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# **United to Reform**

## **A World Reimagined**

**FACAMP Model United Nations Research Guide**



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## FACAMP Model United Nations – FAMUN 2025

# RESEARCH GUIDE

## United to Reform: A world reimagined

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## ABSTRACT

This Research Guide examines the need to reform the Charter of the United Nations (UN) in the face of multiple, interconnected crises, as well as an institutional and legitimacy crisis within the organization itself, which is approaching its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To this end, the Guide is divided into two parts. The first part revisits the drafting of the UN Charter, historical reforms, and current reform proposals, discussing the possibility of invoking article 109 to convene a General Conference to Review the UN Charter. The second part examines the positions of regional groups — Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Europe and others — both during the 1945 negotiations for drafting the UN's founding document and in current discussions on reforming the organization and its Charter. By connecting a historical analysis with the contemporary international political landscape, the Research Guide offers a critical reflection on the limits and possibilities for change in the multilateral system, emphasizing that Charter reform is, above all, a political decision about the role of the UN in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the kind of global governance we wish to build.

**Keywords:** United Nations (UN); UN Charter; UN reform; article 109; multilateral system.





## SUMMARY

|                                                                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>FOREWORD .....</b>                                                                                                                | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>PART 1 – THE UN CHARTER: HISTORY AND CURRENT CHALLENGES .....</b>                                                                 | <b>7</b>  |
| THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE AND THE NEGOTIATIONS OF THE UN CHARTER.....                                                             | 8         |
| MANY CHANGES, FEW REFORMS: THE LIMITED SCOPE OF ALTERATIONS TO THE UN CHARTER IN 80 YEARS OF EXISTENCE .....                         | 13        |
| FROM ARTICLE 108 TO ARTICLE 109: FROM CURRENT UN REFORM PROPOSALS TO THE NEED FOR A GENERAL CONFERENCE TO REVIEW THE UN CHARTER..... | 20        |
| <b>PART 2 – POSITION OF REGIONAL GROUPS .....</b>                                                                                    | <b>28</b> |
| POSITION OF THE AFRICAN GROUP ON THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER REFORM .....                                                             | 29        |
| POSITION OF THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN GROUP ON THE UN CHARTER REFORM .....                                                     | 39        |
| POSITION OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP ON THE UN CHARTER REFORM ....                                                                     | 48        |
| POSITION OF THE EUROPE AND OTHERS GROUP ON THE UN CHARTER REFORM .....                                                               | 55        |





## FOREWORD

Approaching its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the United Nations (UN) finds itself at a critical juncture. Faced with a landscape of multiple and interconnected crises, the organization is also grappling with its own institutional and legitimacy crisis. In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2023, Secretary-General António Guterres stressed<sup>1</sup> that, to address global challenges effectively, the UN needed to undergo reform. Otherwise, the consequence would be the collapse of the international order established in 1945, the year of its creation.

The UN was established in a tragic context, following two World Wars that caused a massive loss of life and, above all, brought to light serious violations of international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The creation of the UN was a direct response to these grave international crimes and to the need to prevent new wars. Its goals were to promote human rights, foster economic and social development, encourage cooperation among nations, and ensure the peaceful settlement of controversies<sup>2</sup>.

However, the 1945 UN Charter has remained virtually unchanged, with only minimal reforms adopted in the 1960s and 1970s. Today's international system faces complex problems and challenges, such as the climate crisis and its consequences for less developed countries, as well as for vulnerable people and groups. International and domestic conflicts have intensified, and human rights violations committed in times of both war and peace are becoming increasingly severe, leading to a growing lack of accountability for individuals who violate international norms. Furthermore, states that played a key role in the creation of the UN, such as the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (USSR), have contributed to undermining multilateral decisions and weakening the UN's role in resolving international controversies.

In light of these events, this Research Guide is divided into two parts. Part 1, entitled "The UN Charter: History and Current Challenges," presents three essays that examine the history of the UN's creation, with emphasis on the negotiations of its constitutive treaty, namely, the organization's Charter; the history of Charter reforms already carried out in the 1960s and 1970s; and the current UN reform negotiation proposals and how they connect to the need to convene a General Conference to Review the UN Charter.

Part 2, entitled "Positions of the Regional Groups," examines four specific regional groups: the African Group; the Latin American and Caribbean Group; the Asia-Pacific

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<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered on 23 September 2023. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/desa/reform-or-rupture>.

<sup>2</sup> It is also important to recall that the signing of the UN Charter took place in a context where a significant portion of the territories we now refer to as the Global South were still under the control of European states. As a result, colonized countries had neither participation nor representation at the UN's founding. They would, however, soon become the majority within the organization as they achieved political independence.





Group; and the European and Others Group. For each group, the historical engagement in the 1945 negotiations of the UN Charter is analyzed, as well as the current positions of selected countries regarding UN reform in general; and their specific interests and priorities for reforming the UN Charter.

Given the complexity of contemporary global challenges and the growing demand for a more representative and effective UN, this Research Guide provides a critical foundation for understanding the need to reform the UN Charter. Combining a historical analysis of the Charter's creation and past reforms with a current overview of the discussions on UN reform from the perspective of regional groups, the Guide invites readers to reflect on the limitations of the current multilateral system and the possibilities for its transformation. More than a technical proposal, the reform of the UN Charter represents a political choice about the role the UN should play in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the kind of world we seek to build collectively.

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# **PART 1 – THE UN CHARTER: HISTORY AND CURRENT CHALLENGES**





# THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE AND THE NEGOTIATIONS OF THE UN CHARTER

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The San Francisco Conference, held between 25 April and 26 June 1945, marked one of the most intense diplomatic efforts in history. For nine weeks, delegations from fifty countries<sup>1</sup> worked to negotiate a treaty for the creation of a new international organization. The outcome of this process was the UN Charter, establishing a new framework for international relations in the post-war period (Fox, [n.d.], p. 115; Finch, 1945, p. 541).

This essay aims to analyze the historical process of negotiating the UN Charter and its creation in 1945. First, we present the purposes and principles of the new Organization, which are designed in the Preamble and Chapter I of the Charter. Then, we highlight the interest of the winners of World War II, which consisted of creating an organization that prevented past mistakes, and established an organ empowered to act in situations of threats to peace and security. In this sense, the UN Security Council (UNSC) was created and reflected the power structure of that time.

In the final years of World War II (1939–1945), the United States, the United Kingdom, the USSR, and China — the so-called “Big Four” — came together to create an international organization to prevent future wars and avoid the mistakes that led to the failure of the League of Nations<sup>2</sup>. The initial foundations of the UN Charter were laid at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in October 1944, where the creation of a permanent body with the authority to ensure international peace and security was proposed: the UNSC (Wilcox, 1945, p. 943; Simmons, 1945, p. 378).

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<sup>1</sup> South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelorussia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, the United States, Ethiopia, the Philippines, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iran, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the United Kingdom, Syria, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, Ukraine, the Soviet Union, and Venezuela. Poland did not participate in the San Francisco Conference as it did not yet have a government officially recognized by the international community. A space was reserved for its signature, which took place on 15 October 1945, after the new government was recognized, thereby making it one of the 51 founding members of the United Nations (Organização das Nações Unidas, 2007, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup> The League of Nations was an organization established in 1922 following World War I (1914–1918). Although conceived by US President Woodrow Wilson, the US did not ratify the organization's treaty due to its isolationist policy. Unable to prevent the outbreak of World War II, the League was replaced in 1945 by the United Nations, which — this time with the active participation of the US — consolidated a new international security structure (United Nations, 2025).





The four countries did not reach an agreement on the composition and functioning of the UNSC at Dumbarton Oaks, which was later defined at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. There, it was decided that the UNSC would have five permanent members – the countries whose industrial and military power had been decisive in the victory against the Axis: The United States, the United Kingdom, the USSR, France<sup>3</sup>, and China (P-5). In addition to permanent seats, these five countries would be granted the veto power<sup>4</sup> – a provision that became known as the Yalta Formula (Wilcox, 1945, p. 944; Khan, 2012, p. 270).

To ensure that the UN would be established with the support of a significant number of participating states, while at the same time not compromising the balance of power between the P-5 and the other countries present at the San Francisco Conference, the negotiation process involved two main stages: Initially, private meetings were held among the P-5 before any public discussion with the other participating countries, and afterward, the conference was opened to all remaining states (Fox, 1946, pp. 121–123). The countries that had not participated in drafting the initial UN Charter used the San Francisco Conference as an opportunity to seek greater influence in shaping the document and succeeded in inserting elements into the text that balanced the initial proposals' heavy emphasis on international security. These additions introduced principles focused on the promotion of human rights, the self-determination of peoples, and international cooperation (Kirk; Chamberlain, 1945, p. 338; Finch, 1945, p. 542).

The UN Charter begins with a Preamble which, although not present in the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, was included during the San Francisco Conference and reflects, in an idealistic tone, the values, beliefs, and principles that would guide the decisions of the new organization. Among the principles featured in the Preamble are the commitment to maintaining international peace and security, to prevent future generations from facing the horrors of war again, through peaceful coexistence and cooperation among states. The Preamble also emphasizes respect for human rights, a demand from the Big Four in response to the atrocities committed during World War II. Global South countries, such as Panama, proposed the inclusion of a Human Rights Charter in the Preamble, but the idea was abandoned due to opposition from the United Kingdom and the USSR. As a result, the references to human dignity and the equality of men and women<sup>5</sup> in the Charter are merely declaratory (Wolfrum, 2012, p. 367).

