

UNITED NATIONS PROCESS

1. The Security Council and the General Assembly

The United Nations includes two deliberative bodies, the 15-member Security Council and the 192-member General Assembly.

Action by the Security Council requires a positive vote of 9 members and no veto by one of the five permanent members -- China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.*

Action by the General Assembly on important questions requires a two-thirds vote of members “present and voting”; other questions are decided by majority vote. Important questions include: recommendations on peace and security; admission, suspension and expulsion of members; budgetary matters; and election of members to UN organs. General Assembly resolutions are not binding on members, except resolutions on budgetary matters.

2. UN Membership

Membership in the United Nations requires a recommendation by the Security Council and action by the General Assembly. Without a Security Council recommendation, the General Assembly can only confer “observer” status.

3. UN Action on Peace and Security

UN action to maintain peace and security ordinarily requires action by the Security Council. However, under the “Uniting for Peace” Resolution (General Assembly Resolution 322 (1950)), the General Assembly may issue non-binding recommendations for “collective measures” by individual states, if there is “a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or act of aggression,” and the Security Council is unable to act because of “lack of unanimity” among the five permanent members. “Collective measures” may include “armed force” when there is a breach of peace or act of aggression.

Resolution 322 was adopted in 1950 to bypass a Soviet veto against UN action to protect South Korea, and was used in 1981 to support UN action against South Africa in support of independence for Namibia.

* The ten non-permanent members of the Security Council, chosen by five regional “groups” and confirmed by the General Assembly, serve 2-year terms: through 2011 - Bosnia/Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon, and Nigeria; and through 2012 - Columbia, Germany, India, Portugal, and South Africa.

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www.brooklynpeace.org