGOs to carry out certain activities on their behalf.

Here are some examples of the activities of NGOs

- Campaign / Issue Organizations (eg Amnesty International)

- Capacity Building Support Organisations

- Domestic Charitable Organizations (eg Lions Clubs International)

- International Relief and Development Organizations (PVOs) (eg WaterAid)

- IT policy (eg Free Software Foundation)

- Networks (eg International Penfriends)

- Quasi-autonomous non-government organisation

(eg International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which is a marginal case. It defines itself as an NGO, but is a network of the government standards agencies of 147 countries.

- Trade Associations and Industry funded interest groups

(eg The California Raisin Marketing Board)

- Treaty Organizations (Independent organizations that act very much like NGOs, but are established and mandated by international treaties) (eg International Committee of the Red Cross)

World Bank

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Bank

The World Bank is an international organization originally created to finance the reconstruction of nations devastated by WWII. It came into existence on December 27, 1945 and is a non-profit-making international organisation owned by member governments that make differing payments to maintain it. There are 177 member states, but the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are controlled primarily by developed countries (which

contribute most of the money), while clients have almost exclusively been developing countries. The United States holds approximately 16.4% of total votes, Japan 7.9%, Germany 4.5% and UK and France each hold 4.3%. The G-7 countries together hold approximately 45% of the vote. As major decisions require an 85% majority, the US can block any reform and effectively has a veto.

The World Bank's activities are currently focused on developing countries or Less Developed Countries. The World Bank provides long term loans, grants, and technical assistance, to help developing countries implement their poverty reduction strategies. World Bank financing is used for health and education sector reforms, agriculture and industry, dams, roads and national parks etc. In addition to financing, the World Bank Group provides advice and assistance to developing countries on almost every aspect of economic development. It provides loans at preferential rates to member countries who are in difficulty. As a condition of the loan, it also asks that political measures be taken to, for example, limit corruption or foster democracy. In the past it has also insisted that countries should undergo structural adjustment programmes ie neo-liberal free market reforms.

The World Bank has been accused of being a US or western tool for imposing economic policies that support western interests. There is substantial evidence that free market reform policies - which the Bank systematically advocates - are actually often harmful to economic development if implemented badly, too quickly, in the wrong sequence, or in an inappropriate environment (e.g. very weak, uncompetitive economies).

In recent years the World Bank Group has been moving from targeting economic growth to aiming specifically at poverty reduction. It has also become more focused on support for small scale local enterprises. It has accepted that clean water, education, and sustainable development are essential to economic growth and has begun investing heavily in such projects. In response to external critics, the World Bank Group's institutions have adopted a wide range of environmental and social safeguard policies, designed to ensure that their projects do not harm individuals or groups in client countries. Despite these policies, World Bank Group projects are frequently criticized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for alleged environmental and social damage and for not achieving their intended goal of poverty reduction.

International Monetary Fund

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund

The IMF describes itself as: "an organization of 184 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty". Of all UN member states only North Korea, Cuba, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Monaco, Tuvalu and Nauru are either integrated and represented by other member states or choose not to participate.

Critics claim that IMF policy makers deliberately supported capitalist military dictatorships friendly to American and European corporations. Critics also claim that the IMF is generally apathetic or hostile to their views of democracy, human rights, and labor rights. These criticisms generated a controversy that helped spark the anti-globalization movement. Others claim the IMF has little power to democratize sovereign states, nor is that its stated objective: to advise and promote financial stability. Arguments in favor of the IMF say that economic stability is a precursor to democracy.

The fact that the IMF intervenes only in countries that already have serious financial problems has certainly hurt its reputation. It intervenes to help with financial collapses that are the result of decades of mismanagement. These collapses usually lead to years of economic difficulty, and as this often happens at the same time as IMF involvement in the economy it has in many cases been associated with the problem. Politicians have also long used the IMF as an easy target for blame when they themselves have made mistakes, using nationalism and the poor public relations of the IMF to gain easy political points.

Overall the IMF success record is limited. While it was created to help stabilize the global economy, since 1980 over 100 countries have experienced a banking collapse that reduced GDP by four percent or more -- far more than at any previous time in history. The considerable delay in IMF response to a crisis, and the fact that it tends to only respond to rather than prevent them, has led many economists to argue for reform.