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<sup>3</sup> France chose to adopt an independent stance from the Big Four during the San Francisco Conference. However, it agreed to the composition, mandate, and veto power of the UNSC (Khan, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> The composition of the UN Security Council and the veto power of the P-5 were contentious issues at the Yalta Conference, and it was decided that this discussion would be resumed at the San Francisco Conference. Regardless, the US, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and China reached a consensus regarding the Council's composition and the veto and were also the sponsors of the draft UN Charter in San Francisco (Khan, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> As part of the Brazilian delegation to the San Francisco Conference, Bertha Lutz ensured that the Preamble of the UN Charter included an explicit reference to the equality of men and women (Ribeiro, 2023).





The Preamble also mentions the equality of rights between large and small nations, but this equality is not reflected in the institutional structure of the UN, since privileges were granted to the permanent members of the UNSC. Finally, although the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals already addressed the importance of economic and social cooperation, it was especially the Global South States that, in San Francisco, advocated for a broader and stronger role for the United Nations in these areas, based on the conviction that lasting peace also depends on economic and social stability, both domestically and among countries (Wolfrum, 2012, p. 369; Organização das Nações Unidas, 2007, p. 1).

Chapter I of the Charter sets out the purposes of the organization (article 1) and its principles (article 2). Article 1 enshrines four essential purposes, which reflect both the lessons from the League of Nations failures and the urgencies of the postwar period. First, the maintenance of international peace and security emerges as the highest priority, preventing threats to peace in accordance with the principles of justice and international law (Wolfrum, 2012, p. 375).

Second, the promotion of friendly relations among nations in order to strengthen international peace incorporates the principle of equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples. The inclusion of the principle of self-determination in the UN Charter resulted from an amendment proposed by the Big Four. However, there were objections, such as that of the Belgian representative, who warned that international law recognized only the equality of States, not of peoples, and that addressing friendly relations as the basis of self-determination could be risky. States that possessed colonies at the time feared that the principle of self-determination of peoples could threaten colonial territories and encourage independence movements. Nevertheless, the aim was to affirm the absence of hierarchies among peoples, transferring the prohibition of racial discrimination to the international level. In this context, self-determination was conceived as a principle of self-government, not as a right to secession, and was to be exercised without undermining peaceful relations among nations (Wolfrum, 2012, p. 378; Wilcox, 1945, p. 952).

The purpose related to the commitment to international cooperation in solving economic, social, and humanitarian problems, already present in the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, was significantly expanded during the San Francisco Conference to include objectives of human development and social justice, fundamental for the legitimacy of the organization. Lastly, there is the purpose that emphasizes the UN as a place for harmonizing actions among its Members in pursuit of common goals, that is, the need for consensus as the basis for UN actions in decision-making processes or for the understanding of the organization as a community of States based on cooperation, the development of friendly relations, conflict resolution, and respect for international law and justice (Wolfrum, 2012, p. 378; Organização das Nações Unidas, 2007, p. 1).





The principles established in article 2 translate these aspirations into concrete rules of international conduct. The principle of sovereign equality among States was extensively discussed during the San Francisco Conference. Latin American countries, along with Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Philippines, emphasized that this principle meant legal equality – that all states are equal before the law and have the same rights and obligations – and encompassed the right to self-determination, political independence, and non-intervention by external actors (Fassbender, 2012, p. 411). Belgium stated that “the smaller states would regard it as somewhat ironical, in view of the striking inequalities evident in the Organization, to find at the head of the statement of principles a bold reference to the “sovereign equality” of all members” (Fassbender, 2012, p. 412). Nevertheless, the four sponsoring countries rejected the proposed amendments, formally enshrining the principle of sovereign equality of states in the UN structure. Thus, this principle of the Charter paradoxically coexists with the reality of the UN and the recognition of the differentiated role of the great powers, such as the veto power granted exclusively to the permanent members of the UNSC (Wilcox, 1945, p. 946; Fassbender, 2012, p. 422).

The principle contained in article 2.7, which establishes that the UN may not intervene in matters that fall within the domestic jurisdiction of States, also stands out, reflecting respect for State sovereignty. During the San Francisco Conference, the United States emphasized that this clause should not be seen merely as a technical rule, but as a fundamental principle of the new international order, different from the League of Nations model, with the intention of protecting States from undue interference by the UN itself, granting domestic jurisdiction a broader shield (Nolte, 2012, p. 569–570).

Chapter V of the UN Charter specifically deals with the composition and functioning of the UNSC and clearly reflects the interests of the great powers at the San Francisco Conference. The Charter assigns the Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as outlined in article 24. In 1945, it was decided that the UNSC would be composed of 11 members, divided between 5 permanent and 6 rotating members, elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, by a two-thirds majority, according to election criteria that would ensure balanced geographical distribution<sup>6</sup> (Geiger, 2012, p. 1073; p. 1075).

The veto power was a subject of debate during the San Francisco Conference and criticized by various delegations, such as Latin American countries, which considered this mechanism discriminatory and incompatible with the democratic principles of the sovereign equality of States, since it allowed a single power to block collective decisions even when it was not involved in the conflict in question (Geiger, 2012, p. 1076; Finch, 1945, p. 542). Wilcox (1945, p. 947) points out that many delegations found it absurd that a single great power could block actions aimed at the peaceful settlement of a dispute in which it was not even a party. Australia submitted an

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<sup>6</sup> Since the 1963 reform, the geographic distribution of the rotating members has followed the following rule: 5 are allocated between Africa and Asia (3 for Africa and 2 for Asia), 2 for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2 for Western Europe and “other States,” and 1 for Eastern Europe (Geiger, 2015, p. 1075).





amendment excluding the veto power from decisions related to the peaceful settlement of disputes, but the proposal was not adopted. In the end, the Yalta Formula defined the UNSC voting system and the P-5 veto power (Geiger, 2012, p. 1210-1211).

Chapter V not only reflected the post-war power configuration, but also reinforced the special position of the permanent members by ensuring that the UN could not take any decision relating to international peace and security without the consent of the P-5. Moreover, it guaranteed that the privileged position of the permanent members could not be easily altered, since both the adoption of amendments to the Charter (article 108) and changes to its text at a review conference depend on ratification by all permanent members of the UNSC (Wilcox, 1945, p. 944). Nonetheless, these articles also reveal the UN founders' intention to renew and adapt the organization, adjusting it to new contexts and dynamics in international relations.

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# MANY CHANGES, FEW REFORMS: THE LIMITED SCOPE OF ALTERATIONS TO THE UN CHARTER IN 80 YEARS OF EXISTENCE

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Since its conception in 1945, the UN Charter has been envisioned as a dynamic and adaptable document capable of evolving alongside the needs of the international political landscape. For this reason, the Charter is a document that, while *representing reforms* and being *subject to reforms*, also paradoxically *limits them*. This essay explores these three intrinsic aspects of the UN's foundational document, focusing specifically on how the Charter is subject to reforms. To that end, we analyze the changes implemented under article 108, highlighting the limited nature of these modifications. We argue that a more comprehensive review of the UN Charter is necessary, as foreseen in article 109, by convening a General Conference. However, we also acknowledge the challenges posed by the document itself, which, by its very structure, restricts more substantial reforms.

In the context of its creation following the Second World War, the UN Charter is regarded as an innovative mechanism for introducing reforms to the dynamics of multilateralism amidst drastic changes in the global order. The Charter was groundbreaking for establishing the foundations of a new international organization aimed at uniting “the peoples of the United Nations” to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war (Rensmann, 2012, pp. 287–288).

At the same time, the Charter is also subject to reform, as its text has consistently been a focus of scrutiny and attempts at review, even right after its formal adoption at the San Francisco Conference, in response to issues affecting the Organization. This fact supports the argument that the UN Charter is a “living document”, designed to be amended to meet the needs of new global realities. As emphasized by the President of the United States himself in 1945:

This Charter, like our own Constitution, will be expanded and improved as time goes on. No one claims that it is now a final or a perfect instrument. It has not been poured into any fixed mold. Changing world conditions will require readjustments – but they will be the readjustments of peace and not of war (Peters; Woolley, 2025).

Especially in the early years of the UN, formal proposals to amend the Charter were met with reluctance, as many countries believed the document was still in a testing





phase and that it would therefore be premature to consider a General Conference for its review (Rao, 1955, p. 363). In addition, many countries questioned whether a review of the Charter would bring significant benefits and feared the pressures that new adjustments could impose on them, particularly on the colonial powers (Finkelstein, 1955, p. 226).

Articles 108 and 109 are the clearest evidence that reforming the Charter was part of the plan from the very beginning. Article 108 allows for specific changes to the Charter through amendments, while article 109 addresses the possibility of a General Conference to Review the UN Charter as a whole, a more complex procedure. In light of the concerns expressed by various countries at the time of the Charter's adoption in 1945, article 109 introduced the possibility of holding such a General Conference within ten years of the document's entry into force. This possibility was discussed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1955, but the adopted resolution stated that the General Conference should take place at a more appropriate time, when the international context would be more favorable, considering the reality of the Cold War. Nevertheless, no specific date was set (Nações Unidas no Brasil, 2025; Rensmann, 2012, p. 287; p. 289–290; United Nations General Assembly, 1955).

