



United Nations

# SIXTY WAYS THE UNITED NATIONS MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The United Nations was established, in the aftermath of a devastating war, to help stabilize international relations and give peace a more secure foundation.

Amid the threat of nuclear war and seemingly endless regional conflicts, peacekeeping has become an overriding concern of the United Nations, and the activities of the blue-helmeted peacekeepers have emerged as among the most visible.

But the United Nations is much more than a peacekeeper and a forum for conflict resolution. Often without attracting attention, the UN and its family of agencies are engaged in a vast array of work that seeks to improve people's lives around the world.

Child survival and development. Environmental protection. Human rights. Health and medical research. Alleviation of poverty and economic development. Agricultural development and fisheries. Education. Advancement of women. Emergency and disaster relief. Air and sea travel. Peaceful uses of atomic energy. Workers' rights. The list goes on.

Here is a sampling of what the United Nations and its component bodies have accomplished since 1945, when the world Organization was founded.

## 1 Maintaining peace and security

By sending 63 peacekeeping and observer missions to the world's trouble spots over the past 60 years, the United Nations has been able to restore calm, allowing many countries to recover from conflict. There are now 17 peacekeeping operations around the world, carried out by some 88,500 brave men and women from 119 countries who go where others can't or won't go.

## 2 Making peace

Since the 1990s, many conflicts have been brought to an end either through UN mediation or the action of third parties acting with UN support. The list includes El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Cambodia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Burundi and the north-south conflict in the Sudan. Research credits UN peacemaking, peacekeeping and conflict prevention activities as a major factor behind a 40 per cent decline in conflict around the world since the 1990s. UN preventive diplomacy and other forms of preventive action have defused many potential conflicts. In addition, UN peace missions in the field address post-conflict situations and carry out peacebuilding measures.

## 3 Preventing nuclear proliferation

For over five decades, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has served as the world's nuclear inspector. IAEA experts work to verify that safeguarded nuclear material is used only for peaceful purposes. To date, the Agency has safeguards agreements with 163 States.

## 4 Promoting development

The United Nations has devoted its attention and resources to promoting living standards and human skills and potential throughout the world. Since 2000, this work has been guided by the Millennium Development Goals. Virtually all funds for UN development assistance come from contributions donated by countries. For instance, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), with staff in 166 countries, supports projects to reduce poverty, promote good governance, address crises and preserve the environment. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) works in 155 countries, primarily on child protection, immunization, girls' education and fighting HIV/AIDS. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) helps developing countries make the most of their trade opportunities. The World Bank provides developing countries with loans and grants, and has supported more than 10,000 development projects since 1947.

## 5 Focusing on African development

Africa continues to be a high priority for the United Nations. In 2001, African Heads of State adopted the continent's own plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in 2002 as the main framework for channelling international support to Africa. The continent receives 38 per cent of UN system expenditures for development, the largest share among the world's regions. All UN agencies have special programmes to benefit Africa.

## 6 Seeking a global solution to climate change

Climate change is a global problem that demands a global solution. The United Nations has been at the forefront in assessing the science and forging a political solution. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which brings together 2,000 leading climate change scientists, issues comprehensive scientific assessments every five or six years: in 2007, it concluded with certainty that climate change was occurring and that human activities were a primary cause. The 192 members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are negotiating a long-term agreement that would both guide countries in reducing emissions that contribute to climate change and help countries adapt to its effects. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and other UN agencies have been at the forefront in raising awareness.

## 7 Helping countries to cope with climate change

The UN helps developing countries to respond to the challenges of global climate change. Twenty-seven UN agencies have formed a partnership to deal comprehensively with the problem. For instance, the Global Environment Facility, which brings together the UN Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme and the World Bank, funds projects in developing countries. As the financial mechanism of the Climate Convention, it allocates about \$250 million per year in projects on energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable transportation.

## 8 Protecting the environment

The United Nations is working to solve global environmental problems. As an international forum for building consensus and negotiating agreements, the UN is tackling global problems like climate change, ozone layer depletion, toxic waste, loss of forests and species, and air and water pollution. Unless these problems are addressed, markets and economies will not be sustainable in the long term, as environmental losses are depleting the natural "capital" on which growth and human survival are based.