Whatever the feelings people in the Western world have for the IMF, research by the Pew Research Center shows that more than 60 percent of Asians and 70 percent of Africans feel that the IMF and the World Bank have a positive effect on their country.

The Difference Between IMF and World Bank

There is much confusion about the difference between the IMF and its sister organisation the World Bank. The IMF keeps account of trade balances between member states, basically who owes whom how much, as an independent auditor. The World Bank on the other hand, gives more long term loans for more general purposes. What it does, as an investment bank, is essentially to intermediate between lenders and borrowers. It sells bonds to corporations, individuals, and sometimes governments, and lends that money to borrowing governments.

The IMF was originally founded to stabilise countries' currencies in relation to each other, and to oversee the currency exchange market. Since the IMF is not really a bank, it doesn't give loans as such. Rather, it has a pool of money from which member countries can borrow when they need to stabilise their currency quickly. This can be compared with an overdraft on a current account. All loans from the IMF must be paid back within 5 years.

Citizenship

The World and Me – Students can explore the organisations that structure the world and how it relates to their lives.

<http://youthink.worldbank.org/> - This site offers a wealth of resources for teaching about the work of the World Bank.

<http://www.un.org/aboutun/chart.html> - interactive UN organisation chart.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/un/classroom/lesson3.html> - lesson plan on improving the current world situation through the UN.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/13/g35/eurounion.html> - Lesson plan on world unions.

<http://www.unausa.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKRI8MPJpF&b=480883> - Lesson plans on the crisis in Sudan and the UN's role.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/citizenx/teachers/eu/lessonplan_offline.shtml - BBC lesson plans on the EU, UN and Commonwealth.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4070000/newsid_4073500/4073516.stm - CBBC resources on the G8

<http://www.j8changetheworld.com/> - curriculum-linked case studies, information and activities about the G8 for teachers and young people aged 13-16.

<http://21citizen.co.uk/live/citizenship/> - British Library website for children on how society works?

http://www.globalisland.nu/pages_intro/en/index.php?lang=en - An online

dilemma and democracy game for young people, developed by the Danish Association for International Co-operation.

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/rmext05/glo/> - provides activities and information to support teaching about global issues.

Geography

Globalisation – Students can study the impacts of globalisation and the organisations which control the way of the world!

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/econ.html> - US lesson plans on global economics.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1999/02/99/e-cyclopedia/711906.stm - BBC website on globalisation.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/globalisation/> - Guardian resources on globalisation.

http://www.ips-dc.org/downloads/Top_200.pdf - report on the rise of corporate world power.

<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Debt.asp> - Debt undermining development.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/resources/food.htm> - Oxfam resources on food, trade and globalisation.

<http://www.twinside.org.sg/> - the third world network. This site offers links to a large variety of resources concerning the global economy, the environment, biodiversity, biotechnology, gender issues, health, and security.

<http://www.worldwatch.org/> - dedicated to informing policymakers and the public about emerging global problems and trends and the complex links between the world economy and its environmental support systems.

<http://adbusters.org/home/> - an organization that represents an anti-multinational corporation point of view. This site offers some very interesting perspectives concerning issues related to globalization.

History

A History of the United Nations

UN online tour of United Nations Headquarters

<http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/untour/index.html>

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/socialstudies/united_nations.html - Lesson plan on the history and mission of the UN

<http://tre.ngfl.gov.uk/server.php?request=cmVzb3VyY2UuZnVsbHZpZXc%3D&resourceId=10382> - lesson plans for teaching about the history of the UN and WWII

English

Dear Kofi – Students can write a letter to the Secretary General of UN, Kofi Annan, highlighting issues which they think need to be addressed.

ICT

Summarising the Structure of the UN – Students can use some of the links above to learn about the UN and then present it in a way that other students can easily understand.

Whole School Activities

Set up a Model United Nations club in your school. <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/modelun/index.asp>

http://www.netaid.org/global_citizen_corps/About.html - The NetAid GCC empowers students to educate and mobilize their peers in efforts to fight global poverty

Taking Action

<http://www.ibt.org.uk/wrtw/about.htm> - A series of activities which explore the role and impact of International Institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. The activities relate to a video but many could be completed without it.

See the module on 'Taking Action' for more ideas.