The Charter's own text ultimately limits the possibility of structural reforms within the UN. This limitation is evident in the complex procedure required to convene a General Conference for the document's review, as provided in article 109<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, in its 80 years of existence, the UN Charter has never undergone a comprehensive review – that is, article 109 has never been invoked to hold a General Conference for the redrafting of the document. Most changes within the organization have occurred “informally,” as they did not involve any amendments to the 1945 Charter<sup>2</sup> (Rensmann, 2012, pp. 289; 292–294).

It is important to acknowledge, however, that specific amendments have been made to the UN's founding document. But these were limited changes, carried out under the scope of article 108<sup>3</sup> (Nações Unidas no Brasil, 2025; Rensmann, 2012, p. 289; United Nations General Assembly, 1955). In total, the UN Charter has been amended five times

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<sup>1</sup> First, it is necessary for the Member States to agree to convene a General Conference. To do so, the approval of two-thirds of the UN General Assembly and the affirmative votes of any nine members of the Security Council are required. The outcome of this conference, the revised Charter, must then be adopted through another deliberation process. The alterations proposed to the Charter must receive the approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly. After that, for the new Charter to actually enter into force, it must be ratified by two-thirds of the UN Member States and by all five permanent members of the Security Council.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of these informal reforms include the interpretation that a permanent member's abstention from the Security Council counts as a vote in favor of a resolution, and the establishment of UN peacekeeping operations (which are not explicitly authorized by the Charter) (Rensmann, 2012, pp. 289; 292–294).

<sup>3</sup> Article 108 does not provide for a broader discussion on the content of the UN Charter or its restructuring. This mechanism allows only for specific changes, such as adding or replacing words or phrases. For that reason, the decision-making process is simpler when compared to article 109. Amendments to the Charter are adopted with the approval of two-thirds of UN Member States and enter into force upon ratification by two-thirds of the Member States, including all permanent members of the Security Council.





through the formal amendments process: four times during the 1960s and once in the 1970s. Table 1 presents a summary of all formal amendments to the document.

**Table 1 – Formal amendments to the UN Charter**

| <b>Amendment approval date</b> | <b>Amended article</b> | <b>Amendment</b>                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Date of entry into force</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 17 December 1963               | 23                     | Increase the number of UNSC members from 11 to 15; expansion of non-permanent members from 6 to 10                                                                                       | 31 August 1965                  |
| 17 December 1963               | 27                     | Change in the number of votes required for procedural decisions from 7 to 9, as well as for all other decisions, including those requiring the concurring votes of the permanent members | 31 August 1965                  |
| 17 December 1963               | 61                     | Increase in the number of members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 18 to 27                                                                                              | 31 August 1965                  |
| 20 December 1965               | 109                    | Change from 7 to 9 votes required by the UNSC to convene the General Conference to Review the UN Charter                                                                                 | 12 June 1968                    |
| 20 December 1971               | 61                     | Increase in the number of members of the ECOSOC from 27 to 54                                                                                                                            | 24 September 1973               |

Source: Own elaboration based on information available at Nações Unidas no Brasil (2025).

Pressures for institutional reforms had been articulated since the mid-1950s. Following the first significant increase in the number of UN member states in 1955, a group of Latin American countries and Spain proposed including the issue of amending the UN Charter to increase the number of non-permanent members of the UNSC and the seats in the ECOSOC on the agenda of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly (1956).

In the 1960s, the pressure for this expansion grew in light of the significant increase in membership, from 51 in 1945 to 113 in 1963, driven by decolonization processes. Most of these new states, emerging from Africa and Asia, demanded greater representation in the organization's main bodies, whose compositions reflected a previous world order. In this context, in 1963, 46 African countries, through a joint letter, requested that the issue of expanding these bodies be added to the agenda of the 18th session of the General Assembly to make them more representative, reflecting the current composition of the organization, where Asian and African states already constituted more than half of its members (Schwelb, 1965, p. 835–836; United Nations General Assembly, 1963 a, p. 1–3; United Nations General Assembly, 1963 c).





Negotiations regarding the expansion of the two Councils were influenced by Cold War tensions, particularly concerning the UNSC, due to the resistance of permanent members to any changes that could affect their status. France and the United Kingdom, for example, initially sought to prevent any reform that might lead to a broader review of the Charter, such as limiting the veto power or strengthening the General Assembly's position within the organization. They insisted on the "flexibility" of the current text to justify their stance (Sihvo, 1997, p. 295). In this same context, the USSR conditioned its acceptance of the amendment on the replacement of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the UNSC. Moscow insisted that any expansion of the main bodies should be negotiated without violating the UN Charter, arguing that China's absence from the discussions would render the process illegal. Following public statements from the PRC denying any opposition to the reform and accusing the Soviets of political manipulation, Moscow was pressured to concede (Sihvo, 1997, p. 280-281; p. 295; United Nations General Assembly, 1963 a, p. 9).

Resolution 1991 (XVIII), adopted by the UNGA in 1963, expanded the UNSC from 11 to 15 members, with 10 non-permanent seats, and reformulated its geographical distribution and the number of votes required for decision-making. The 1965 amendment, which modified article 109, took this expansion into account by adjusting the calculation of votes necessary to convene a General Conference to Review the UN Charter, thereby maintaining the minimal changes character of the formal amendments made in the 1960s (United Nations General Assembly, 1965; Tavernier, 2005, p. 4).

These limited changes, through their concise wording alterations (for example, the strict replacement of 'eleven' with 'fifteen'), demonstrate the reality of the Cold War period, where every word mattered. It is noteworthy that both the changes made within the UNSC and those implemented in the ECOSOC feature practically identical texts in their preambles, with the same considerations regarding the increase in geographical representation and the recognition of an unequally representative body. Furthermore, they highlight the efforts of the committee that was working at the time to facilitate the Charter reform (Rensmann, 2012, p. 291-292; United Nations General Assembly, 1963 b).

By the 1970s, the UN faced an even greater context of pressure from the least developed countries (LDCs) for increased representation in the international system, reflecting the North-South tensions characteristic of that period. The second reform of the ECOSOC, implemented between 1971 and 1973, took place in a scenario where LDCs already constituted 71% of the 132 UN member states. This change expanded the ECOSOC's composition from 27 to 54 members, nearly recycling the same text from 1965 in its preamble. This text reiterated the importance of increasing membership for a more effective functioning of the body, but now without mentioning the reform committee that had already been disbanded during this period (United Nations General Assembly, 1971 b).





The negotiation process revealed deep divergences: while LDCs, supported by the US, advocated for expansion as a means to strengthen the legitimacy of ECOSOC, some developed countries resisted the change. Resolution 2847 (XXVI), which proposed the amendment, was approved with 105 votes in favor, 2 against, and 15 abstentions. France, for example, opposed the resolution, arguing that changes to the Charter are delicate operations that would require more time for analysis and that since ECOSOC is a principal body, its authority does not necessarily depend on the number of members or their geographical distribution. France asserted that the number of seats was already excessively large. The United Kingdom also voted against, arguing that the expansion did not represent an urgent need and could harm the effectiveness of the body. Meanwhile, the USSR and its socialist allies (such as Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belarus) chose to abstain, claiming that increasing membership would not resolve the real issues of ECOSOC's functioning and could even make it more inefficient (United Nations General Assembly, 1971 a, p. 1-3).

Resolution 2847 (XXVI) approved the expansion of ECOSOC and consolidated the geographical distribution of seats, favoring Africa and Asia. However, it did not address issues such as proportional representation or the coordination of the UN system. The resolution responded more to a demand for symbolic representation than to a genuine concern for increasing the efficiency or decision-making capacity of this Council (Alves, 2015, p. 396- 398).

This process was the last significant formal reform of the Charter in over 50 years, highlighting the difficulty of adapting the UN to new geopolitical realities, whether due to the rigidity of the amendment process or a lack of consensus among member states. The end of the Cold War in 1990 removed the main axis of political-ideological blockage within the organization and opened a historical window for deeper reforms, but this opportunity was not seized. Despite the emergence of a more fluid and multipolar international context, no substantial changes were made to the structure of the UN.

Thus, beyond the issue of numerical representation in its main bodies, it is revealing that none of the foundational pillars of the organization (its principles and purposes enshrined in 1945) have been reviewed or adapted, even in the face of unprecedented global challenges, such as the environmental crisis, the emergence of new transnational threats, and the transformation of international economic and technological relations that shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, the need for transformation becomes even more evident considering the current crisis of multilateralism, where the weakening of international cooperation, the fragmentation of decision-making spaces, and the rise of unilateral and nationalist approaches directly challenge the legitimacy and effectiveness of the international organization.

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## FROM ARTICLE 108 TO ARTICLE 109: FROM CURRENT UN REFORM PROPOSALS TO THE NEED FOR A GENERAL CONFERENCE TO REVIEW THE UN CHARTER

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As it approaches its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the UN faces a decisive moment. Pressured by the crisis of multilateralism, the organization is immersed in a debate on the urgent need for profound institutional reforms capable of updating its functioning and strengthening its legitimacy in the face of 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. In this context, three distinct UN reform processes are underway, based on the amendment mechanisms of article 108: The Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform (IGN), the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (AHWG), and the Secretary-General (SG) António Guterres reform proposals called United to Reform.