## 9 Promoting human rights

Since the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations has helped to enact dozens of comprehensive agreements on political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. By investigating individual complaints, the UN human rights bodies have focused world attention on cases of torture, disappearance, arbitrary detention and other human rights violations, and have generated international pressure on Governments to improve their human rights records.

## 10 Fostering democracy

The United Nations promotes and strengthens democratic institutions and practices around the world, including by helping people in many countries to participate in free and fair elections. The UN has provided electoral advice and assistance, and in some cases election monitors, to more than 100 countries, often at decisive moments in their history, such as Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, South Africa, Timor Leste, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal.

## 11 Promoting women's rights

A long-term objective of the United Nations has been to improve the lives of women and empower them to have greater control over their lives. The UN organized the first-ever World Conference on Women (Mexico City, 1975), which, together with two World Conferences during the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) and the World Conference in Beijing (1995), set the agenda for advancing women's rights and promoting gender equality. The 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by 185 countries, has helped to promote the rights of women worldwide.

## 12 Prosecuting war criminals

By prosecuting and convicting war criminals, the UN tribunals established for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda have helped to expand international humanitarian and criminal law dealing with genocide and other violations of international law. Both tribunals have contributed to restoring peace and justice in the affected countries and in the region. The International Criminal Court is an independent, permanent court that investigates and prosecutes persons accused of the most serious international crimes—genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes—if national authorities are unwilling or unable to do so. Situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda, Sudan's Darfur region and the Central African Republic have been referred to the Court, which has already established itself as the centrepiece of the system of international crimi-

nal justice. UN-backed courts in Sierra Leone and Cambodia are prosecuting those responsible for serious violations of international law, including mass killings and war crimes.

### **13 Ending apartheid in South Africa**

By imposing measures ranging from an arms embargo to a convention against segregated sporting events, the United Nations was a major factor in bringing about the downfall of the apartheid system. In 1994, elections in which all South Africans were allowed to participate on an equal basis led to the establishment of a multiracial Government.

### **14 Promoting self-determination and independence**

When the United Nations was established in 1945, 750 million people—almost a third of the world population—lived in non-self-governing territories dependent on colonial powers. The UN played a role in bringing about the independence of more than 80 countries that are now sovereign nations.

### **15 Strengthening international law**

Over 510 multilateral treaties—on human rights, terrorism, global crime, refugees, disarmament, trade, commodities, the oceans and many other matters—have been negotiated and concluded through the efforts of the United Nations.

### **16 Providing humanitarian aid to refugees**

More than 50 million refugees fleeing persecution, violence and war have received aid from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) since 1951, in a continuing effort that often involves other agencies. UNHCR seeks long-term or “durable” solutions by helping refugees repatriate to their homelands, if conditions warrant, or by helping them to integrate in their countries of asylum or to resettle in third countries. There are more than 25 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, mostly women and children, who are receiving food, shelter, medical aid, education and repatriation assistance from the UN.

### **17 Aiding Palestine refugees**

As the global community strives for a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a relief and human development agency, has assisted four generations of Palestinian refugees with education, health care, social services, microfinance and emergency aid. Today, 4.4 million refugees in the Middle East are registered with UNRWA.

### **18 Alleviating rural poverty in developing countries**

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) provides low-interest loans and grants to very poor rural people. Since 1978, IFAD has invested more than \$10 billion, helping more than 300 million women and men increase their incomes and provide for their families. Today, IFAD supports more than 200 programmes and projects in 81 developing countries.

### **19 Promoting women’s well-being**

The United Nations has helped to promote women’s equality and well-being. The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) supports programmes in more than 100 countries that seek to eliminate violence against women, reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, support women’s political participation and promote their economic security—for instance by increasing their access to work and their rights to land and inheritance. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) helps to improve women’s quality of life and promote women’s rights by carrying out action-oriented research and capacity building on security, migration and governance. All UN agencies must take into account the needs of women.

### **20 Promoting reproductive and maternal health**

By promoting the right of individuals to make their own decisions on the number, spacing and timing of their children through voluntary family planning programmes, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has helped people to make informed choices and given families, especially women, greater control over their lives. As a result, women in developing countries are having fewer children—from six in the 1960s to three today—slowing world population growth. Fewer unintended pregnancies also means less maternal death and fewer unsafe abortions. When UNFPA started work in 1969, under 20 per cent of couples practiced family planning; the number now stands at about 63 per cent. UNFPA and several partners also help to provide skilled assistance during childbirth and access to emergency obstetrical care to reduce maternal deaths. UNFPA supports safe motherhood initiatives in about 90 countries.

