Chapter 25 Lesson 2

The US and International Organizations

Why and how do nations interact with one another?

The Purpose of International Organizations

Nations often hold talks with one another to discuss issues about climate change, pollution, and trade. Diplomats, officials who represent their country’s government, meet and try to work out way to address common concerns.

Government Organizations

Countries form organizations to address international issues called government organizations. The government of each member organization must agree to follow the rules of the organization and to support its decisions.

Some are formed for a single purpose: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created for the defense of member nations. World Trade Organization (WTO) for issues of trade and finance. Some government organizations have broad goals, like the largest governmental organization the United Nations (UN). It has many goals:

1. Promoting peace
2. Fighting disease
3. Building schools
4. Improving healthcare

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO’s)

Groups formed by private citizens to meet a need or work for a cause. NGO’s often work with governmental organizations to provide relief in the event of a natural disaster. These organizations usually depend on volunteers and private donations. NGO’s can sometimes do things governmental agencies cannot do, some countries may be willing to accept aid from a NGO but not a governmental organization.

The United Nations

Founded in 1945, just after World War II. The UN’s goals:

1. Keep peace among nations
2. Support social progress
3. Fight poverty
4. Protect human rights

The General Assembly is the main forum for the UN’s 192 member nations. Every member has a voice there. A smaller body called the Security Council deals with immediate threats to world peace. The Security Council has 5 permanent members: USA, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China. Ten other members are elected to two-year terms by the General Assembly. Any one of the 5 permanent members can veto a decision made by or block any action of the Security Council.

The UN has a number of units that handle other issues:

UN’s International Court of Justice: settles legal disputes between nations

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF): works to improve the lives of children around the world

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): promotes science, education, and culture

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): a group of 28 nations in North American and Europe, its main goals are to keep peace and defend all members in times of war. Sometimes, NATO members send armed forces to an area where there is a crisis.

World Trade Organization (WTO): more than 150 members. Goal is to promote free trade by encouraging member nations to remove trade barriers. It also tries to resolve trade disputes between member countries if they arise.

World Health Organization (WHO): part of the UN and works to improve health for all people. It has formed standards for countries to meet to promote their people’s health. Also conducts research on public health issues.

WHO helped eliminate polio and smallpox.

Peace Corps: volunteer program run by the US government. Help Americans and people of other nations understand each other. Has almost 8,000 volunteers working in 77 countries, some work on public health issues like clean water.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in a NGO. They give aid to people who are victims of war or natural disasters. During a war they try to protect civilians and to make sure that prisoners of war are well treated. Prisoners of war are soldiers captured by enemy forces during a conflict. The ICRC also brings food, clothing, and medicines to people in need. They remain neutral and do not take sides.