Although relevant, these processes have been limited to partial adjustments and do not directly address reforming the actual text of the Charter – an essential step to redefine the UN's principles, structures, and functions in light of the current demands. Thus, this essay first aims to analyze these three ongoing reform processes, highlighting their limitations in responding to present-day challenges. Secondly, it discusses the relevance of the emerging proposal from civil society to mobilize UN Member States to convene a General Conference to Review the UN Charter under article 109, with special attention to the transformative role of youth in this global debate.

The first ongoing UN reform process under article 108 of the Charter concerns the UNSC reform. Indeed, this topic has existed since the organization's creation, but it was only in 1993 that the UNGA established a Working Group<sup>1</sup> for this purpose. In 2009, the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on UNSC Reform were formally launched. It was determined that all IGN decisions should be based on consensus and that their agenda would cover issues such as the expansion of permanent and non-permanent seats, new categories of participation, and the question of the veto (United Nations General Assembly, 2000, p. 1; Baccarini, 2018, p. 98–99). Through these negotiations, different groups of countries presented varying proposals for UNSC reform, as shown in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.





**Table 1 – Proposals on UNSC Reform<sup>2</sup>**

| <b>Category/<br/>Proposal</b>                                                | <b>G4</b>                                                                       | <b>L.69</b>                                                                                                   | <b>C-10<sup>3</sup></b>                                                                                               | <b>Uniting for<br/>Consensus (Ufc)</b>                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Group<br/>composition</b>                                                 | Germany, Brazil,<br>India, and<br>Japan                                         | 42 developing<br>countries from<br>Africa, Latin<br>America and<br>the Caribbean,<br>and the Asia-<br>Pacific | Algeria, Congo,<br>Equatorial<br>Guinea, Kenya,<br>Libya, Namibia,<br>Senegal, Sierra<br>Leone, Uganda,<br>and Zambia | Argentina,<br>Canada,<br>Colombia, South<br>Korea, Costa Rica,<br>Spain, Italy, Malta,<br>Mexico, Pakistan,<br>San Marino, and<br>Turkey                 |
| <b>Proposed<br/>total number<br/>of UNSC<br/>members</b>                     | 25–26                                                                           | 27                                                                                                            | 22                                                                                                                    | 27                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Proposal for<br/>the creation<br/>of new<br/>permanent<br/>seats</b>      | 6<br>(2 for Africa, 2<br>for Asia, 1 for<br>GRULAC, 1 for<br>WEOG)              | 6<br>(2 for Africa, 2<br>for Asia, 1 for<br>GRULAC, 1 for<br>WEOG)                                            | 2<br>(for African<br>countries)                                                                                       | 0                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Proposal for<br/>the creation<br/>of new non-<br/>permanent<br/>seats</b> | 4–5<br>(1 for Africa, 1 for<br>Asia, 1 for<br>GRULAC, 1 for<br>WEOG, 1 for EEG) | 6<br>(2 for Africa, 1<br>for Asia, 1 for<br>GRULAC, 1 for<br>WEOG, 1 for EEG)                                 | 5<br>(2 for Africa, 1<br>for Asia, 1 for<br>GRULAC, 1 for<br>EEG)                                                     | 12<br>(3 for Africa, 3 for<br>Asia, 2 for<br>GRULAC, 2 for<br>WEOG, 2 for EEG)                                                                           |
| <b>Proposed<br/>term length<br/>for non-<br/>permanent<br/>seats</b>         | 2 years<br>(no re-election)                                                     | 2 years<br>(no re-election)                                                                                   | 2 years<br>(no re-election)                                                                                           | 2 categories:<br>2 years for<br>traditional<br>rotating seats (no<br>re-election);<br>3–5 years for<br>long-term<br>rotating seats<br>(with re-election) |

<sup>2</sup> Acronyms in the table: GRULAC: Latin American and Caribbean Group; WEOG: Western European and Others Group; SIDS: Small Island Developing States; EEG: Eastern European Group.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee of Ten (C-10) was established in 2005 within the framework of the African Union (AU) to promote UNSC reform. The C-10 advocates for the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, documents adopted within the AU, which propose new permanent and non-permanent seats, as indicated in the table.





| Category/<br>Proposal            | G4                                                                                              | L.69                                                                                                              | C-10 <sup>4</sup>                        | Uniting for<br>Consensus (UfC)                             |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Proposal for<br>special seats    | –                                                                                               | 1 for SIDS                                                                                                        | –                                        | 1 for SIDS                                                 |
| Position on<br>the veto<br>power | Extension to<br>new permanent<br>members (with<br>restrictions and<br>review after 15<br>years) | Extension to<br>new permanent<br>members (with<br>restrictions and<br>possibility of<br>progressive<br>abolition) | Extension to<br>new permanent<br>members | Against new<br>vetoes, defends<br>progressive<br>abolition |

Source: Own elaboration based on the proposals from G4, L.69, C-10, and UfC.

The IGN continued to take place annually, but deadlocks and lack of consensus have prevailed in recent years (United Nations General Assembly, 2016, p. 1-4; p. 5-7; Baccarini, 2018, p. 101). Despite the negotiations and commitments, any substantive change in the UNSC will require amendments to Chapter V of the Charter through article 108, especially on articles 23 and 27, which address the composition and functions of the Council (United Nations, 2007, p. 17; p. 20; United Nations General Assembly, 2008, p. 1-2).

More recently, the Pact for the Future, adopted by the UNGA in 2024, advocated in its Actions 40 and 41 for a more representative, effective, and continuously updated UNSC through periodic review, with an emphasis on closer alignment with the General Assembly (United Nations, 2024 a; United Nations, 2024 b, p. 27-28). In this context, the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (AHWG) also stands out. Created in 2005, its purpose is to strengthen the role, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Assembly. Since its inception, the AHWG has promoted more than 200 measures, such as enhancing communication strategies and civil society engagement, and increasing transparency in the SG election (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p. 3; United Nations, 2025 a).

On the occasion of the UN's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, SG António Guterres published the report *Our Common Agenda*, which addressed the need to restore the UNGA's political centrality and influence in global governance (United Nations, 2021, p. 3-5; p. 77-79). Since then, Member States have held a series of thematic consultations, covering issues ranging from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to proposals such as strengthening digital governance and the need for a more inclusive and effective multilateralism (United Nations, 2022, p. 1-4; p. 5-8; p. 9-12; p. 13-17; p. 18-22; p. 23-26). As a result of these debates, the Pact for the Future

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<sup>4</sup> The Committee of Ten (C-10) was established in 2005 within the framework of the African Union (AU) to promote UNSC reform. The C-10 advocates for the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, documents adopted within the AU, which propose new permanent and non-permanent seats, as indicated in the table.





addressed the UNGA revitalization through Action 42, which aims to strengthen the UN's main deliberative body and ensure greater transparency and merit in the SG selection process, encouraging the nomination of women (United Nations, 2024 b, p. 27-29). In this context, the reforms under the AHWG and the proposals of Our Common Agenda are being negotiated and implemented without promoting any amendments to the Charter.

It is also important to note that significant differences exist between the positions of Global South and Global North countries within the AHWG. The Global South – represented by countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and Malaysia – advocates for the urgent need to correct regional imbalances in representation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, 2025; United Nations Journal, 2024, p. 1-3; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, 2024). Meanwhile, the Global North – led by actors such as the European Union, the United States, and Japan – prioritizes technical and procedural reforms focused on administrative efficiency (European Union External Action, 2025; United States Mission to the United Nations, 2022; Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, 2017).

Finally, the SG António Guterres proposal, United to Reform, began as soon as he took office in January 2017, intending to develop a reform agenda for the UN in three main areas: Peace and security, management, and development (Universal Rights Group, 2017). The peace and security area seeks greater integration with the development and human rights pillars, aiming to strengthen conflict prevention and promote sustainable peace, replacing the reactive crisis response logic with more agile, effective, and risk-anticipating action. In this context, UN peacekeeping missions have been reformulated to incorporate long-term peacebuilding and peacekeeping strategies<sup>5</sup>. The second area, dedicated to management, aims to expand the Secretariat's autonomy, ensuring greater flexibility in resource administration and strengthening the SG's role as executive leader, granting him (or her) more freedom to implement reforms and modernize the UN's internal functioning. An example of management reform is the Gender Parity Strategy, which reinforces the call for gender equality in the UN Charter. Finally, the third area concerns the UN development system and contains the most ambitious proposals, with the main goal of making the system more cohesive, effective, and aligned with the 2030 Agenda (United to Reform, 2025; United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2019, p. 8-12; Universal Rights Group, 2017).

However, one of the main criticisms of the United to Reform proposal is the absence of reforms involving the human rights pillar, which is a fundamental part of the UN Charter. This omission is particularly serious because it undermines the logic of the reform itself, since the other goals cannot be achieved without progress in human rights (Universal Rights Group, 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> Peacekeeping operations, established in 1948, were not originally provided for in the UN Charter (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2025; Universal Rights Group, 2017).





It is evident, therefore, that the IGN, the AHWG, and United to Reform address UN reform proposals that focus on crucial issues related to the organization's modernization and efficiency. However, none of these mechanisms directly discusses the UN Charter reform. In this context, civil society organizations and other stakeholders<sup>6</sup> are advancing the agenda of mobilizing UN Member States to convene a General Conference to reform the Charter itself, as a strategy to revitalize and strengthen the organization's capacity to address the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges (Aly, 2025).