### **21 Providing safe drinking water**

During the first UN decade on water (1981-1990), more than a billion people gained access to safe drinking water for the first time in their lives. By 2002, another 1.1 billion people had clean water. In 2003, the International Year of Freshwater raised awareness of the importance of protecting this precious resource. The second international water decade (2005-2015) aims to reduce by half the number of people without a source of clean drinking water.

## 22 Responding to HIV/AIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) coordinates global action against an epidemic that affects some 33 million people. It works in more than 80 countries to provide universal access to HIV prevention and treatment services, as well as to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and communities and alleviate the impact of the epidemic. UNAIDS brings together the expertise of its 10 co-sponsoring UN organizations.

## 23 Eradicating smallpox

A 13-year effort by the World Health Organization (WHO) resulted in smallpox being declared officially eradicated from the planet in 1980. The eradication has saved an estimated \$1 billion a year in vaccination and monitoring, almost three times the cost of eliminating the scourge itself.

## 24 Wiping out polio

Poliomyelitis has been eliminated from all but four countries—Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan—as a result of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the largest international public health effort to date. Thanks to the Initiative, spearheaded by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, Rotary International and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 5 million children are walking who would otherwise have been paralyzed by polio. A disease that once crippled children in 125 countries is on the verge of being eradicated.

## 25 Fighting neglected tropical diseases

A World Health Organization programme eliminated river blindness (onchocerciasis) in 10 West African countries while opening up 25 million hectares of fertile land to farming. Today, the disease is being controlled in 19 more countries under the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control. In 1991, efforts by UN agencies in North Africa led to the elimination of the dreaded screw worm, a parasite that feeds on human and animal flesh. Guinea-worm disease (dracunculiasis) is on the verge of being eradicated, while other neglected diseases, such as leprosy—which has been eliminated in 116 out of 122 endemic countries—lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis and sleeping sickness (human African trypanosomiasis) are now under control.

## 26 Halting the spread of epidemics

The World Health Organization helped to stop the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). In March 2003, it issued a global alert and emergency travel advisory, and its leadership helped to stop this new disease, which had the potential to become a worldwide epidemic. WHO investigates over 200 disease outbreaks each year, 15 to 20 of which

require an international response. Some of the more prominent diseases for which WHO is leading the global response include meningitis, yellow fever, cholera and influenza.

## 27 Pressing for universal immunization

Immunization saves more than 2 million lives every year. As a result of efforts by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, other organizations and Governments, an estimated 79 per cent of the world's children are now vaccinated with the diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus vaccine, up from 20 per cent in 1980. Between 2000 and 2006, measles deaths in Africa declined by 91 per cent, with a two-thirds reduction globally. Barriers to introducing new vaccines are gradually being overcome, and contacts forged through immunization are being used to provide additional life-saving assistance, such as insecticide-treated nets to protect against malaria and vitamin A supplements to prevent malnutrition.

## 28 Reducing child mortality

In 1990, 1 out of 10 children died before they were five years old. Through oral rehydration therapy, clear water and sanitation and other health and nutrition measures undertaken by UN agencies, child mortality rates in developing countries had dropped to less than 1 in 12 by 2006. The goal is now to reduce the 1990 under-five mortality rate by two thirds by 2015.

## 29 Laying the groundwork for business

The United Nations is good for business. It has provided the “soft infrastructure” for the global economy by negotiating universally accepted technical standards in such diverse areas as statistics, trade law, customs procedures, intellectual property, aviation, shipping and telecommunications, facilitating economic activity and reducing transaction costs. It has laid the groundwork for investment in developing economies by promoting stability and good governance, battling corruption and urging sound economic policies and business-friendly legislation.

## 30 Supporting industry in developing countries

The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has served as a “matchmaker” for North-South and South-South industrial cooperation, promoting entrepreneurship, investment, technology transfer and cost-effective and sustainable industrial development. It has helped countries to manage the process of globalization smoothly and reduce poverty.