The UN Charter Reform Coalition is one of these civil society organizations, focused on pressuring Member States to invoke article 109 of the UN Charter by 2027, so that a General Conference may be held in 2030 (Global Governance Forum, 2020 b). Among the actors engaged in the Coalition is the Global Governance Forum (GGF), an independent organization that published the document *A Second United Nations Charter: Modernizing the UN for a New Generation*, presenting a new version of the UN Charter as an invitation to debate its reform (Global Governance Forum, 2020 a).

The proposals of the *A Second United Nations Charter* aim to redefine the UN's foundations with four central pillars: Human rights, sustainable development, peace and international security, and environmental protection. Based on these pillars, the proposal integrates new principles, such as disarmament and the preservation of Earth systems. This reformulation aims to reinforce the organization's commitments to equity, climate justice, transparency, and civil society participation. In line with this vision, GGF also proposes expanding the UNSC to 25 members and including a veto override mechanism, demonstrating how article 109 can serve as an institutional gateway to structural transformations of the Charter and, consequently, global governance (Global Governance Forum, 2024, p. 2; p. 13-20; p. 36-37).

Civil society participation in the UN Charter reform is essential, and one group that stands out is youth. Today, the UN Secretariat views young people not only as the beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda, but also as architects of international cooperation, as outlined in the Youth 2030 strategy (United Nations, 2024c; United Nations, 2025b). Thus, global youth must organize themselves to promote substantive changes to the UN Charter.

In this regard, we, from FAMUN 2025 and as members of Brazilian youth, propose the incorporation of two new principles into the UN Charter: Global technology governance and sustainable development. Today, technological advancements pose a threat to democracy, sovereignty, and global stability, and should become a UN pillar. Furthermore, the difficulty in formulating effective policies that reconcile economic development with ecosystem protection demands a dedicated pillar for sustainable development. To achieve this, updating isolated sections of the Charter is

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<sup>6</sup> The mobilization of civil society for the reform of the UN Charter was formalized at the United Nations Civil Society Conference, held in Nairobi in 2024. At this conference, 20 *ImPACT Coalitions* were created through civil society self-organization, with the aim of accelerating the reform process of the UN system and global governance (United Nations, 2024d, pp. 7-8; p. 65).





not enough: A comprehensive change to the entire document is essential, through a General Conference as provided for in article 109. In the face of deep global crises, FAMUN 2025 demonstrates that there is a youth ready to raise its voice and demand justice and a future in which the UN Charter and multilateralism itself are reimagined.

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## **PART 2 – POSITION OF REGIONAL GROUPS**





## **POSITION OF THE AFRICAN GROUP ON THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER REFORM**

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A contradiction marks the trajectory of Africa within the United Nations (UN). Despite the continent's practical exclusion from the UN Charter drafting process at the 1945 San Francisco Conference, it became the organization's most numerous regional group from the 1960s onward. This presence, however, did not translate into fair representation. This disparity led African countries to organize collectively, proposing reforms to address what they saw as institutional racism and colonial legacies within the UN's structure. Their common position was formalized in 2005 with the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration – documents from the African Union (AU) that demand structural changes to correct historical injustices, particularly in the UN Security Council (UNSC). These African demands reflect not only a history of exclusion but also the continent's recognition of the UN as a strategic space for its development and self-determination. Considering this, the following analysis will present an overview of African countries' participation in the UN, demonstrating how their demands for reform, from the 1960s to the present, are direct responses to an institution shaped by colonial hierarchies.

The UN Charter, adopted in 1945, was preceded by principles established in the 1941 Atlantic Charter. This earlier document resulted from the strategic alignment between the United States and the United Kingdom during World War II. The Atlantic Charter affirmed the right of peoples to self-determination and the restoration of sovereignty to territories that had been subjected to domination through force or coercion. However, this affirmation stood in stark contrast to the position of the United Kingdom and other Western European countries, which maintained colonized territories, especially in Africa and Asia. These territories were upheld by deeply oppressive and exploitative power structures. When confronted with this contradiction, Winston Churchill stated that the principles of the Atlantic Charter applied exclusively to the peoples and territories of the European continent (Sherwood, 1996, p. 71-72; Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008).





This position of the European powers had direct repercussions during the negotiation and adoption of the UN Charter. Due to European colonization of the continent, the participation of African countries at the San Francisco Conference was limited: of the 51 founding countries of the UN, only three were independent African states: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Liberia<sup>1</sup>. Despite their small number, these three countries played a significant role in the negotiations. They argued that international peace was dependent on the independence of countries under colonial regimes and the right to sovereignty. Furthermore, they positioned themselves against any possibility of the organization intervening in domestic affairs. The countries also voiced criticisms of the structure of the Security Council, specifically regarding member representation and the veto power of the permanent members<sup>2</sup> (United Nations Information Organizations, 1945, p. 236–237; p. 427–429; p. 448–450).

The limited African representation in the negotiations of the UN Charter resulted in some key limitations in the document's final wording. It is noticeable, for example, that the decolonization of African peoples and territories and the need to end racial discrimination do not appear as explicit objectives or principles of the Charter. There is not even a mention of terms such as "decolonization" or "colonies" in the final text. Instead, the Charter uses terms like "non-self-governing territories" or "trust territories," which tend to soften the violence of European colonialism. This absence of explicit references to decolonization or racial issues in the UN's founding document contributed to maintaining the imperialist status quo in international politics, reflecting the political influence that colonial powers exercised in the drafting of the UN foundational document (Biazi, 2015, p. 183–184; Sherwood, 1996, p. 85–86).

Africa's relationship with the UN underwent a profound change between 1950 and 1960 as many countries gained independence and joined the organization as member

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<sup>1</sup> The Union of South Africa, which would later become the Republic of South Africa, participated in the conference but was still a dominion under British rule. Despite the low official representation of African states, it is important to acknowledge the attempts by civil society to influence the San Francisco Conference. Through lobbying—a practice aimed at influencing political decision-making—academic and student organizations, such as the African Students Association and the African Academy for Arts and Research, collaborated with African American intellectuals in the United States to pressure state representatives. Their goal was to advocate for the emancipation of the colonies and the right to self-determination of colonized peoples during the Charter negotiations (Sherwood, 1996, p. 75–78).

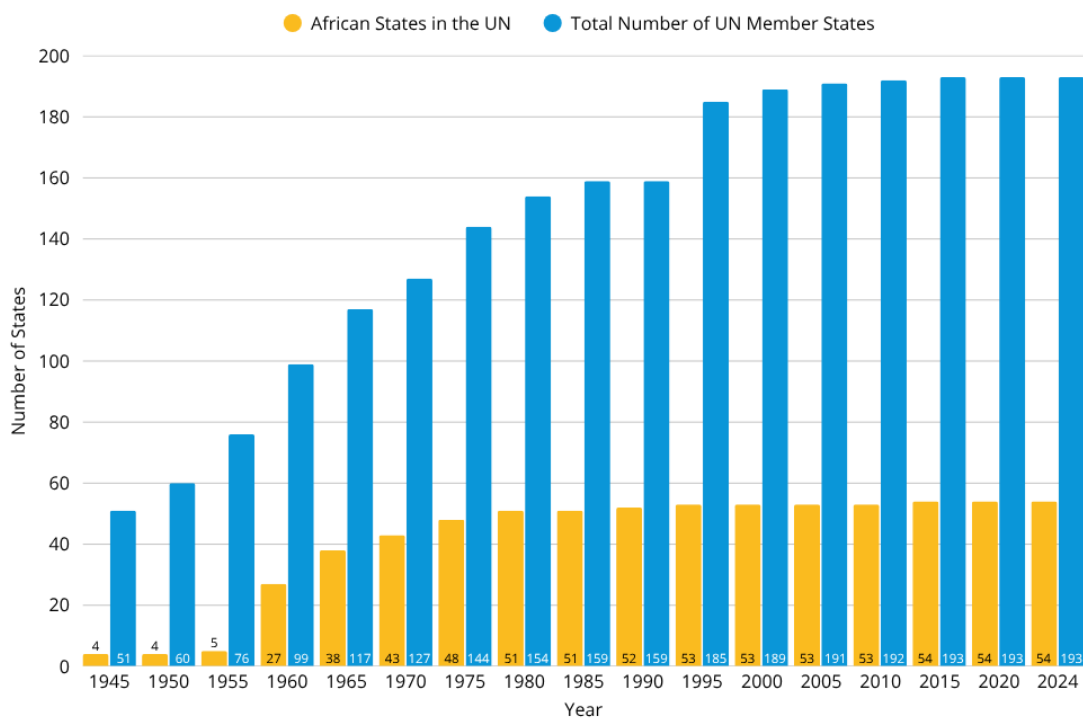
<sup>2</sup> More specifically, Egypt advocated for a greater balance in the UNSC, proposing its expansion from 10 to 14 members and the adoption of geographic criteria to ensure broader global representation. The country questioned the right of veto, arguing that allowing a power to act as "judge in its own case" would undermine the UN's democratic principles. Ethiopia, in turn, emphasized that the new organization should be founded on guaranteeing the free and independent existence of small nations, warning that without this, peace could not be sustained. It defended a UNSC with effective decision-making power, capable of acting quickly and without procedural obstacles in cases of aggression. Liberia also defended the independence of small nations, opposing any possibility of the organization intervening in domestic affairs. It stressed that such intervention would compromise national sovereignty and could relegate these states to a condition of dependency. Liberia was also in favor of expanding the number of non-permanent members in the Security Council with rotating mandates to ensure greater representation for smaller states (United Nations Information Organizations, 1945, p. 236–237; p. 427–429; p. 448–450).





states. The limited representation of only three African member states in 1950 grew dramatically by 1968, when the number reached 41 (see Chart 1 below). This surge meant that African nations came to represent 32.6% of the UN's total membership, underscoring their growing collective influence (Kay, 1969, p. 21).