## 31 Helping disaster victims

When natural disasters and emergencies arise, the United Nations coordinates and mobilizes assistance to the victims. Working together with Governments, the Red Cross/Red

Crescent Movement, major aid organizations and donors, the UN provides much-needed humanitarian assistance. UN appeals raise several billion dollars a year for emergency assistance.

### **32 Reducing the effects of natural disasters**

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has helped to spare millions of people from the calamitous effects of both natural and man-made disasters. Its early warning system, which includes thousands of surface monitors, as well as satellites, has made it possible to predict with greater accuracy weather-related disasters, has provided information on the dispersal of oil spills and chemical and nuclear leaks and has predicted long-term droughts. It has also allowed for the efficient distribution of food aid to drought-affected regions.

### **33 Providing tsunami relief**

Within 24 hours of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004, United Nations disaster assessment and coordination experts were dispatched. The UN leapt into action to assist the survivors, distributing food to more than 1.7 million individuals, providing shelter for more than 1.1 million made homeless, providing drinking water to more than 1 million and vaccinating more than 1.2 million children against measles—all in the first six months of relief operations. The quick and effective delivery of humanitarian relief meant that no additional lives were lost due to privation after the initial devastation, and the outbreak of disease was averted.

### **34 Protecting the ozone layer**

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) have been instrumental in highlighting the damage caused to Earth's ozone layer. As a result of a treaty known as the Montreal Protocol, Governments are phasing out chemicals that have caused the depletion of the ozone layer and replacing them with safer alternatives. This will spare millions of people from contracting skin cancer because of exposure to increased ultraviolet radiation.

### **35 Clearing landmines**

The United Nations clears landmines in 42 countries or territories, including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Mozambique and the Sudan. Landmines kill or maim thousands of civilians every year. The UN also teaches people how to stay out of harm's way, helps victims to become self-sufficient, assist countries in destroying stockpiled landmines and advocates for full international participation in treaties related to landmines.

### **36 Providing food to the neediest**

The World Food Programme (WFP), the world's largest humanitarian agency, reaches an average of 90 million hungry people in 80 countries every year, including most of the world's refugees and internally displaced people. WFP food assistance is designed to meet the special needs of hungry people, especially women and children—the vulnerable majority most often affected by hunger. WFP works to break the cycle of hunger at its root by targeting the poorest and most malnourished people. School-feeding projects provide free lunches or take-home meals to nearly 20 million schoolchildren—with each meal costing just 25 U.S. cents. The agency's logistical expertise in emergency telecommunications enables it to dispatch help quickly in the most difficult and dangerous situations. With over 90 per cent of its staff working in the field, WFP uses a global network of planes, ships, helicopters, trucks and, if needed, donkeys, camels and elephants to reach those most in need. WFP serves as an advocate for the hungry, carrying the message from the grass roots to political leaders around the world.

### **37 Fighting hunger**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) leads global efforts to defeat hunger. The goal of universal food security—where people everywhere have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives—is at the heart of all its work. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum, where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO also helps developing countries to modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices in ways that conserve natural resources and improve nutrition.

### **38 Tackling fish stock depletion**

Seventy per cent of the world's major commercial fish stocks are exploited to their sustainable limits or beyond. FAO monitors global fisheries production and the status of wild fish stocks and works with countries to improve the management of fisheries, stamp out illegal fishing, promote responsible international fish trade and protect fragile species and environments.

### **39 Banning toxic chemicals**

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants seeks to rid the world of some of the most dangerous chemicals ever created. Ratified by 150 countries, the Convention targets 12 hazardous pesticides and industrial chemicals that can kill people, damage the nervous and immune systems, cause cancer and reproductive disorders and interfere with child development. Other UN conventions

and action plans help to preserve biodiversity, protect endangered species, combat desertification, clean up seas and curb cross-border movements of hazardous wastes.

#### **40 Protecting consumers' health**

To ensure the safety of food sold in the marketplace, FAO and the World Health Organization, working with Member States, have established standards for over 230 food commodities, safety limits for more than 3,000 food contaminants, and regulations on food processing, transport and storage. Standards on labelling and description seek to ensure that the consumer is not misled. More food than ever before is travelling the globe, and the United Nations works to make sure that it is safe.