**Chart 1 – Representation of African States in the United Nations relative to total membership (1945–2024)**



Source: Elaborated by Gabriel Vicentini, based on data available in Kay (1969) and United Nations (2025 b).

The recognition of African countries as member states did not automatically grant them equal representation within the UN. Many newly independent nations faced significant challenges, including a lack of qualified diplomats, limited financial resources, and insufficient support for research and policy development. These issues hindered their ability to produce scientific knowledge and formulate effective foreign policy<sup>3</sup> (Kay, 1969, p. 22). Thus, political coordination among African countries within the UN proved to be a crucial strategy for strengthening their position and advancing their demands within the organization<sup>4</sup>.

A direct reflection of the alignment of African countries as a cohesive regional group within the UN was General Assembly Resolution 1514, adopted in 1960. This resolution

<sup>3</sup> The very size of African delegations reflected these challenges. In 1960, while European countries had an average of about eight diplomats in their permanent missions to the UN, African missions, on average, had only four representatives (Kay, 1969, p. 24; United Nations, 1960).

<sup>4</sup> This movement did not occur only at the UN. A key milestone for this cohesion was the First Conference of Independent African States, held in Accra in 1958. At this conference, African states discussed issues such as self-determination, the independence of still-colonized territories, the fight against racial discrimination, and the need to coordinate African policies within the UN (Hovet, 1964, p. 124–125).





brought the issue of decolonization to the forefront and established the legal obligation for countries to proceed with decolonization and support the right to independence of colonized peoples. As a result, there was a significant increase in the number of African member states in the UN. Between 1960 and 1963, 25 new African states joined the organization, which significantly boosted the African presence within the UN<sup>5</sup> (Biazi, 2015, p. 187-188; Hovet, 1964, p. 124-125; Spencer, 1962, p. 375).

In addition to the eradication of colonialism, coordinated African countries began demanding the abolition of racial discrimination policies, including the unequivocal condemnation of apartheid in South Africa. In doing so, they brought issues to the UN that were not addressed in the 1945 Charter. African demands also started to intertwine anti-colonial struggles with the defense of human rights and the fight against structural inequalities, leading them to advocate for international cooperation for economic development as a form of historical reparation (Hovet, 1964, p. 124-125; p. 127-129). These demands, though deeply significant to African countries, did not result in any formal changes to the principles and purposes of the organization as established in the UN Charter. The Charter has remained essentially unchanged since 1945, maintaining the original language that avoided direct references to colonialism. This situation hindered the creation of a regional African identity within the organization.

The structure of the UN was another area of concern for African countries. As the number of member states in the organization increased, they began to demand more equitable representation in the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This demand was formalized through a letter to the UN General Assembly, submitted jointly with countries from the Asia-Pacific region (United Nations General Assembly, 1963 b). As a result, both councils were expanded in the 1960s through specific amendments to the UN Charter<sup>6</sup> (Kay, 1969, p. 26-28; United Nations General Assembly, 1963 a).

A more comprehensive reform of the UN Charter, however, is of interest to African countries, which view the organization as essential for their development, especially in peacekeeping missions, humanitarian aid, and socioeconomic policies. The common African position on these reforms was strengthened with the creation of the AU in 2002<sup>7</sup>. Currently, through the AU, African countries advocate for the UN while proposing

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<sup>5</sup> In the context of the 1960s, the African Group for Political Convention was created. This informal and permanent collective was aimed at aligning African countries within the organization. Since many of these states did not have embassies in other African countries, the UN became the main stage for regional political coordination. This alignment was also strategically important for decision-making within the organization, as by 1962, African countries represented approximately 26% of the votes in the General Assembly (Hovet, 1964, p. 124-125; Spencer, 1962, p. 375).

<sup>6</sup> The expansion of the UNSC and the ECOSOC was determined by the UNGA through resolution A/RES/1991/A, which increased the rotating members of the UNSC from 6 to 10, with 5 of those seats designated for representatives from Africa and Asia; and resolution A/RES/1991/B, which assigned 7 of the 9 ECOSOC seats to representatives from Africa and Asia (United Nations General Assembly, 1963 a).

<sup>7</sup> The AU is an institution focused on regional integration and cooperation. Composed of 55 members, it seeks to assert Africa's place on the international stage. The organization has enabled greater coordination





reforms to make it more equitable and effective in the face of the continent's challenges and the international landscape. Their demands include a greater presence in the organization's secretariat and the strengthening of the Human Rights Council and ECOSOC (Nantulya, 2023).

A common position among African countries was formalized in 2005 with the Ezulwini Consensus. In this document, the AU outlines the region's main demands for greater attention from the UN, which include the eradication of poverty, the relief of external public debt, the combating of infectious diseases, and the mitigation of environmental degradation. Item C of the document presents the institutional reforms that the AU advocates for within the UN. It includes specific demands for each of the principal organs, such as the strengthening of the UN General Assembly, as it is the most democratic organ of the organization, particularly on issues related to international peace and security (African Union, 2005 b).

The most pressing demands, however, relate to the UNSC. The document cites the absence of African countries during the UN Charter negotiations in 1945 to justify the need for reform of the body. Accordingly, the document establishes that Africa's objective is to have full participation in all the decision-making organs of the UN, especially in the UNSC. This reform would entail securing at least two permanent seats on the Council with veto power and five non-permanent, rotating seats. It is important to highlight that the AU opposes veto power but states that, as long as this privilege persists, all permanent members should have it. Another demand is that the AU, and not the General Assembly, must be responsible for electing the African countries that will serve on the UNSC (African Union, 2005 b).

The Ezulwini Consensus was also reinforced in 2005 by another AU document, the Sirte Declaration on United Nations reform (African Union, 2005 a). In the same year, the Committee of Ten (C-10) was created, coordinated by Sierra Leone, to serve as a bargaining coalition to defend the African positions on UN reform established in these documents<sup>8</sup> (Singh, 2024). Considering all these instances, the main African demands for UN Charter reform are systematized in the Table below.

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among African countries, allowing them to formulate common demands for a reform of the UN Charter (African Union, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> The C-10 is composed of the Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea from Central Africa; Kenya and Uganda from East Africa; Namibia and Zambia from Southern Africa; Libya and Algeria from North Africa; and Senegal and Sierra Leone from West Africa (Singh, 2024).





**Table 1 – Main demands of the African Union for United Nations Charter reform**

| Topic            | AU demands                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Preamble         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider sustainable development and poverty eradication as key pillars of the organization.</li><li>• Recognize the importance of equality in the cultural rights of all peoples, alongside civil and political rights.</li><li>• Recognize the crucial role of regional organizations in ensuring peace and stability within the UN framework.</li></ul> |
| Chapter I        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include international cooperation for sustainable development among the UN's core principles.</li><li>• Reaffirm the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs.</li><li>• Advocate for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.</li></ul>                                                                                |
| Security Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include at least two permanent seats in the UNSC for African countries.</li><li>• Increase the number of non-permanent members from 10 to 15, adding five new seats to the UNSC.</li><li>• Eliminate the veto power. However, if this is not possible, ensure that new permanent members are also granted this right.</li></ul>                            |

Source: Elaborated by Sofia Ariceto based on data available in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration (African Union, 2005 a; 2005 b).

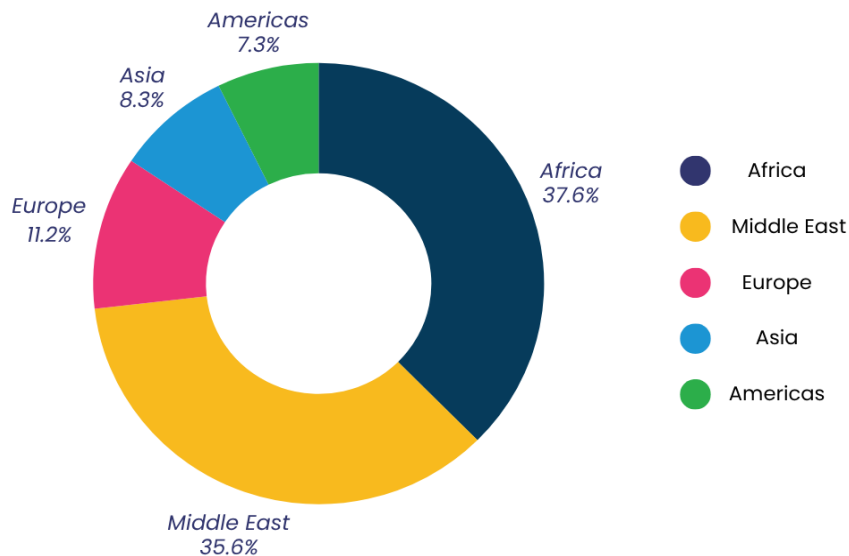
The African demands for UNSC reform were recently emphasized by Sierra Leone during its rotating presidency of the body in 2024. At that time, the African representative added the issue of historical injustices and the strengthening of Africa's effective representation in the council as an item on the UNSC's agenda (United Nations Security Council, 2024 a). The reform of the Security Council is particularly relevant for African countries, given the continent's relationship with the current international peace and security architecture. As shown in Chart 2, African countries are the most frequently discussed topic on the Council's agenda. But despite being a central point of concern for the UNSC, African countries are not sufficiently represented in the organ to make decisions about issues on their own continent. There is no African country among the permanent members of the UNSC, and while the expansion of the body granted three rotating seats for Africa, not all countries on the continent have served on the UNSC<sup>9</sup> (United Nations Security Council, 2024 b).