#### **41 Combating terrorism**

Member States have been coordinating their counter-terrorism efforts through the United Nations. In 2006, the UN adopted a global strategy to counter terrorism—the first time that all countries agreed to a common approach to fighting terrorism. UN agencies and programmes have helped countries to put in practice the common strategy, providing legal assistance and promoting international cooperation against terrorism. The United Nations has also put in place a legal framework to combat terrorism. Sixteen global legal instruments have been negotiated under UN auspices, including treaties against hostage-taking, aircraft hijacking, terrorist bombings, terrorism financing and, most recently, nuclear terrorism.

#### **42 Handing down judgments in major international disputes**

By delivering judgments and advisory opinions, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has helped to settle international disputes involving territorial questions, maritime boundaries, diplomatic relations, State responsibility, the treatment of alien, the use of force and many other issues.

#### **43 Improving global trade relations**

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has helped developing countries to negotiate trade agreements and to win preferential treatment for their exports. It has negotiated international commodity agreements to ensure fair prices for developing countries, improved the efficiency of their trade infrastructure and helped them to diversify their production and to integrate into the global economy.

#### **44 Promoting economic reform**

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have helped many countries to improve their economic manage-

ment, provided temporary financial assistance to countries to help ease balance-of-payment difficulties and offered training for government finance officials.

#### **45 Promoting stability and order in the world's oceans**

The United Nations has spearheaded international efforts to regulate the use of the oceans under a single treaty. The 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has gained nearly universal acceptance, provides the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas. The Convention lays down rules for the establishment of maritime zones, the rights and duties of coastal and landlocked States, including with regard to navigation, the protection of the marine environment, marine scientific research, and the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources. The treaty includes mechanisms for settling disputes.

#### **46 Improving aviation and shipping**

UN agencies have been responsible for setting safety standards for aviation and shipping. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has contributed to making air travel the safest mode of transportation. In 1947, when 21 million travelled by air, 590 were killed in aircraft accidents; in 2007, the number of deaths was 581 out of 2.2 billion airline passengers. Likewise, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has helped to make the seas cleaner and shipping safer and more secure. Statistics show that shipping is becoming safer and is improving its environmental credentials. Ship losses are falling, fatalities are decreasing, pollution incidents are down, total oil pollution is down, and air pollution and pollution from sewage are being tackled—all while the amount of cargo carried by sea continues to increase.

#### **47 Combating international crime**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with countries and organizations to counter transnational organized crime by providing legal and technical assistance to fight corruption, money-laundering, drug trafficking and smuggling of migrants, as well as by strengthening criminal justice systems. It helps countries to prevent terrorism, it is a leader in the global fight against trafficking in persons and, together with the World Bank, it helps countries to recover assets stolen by corrupt leaders. The Office has played a key role in brokering and implementing relevant international treaties, such as the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

#### **48 Containing the world drug problem**

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works to reduce the supply of and demand for illicit drugs under the three main UN conventions on drug control. The Office works with countries to improve public health, as well as public security, in order to prevent, treat and control drug abuse. Efforts to contain the global drug problem have reversed a 25-year rise in drug abuse and headed off a pandemic. Nevertheless, several countries and regions remain vulnerable to the instability caused by drug cultivation and trafficking. That is why the Office is particularly engaged in drug control in Afghanistan, the Andean countries, Central Asia, Myanmar and West Africa.

#### **49 Promoting decent work**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has established standards and fundamental principles and rights for work, including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of workplace discrimination. Employment promotion, social protection for all and strong social dialogue between employers' and workers' organizations and Governments are at the core of ILO activities.

#### **50 Improving literacy and education in developing countries**

Today 83 per cent of adults in developing countries can read and write and 84 per cent of children attend primary school. The goal now is to ensure that by 2015 all children complete a full course of primary school. Programmes aimed at promoting education and advancement for women helped to raise the female literacy rate in developing countries from 36 per cent in 1970 to 79 per cent in 2007. The next goal is to ensure that by 2015 all girls complete primary and secondary school.

#### **51 Generating worldwide commitment in support of children**

From Afghanistan to Lebanon and from the Sudan to the former Yugoslavia, UNICEF has pioneered the establishment of "days of tranquillity" and the opening of "corridors of peace" to provide vaccines and other aid desperately needed by children caught in armed conflict. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has become law in 193 countries. Following the 2002 UN special session on children, 190 Governments committed themselves to a time-bound set of goals in the areas of health, education, protection against abuse, exploitation and violence and the struggle against HIV/AIDS.