<sup>9</sup> The African countries that have never been elected as a non-permanent member of the UNSC are Comoros, Lesotho, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Seychelles, Sao Tome and Principe, Eritrea, Malawi, and Eswatini (United Nations Security Council, 2025 a).





**Chart 2 – Percentage of UNSC meetings on each geographic region, in 2024**



Source: Elaborated by Ana Carolina Moraes, based on data provided by SCPCRB/SCAD (United Nations Security Council, 2025 b).

Additionally, Africa has been the recipient of the most UN peacekeeping missions mandated by the UNSC. Five of the eleven current UN missions are taking place in African countries<sup>10</sup>. In total, out of the 71 peacekeeping missions the UN has carried out, 28 have taken place on African soil (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2025 a). Because of this, the AU began to build its own specialized peace and security architecture focused on the region's conflicts, which has included carrying out peace missions with the approval of the UNSC, as well as jointly promoting agreements to maintain peace among the warring parties in local conflicts (Moerane, 2024, p. 220–223). At the same time, Africa is also one of the main regions contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions. More than 40% of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces soldiers come from African countries, serving in missions both within and outside the continent<sup>11</sup> (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2025 b). Therefore, Africa has much to contribute to the renewal of the international peace and security architecture, which justifies its demands for reforms in the Security Council.

In summary, the common position of African countries on UN reforms reflects the pursuit of redressing the historical injustices suffered by the continent in the context of the organization's establishment. Africa has transformed its historical struggles, such as decolonization, the end of apartheid, and the fight against poverty, into a coherent

<sup>10</sup> Currently, the African countries with a peacekeeping mission on their territory are: Western Sahara, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Abyei (a disputed area on the border of Sudan and South Sudan), and South Sudan (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2025 c).

<sup>11</sup> Deploying troops is an alternative to financial contributions to the UN, which many countries in the Global South cannot afford. It's also a way for these countries to access training and personnel development. At the same time, developed countries tend to avoid sending soldiers to areas they consider riskier and with a higher possibility of casualties. Therefore, African countries often find themselves sending a larger military contingent as their contribution to the organization (Pinotti; Borelli, 2021, p. 51–52).





agenda centered on the democratization of multilateralism. The Ezulwini Consensus, the Sirte Declaration, and the work of the C-10 demonstrate the commitment and dedication of these countries to strengthening the UN. However, achieving this requires not only reforming the structure and composition of its bodies but also a philosophical review of the organization's founding Charter, incorporating long-ignored demands such as economic, social, and cultural justice. Therefore, the reform is not merely institutional but also a reckoning with history.

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## POSITION OF THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN GROUP ON THE UN CHARTER REFORM

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The Latin American and Caribbean Group was directly involved in the negotiations for the shaping of a new international order during the final years of World War II, despite facing a scenario of inequality. The Dumbarton Oaks Conference<sup>1</sup>, held in 1944, was attended only by the great powers, marginalizing the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean. In response to this exclusion, the countries of the region convened the Inter-American Conference on War and Peace, held at Chapultepec Castle in Mexico in 1945. At this conference, the region sought to consolidate common positions to assert itself collectively and influence the structure of the new General International Organization, which would become the United Nations (UN) (Peña, 2011, p. 117-118).

At Chapultepec, Latin American and Caribbean countries proposed that the UN should be based on justice and equity, so that it would reflect the ideas and aspirations of all nations. As a consequence, they defended universality as a guiding principle of the UN, so that it would be open to all. In practical terms, the region supported this universality by promoting the expansion of the powers of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), so that this body would hold real influence, acting in cooperation with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Furthermore, the region aimed to ensure greater Latin American representation in the UNSC and expressed opposition to the veto power held by the major powers. In the field of security and defense, Latin America and the Caribbean emphasized the use of peaceful means to resolve conflicts, defending the primacy of international law over the use of force. In this sense, the region proposed expanding the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as well as resolving disputes through regional mechanisms (Abdenur, 2016, p. 1176-1177; Conferencia Interamericana sobre Problemas de la Guerra e de la Paz, 1945).

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<sup>1</sup> The Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944) was a series of meetings between the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China that established the foundations for the creation of the UN. Its proposals included the creation of the Security Council, with permanent members holding veto power (United Nations, 2025 a).





At the San Francisco Conference in 1945, the region advanced these proposals in a coordinated manner, ensuring a strong presence and participation. Since most Latin American and Caribbean countries were already politically independent, their coordinated action granted them significant numerical weight in the negotiations. Table 1 illustrates this regional protagonism by presenting the dates on which the UN Charter was signed at the San Francisco Conference and when it was ratified. Of the 50 States present in San Francisco, 20 were part of the Latin American and Caribbean Group – 16 from Latin America and 4 from the Caribbean. This numerical presence made it possible to create a diplomatic bloc with real capacity to influence the final drafting of the Charter, demonstrating the reach and cohesion of the group in the discussions that shaped the UN (Pernet, 2012, p. 87–88; Peña, 2011, p. 118).

**Table 1 – Participation of Latin America and the Caribbean in the San Francisco Conference (1945): Signatory countries of the UN Charter**

| Region        | Country            | Date of Signature | Deposit of Ratification |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Latin America | Argentina          | 26 June 1945      | 24 September 1945       |
|               | Bolivia            | 26 June 1945      | 14 November 1945        |
|               | Brazil             | 26 June 1945      | 21 September 1945       |
|               | Chile              | 26 June 1945      | 11 October 1945         |
|               | Colombia           | 26 June 1945      | 5 November 1945         |
|               | Costa Rica         | 26 June 1945      | 2 November 1945         |
|               | Ecuador            | 26 June 1945      | 21 December 1945        |
|               | Guatemala          | 26 June 1945      | 21 November 1945        |
|               | Honduras           | 26 June 1945      | 17 November 1945        |
|               | Mexico             | 26 June 1945      | 7 November 1945         |
|               | Panama             | 26 June 1945      | 13 November 1945        |
|               | Paraguay           | 26 June 1945      | 12 October 1945         |
|               | Peru               | 26 June 1945      | 31 October 1945         |
|               | Uruguay            | 26 June 1945      | 18 December 1945        |
|               | Venezuela          | 26 June 1945      | 15 November 1945        |
| Caribbean     | Cuba               | 26 June 1945      | 15 October 1945         |
|               | Dominican Republic | 26 June 1945      | 4 September 1945        |
|               | El Salvador        | 26 June 1945      | 26 September 1945       |
|               | Haiti              | 26 June 1945      | 27 September 1945       |
|               | Nicaragua          | 26 June 1945      | 6 September 1945        |

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the United Nations, 2021.

Although Latin America and the Caribbean succeeded in ensuring the principles such as universality, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and non-intervention in the UN Charter, their proposals to reform the structure of the Security Council to guarantee fairer and more equitable representation were not accepted at the San Francisco Conference. Brazil, in particular, has expressed a sustained interest in securing a permanent seat on the Council, positioning itself as a regional leader and a historical contributor to the UN since its founding. However, due to the opposition from the major powers, neither Brazil nor any other Latin American country succeeded in becoming a permanent member of the Council (Abdenur, 2016, p. 1175–1177).





Despite this setback regarding the Security Council, the countries of the region succeeded in broadening the UN's purpose beyond military security, influencing the inclusion of economic, social, and human rights issues – topics absent from the Dumbarton Oaks proposals (Pernet, 2012, p. 88; Peña, 2011, p. 118). They also contributed to the recognition of regional organizations in Chapter VIII of the Charter and the inclusion of international economic and social cooperation as a central goal of the UN, as stated in article 1, §3<sup>2</sup>. Another achievement was the inclusion of Chapters IX and X of the Charter, which present, respectively, the provisions for international economic and social cooperation and the creation of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Abdenur, 2016, p. 1176; United Nations, 2025 b).

The establishment of ECOSOC as a principal organ of the UN responded to the Latin American and Caribbean aspiration to play a prominent role in promoting economic and social development and improving living conditions. For the region, economic and social rights were fundamental to addressing the historical inequalities that had impacted countries previously subjected to colonization. While the major powers showed resistance to giving prominence to this agenda, preferring instead to focus on military security, Latin America and the Caribbean viewed international peace and security as intrinsically linked to fair economic and social progress among nations (Russell, 1958, p. 790; Peña, 2011, p. 118). Therefore, this coordinated effort in the field of economic and social rights aimed not only to safeguard civil liberties but also to promote basic conditions of dignity, such as access to education, healthcare, employment, and social security – crucial aspects for reducing inequalities and building more equitable societies (Pernet, 2012, p. 89-90).