#### **52 Preserving historic, cultural, architectural and natural sites**

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has helped 137 countries to protect ancient monuments and historic, cultural and natural sites. It has negotiated international conventions to preserve cultural property, cultural diversity and outstanding cultural and natural sites. More than 850 such sites have been designated as having exceptional universal value.

#### **53 Facilitating academic and cultural exchanges**

The United Nations, through UNESCO and the United Nations University, has encouraged scholarly and scientific cooperation, networking of higher education institutions and promotion of cultural expression, including for minorities and indigenous people.

#### **54 Encouraging creativity and innovation**

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) promotes the protection of intellectual property rights and ensures that all countries are in a position to harness the benefits of an effective intellectual property system. Intellectual property, which at its core is a mechanism designed to recognize and reward inventors and creators for their ingenuity while safeguarding the public interest, helps to promote development and create wealth. The incentives built into the intellectual property system act as a spur to human creativity, pushing forward the boundaries of science and technology and enriching the world of literature and the arts.

#### **55 Promoting press freedom and freedom of expression**

To allow all people to obtain information that is free of censorship and culturally diverse, UNESCO has helped to develop and strengthen the media and supported independent newspapers and broadcasters. UNESCO also serves as a watchdog for press freedom, and publicly denounces serious violations like the assassination and detention of journalists.

#### **56 Turning slums into decent human settlements**

Cities are now home to half of humankind. They are the hub for much national production and consumption—economic and social processes that generate wealth and opportunity. But they also are places of disease, crime, pollution and poverty. In many cities in developing countries, slum-dwellers number more than 50 per cent of the population and have little or no access to shelter, water and sanitation. The UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), with over 150 technical programmes and projects in some 50 countries, works with Governments, local authorities and

non-governmental organizations to seek innovative solutions for towns and cities. These include providing security of tenure for the urban poor, which is in turn a catalyst for investment in housing and basic services for the poor.

### **57 Providing local access to a global network**

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) facilitates the exchange of international mail and develops social, cultural and commercial communications between peoples and businesses with up-to-date postal services and products. Some 660,000 post offices around the world form one of the most extensive networks in the world, facilitating the transfer of information, goods and money. The Internet and new technologies have opened new opportunities for postal services, especially in the area of e-commerce, as goods ordered online still cannot be sent electronically. The post remains a critical bridge between physical, digital and financial operations and a key partner for global development.

### **58 Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities**

The United Nations has been at the forefront of the fight for full equality for persons with disabilities, promoting their participation in social, economic and political life. The UN has shown that persons with disabilities are a resource for society, and has negotiated the first-ever treaty to advance their rights and dignity worldwide: the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in 2008.

### **59 Improving global telecommunications**

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) brings together Governments and industry to develop and coordinate the operation of global telecommunication networks and services. It has coordinated shared use of the radio spectrum, promoted international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, worked to improve telecommunication infrastructure in the developing world and negotiated the global standards that ensure the seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems. From broadband Internet to the latest-generation wireless technologies, from air and sea navigation to radio astronomy and satellite-based meteorology, from phone services to TV broadcasting and next-generation networks, ITU is committed to connecting the world. Its work has enabled telecommunications to grow into a \$1.3 trillion global industry.

### **60 Improving the plight of indigenous people**

The United Nations has brought to the fore injustices against the 370 million to 500 million indigenous peoples who live in some 90 countries worldwide and who are among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The 16-member Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, established in 2000, works to improve the situation of indigenous peoples all over the world in development, culture, human rights, the environment, education and health.

## **Nobel Peace Prizes to the United Nations**

- 2007 • The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- 2005 • The International Atomic Energy Agency and its Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei
- 2001 • The United Nations and its Secretary-General, Kofi Annan
- 1988 • The United Nations Peacekeeping Forces
- 1981 • The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- 1969 • The International Labour Organization
- 1965 • The United Nations Children's Fund
- 1961 • Dag Hammarskjöld, United Nations Secretary-General
- 1954 • The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- 1950 • The Director of the United Nations Division of Trusteeship, Ralph Bunche