A significant milestone during the San Francisco Conference was the proposal submitted by Panama to ensure fundamental freedoms “for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” in the UN Charter, as a strategy to protect Latin American and Caribbean societies from marginalization and to strengthen global social justice. However, the proposal met strong opposition from the United States (US) and the United Kingdom, who feared that more specific commitments could impose limitations on their sovereignty or create binding legal obligations. In response to this opposition, Latin American and Caribbean countries formed a coalition to ensure the inclusion of articles<sup>3</sup> that guaranteed the promotion of fundamental rights without discrimination (Pernet, 2012, p. 89-90; Peña, 2011, p. 119).

Another milestone was the enshrinement of gender equality as a founding principle of the UN, led by Brazilian diplomat Bertha Lutz. With the support of other women

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<sup>2</sup> Article 1, §3 of the UN Charter establishes as one of the purposes of the organization “to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (United Nations, 2025 b).

<sup>3</sup> These rights are mentioned in the UN Charter both in the Preamble, which commits to “promote social progress and better standards of life” and in Chapter I, article 1, which encourages international cooperation to solve economic and social issues and to promote the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (United Nations, 2025 b).





diplomats<sup>4</sup>, Lutz faced opposition from US and United Kingdom female delegates<sup>5</sup>, who deemed such a request “rude” and “unworthy”. For the major powers, a direct reference to equality between men and women was unnecessary, as they believed the term “man” was sufficient to represent all of humanity. However, including gender equality in the UN Charter was essential for Latin American and Caribbean countries, as it reflected regional movements aimed at addressing the historical invisibility of women in international law. Moreover, the Latin American and Caribbean women diplomats present in San Francisco firmly believed that a new world order should reflect the effective and substantive inclusion of all individuals, which they saw as a fundamental requirement for comprehensive social progress. The efforts led by Lutz were successful, ensuring the inclusion of equality between men and women as a component of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Preamble, article 1, and article 8 of the UN Charter (Ribeiro, 2023, p. 187; p. 189–192; United Nations, 2025 b).

The joint participation of Latin America and the Caribbean in the San Francisco Conference thus resulted in a significant contribution to the drafting of the UN Charter, reinforcing core principles such as the defense of human rights, gender equality, and economic and social development. Eighty years later, the region once again has the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to updating this historic document. Today, the region leads two important agendas for reforming the UN Charter: A broader perspective on sustainable development and greater representation and democratization of the Security Council.

Latin America and the Caribbean are committed to promoting a broader and more critical perspective of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – one that goes beyond economic growth to include social justice, the preservation of Nature, and the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. For the region, the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities are preconditions for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the region emphasizes the importance of preserving Nature and ensuring racial and gender equality as integral components of sustainable development. It also advocates for the recognition of ancestral knowledge and the cultural and environmental practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as key elements in global efforts to ensure food security and a just transition to sustainable lifestyles in harmony with Nature (Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, 2025, p. 1; p. 3–4; p. 13).

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<sup>4</sup> The notable female diplomats are Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Isabel de Vidal (Uruguay), Amália Gonzalez Caballero de Castillo León (Mexico), Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (India), and Jean McKenzie (New Zealand) (Ribeiro, 2023, p. 189–190).

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Gildersleeve (US) and Ellen Wilkinson (United Kingdom) considered the explicit inclusion of gender equality in the Charter to be an exaggeration or a break from diplomatic tradition. For both, such inclusion was deemed unnecessary, as they assumed that the existing norms adequately covered women. These diplomats refused to acknowledge that, in reality, many women around the world lacked access to rights (Ribeiro, 2023, p. 189–190).





In particular, the member countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have played an increasingly prominent role in expanding the sustainable development agenda by linking the urgency of climate issues to the demand for reform of the UN Charter, which has no mention of environmental or climate sustainability. Leaders such as Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados, exemplify this position by highlighting the inadequacy of current global governance structures and arguing that the UN requires a profound transformation to reflect the environmental and climate-related priorities and vulnerabilities of small developing nations. Thus, the Caribbean proposes an agenda that links the urgency of climate justice with the need for a more democratic, effective, and inclusive UN (Bardouille, 2024). In this way, Latin America and the Caribbean not only uphold their longstanding tradition of advocating development as a central goal of the UN but also lead the efforts to make sustainable development a new foundational principle of the UN Charter.

Another important agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean is the reform of the UNSC. As already mentioned, the region presented a common proposal at the San Francisco Conference, calling for a more representative and democratic Council. In that context, Latin American and Caribbean countries jointly defended the expansion of the UNSC in order to ensure that all countries had a more appropriate representation (Peña, 2011, p. 117–118). Although the region still defends such expansion, there is currently a fragmentation of positions regarding the substance of UNSC reform, as presented in Table 2. The table shows three different proposals for UNSC reform supported by the countries of the region: The proposal of the Group of Four (G4), composed by Brazil, Germany, India and Japan; the proposal of the L.69, supported by 42 developing countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia-Pacific; and the proposal of Uniting for Consensus (UfC), composed by 12 countries from different regions, four of them from Latin American and the Caribbean<sup>6</sup>.

Brazil and Mexico are the main regional powers of Latin America and the Caribbean and defend divergent proposals regarding the reform of the UNSC. Brazil – the oldest Latin American candidate aiming for a permanent seat in the Council – is part of the G4, which proposes an increase of 6 new seats for permanent members (including 1 new seat for GRULAC), and 4–5 new non-permanent seats (including 1 new seat for GRULAC). The G4 defends an ambiguous position about the veto, admitting that it can be used in certain circumstances, but without specifying which ones. In addition, the group proposes that the new permanent members could only use the veto fifteen years after joining the Council (Cervo, 2009, p. 12–13; Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations New York *et al.*, 2023; Menezes, 2010, p. 241–242).

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<sup>6</sup> The UfC is composed of: Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain, and Turkey.





**Table 2 – Number of seats for the Latin America and Caribbean region envisioned in the Security Council reform proposals<sup>7</sup>**

| Group/ Proposal                       | G4                                                   | L.69                                            | Uniting for Consensus (UfC)                         |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Total UNSC seats</b>               | 25-26<br>(6 new permanent and 4-5 new non-permanent) | 27<br>(6 new permanent and 6 new non-permanent) | 27<br>(0 permanent new and 12 new non-permanent)    |
| <b>New permanent seats for GRULAC</b> | 1<br>(of 6 new seats)                                | 1<br>(of 6 new seats)                           | 0<br>(of 0 new seats)                               |
| <b>Total non-permanent for GRULAC</b> | 3<br>(2 already existing and 1 new)                  | 3<br>(2 already existing and 1 new)             | 4<br>(2 already existing and 2 new)                 |
| <b>Special non-permanent seats</b>    | -                                                    | 1 for SIDS, with regional rotation              | 1 for SIDS and small States, with regional rotation |

Source: Own elaboration based on the data of Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations New York *et al.*, 2023; Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations New York, 2024; Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations New York, 2023.

While Brazil advocates for the expansion of the UNSC with new permanent members, including itself as a candidate, Mexico rejects this possibility, considering it incompatible with the principle of sovereign equality. Mexico also fears that Brazil's ascension as a permanent member would exacerbate regional imbalances within GRULAC. Furthermore, although Brazil criticizes the concentration of veto power in the hands of the P-5, it does not rule out the possibility of new permanent members also exercising this right in the future. Mexico, on the other hand, prioritizes limiting this power, particularly in cases of mass atrocities, and supports its long-term abolition, categorically rejecting the extension of veto rights to new members (Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations New York and Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations in New York, 2024, p. 10-12; Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations New York, 2024, p. 3-4; United Nations General Assembly, 2023, p. 4).

That is the reason why Mexico supports the proposal of the UfC group, along with Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica. The UfC group opposes the idea of expanding permanent seats, whether with or without veto power, considering them incompatible with the principle of sovereign equality. Additionally, the group argues that the veto power must be abolished, as it is the root cause of the UNSC's decision-making inefficiency. Thus, the UfC's proposal focuses on creating 12 new non-permanent seats to expand the body's representativeness. Among these seats, two would be allocated to GRULAC, along with one seat exclusively for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

<sup>7</sup> Acronyms in the table: GRULAC: Group of Latin America and the Caribbean; SIDS: Small Island Developing States.





and for other small states, with regional rotation (Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations New York, 2024, p. 3-4).

Beyond the G4 and UfC, the L.69 group stands out for its broad support from Latin American and Caribbean countries as a coalition of developing nations<sup>8</sup>. Precisely because it promotes an alliance with other regions of the Global South – comprising countries from Africa and Asia as well –, the L.69 proposes an increase in both permanent and non-permanent UNSC members, prioritizing regional representation. The group also advocates for opening Council meetings to other countries and civil society, as well as abolishing the veto power or extending it to all members to ensure greater equality of influence (Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, 2023, p. 3-5).

The L.69 group enjoys strong backing from CARICOM due to its proposal for a dedicated rotating seat for SIDS, given the climate emergency these countries face and their limited representation. The small Caribbean islands, among the most vulnerable to global warming, view UNSC reform not only as a matter of political representation but also as a crucial tactic for their survival and security. They argue that international security should be understood more broadly, encompassing existential threats resulting from climate change, food insecurity, and environmental decline (Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, 2024, p. 2).

Faced with multiple proposals for UNSC reform, Latin America and the Caribbean have been unable to present a united diplomatic position, as they did at the San Francisco Conference in 1945. Therefore, for the General Conference to Review the UN Charter, the region must set aside its differences and unite, as countries yearn for a more inclusive Charter that promotes sustainable development. The region must act as a bastion to address urgent problems such as poverty, hunger, and inequality, deepen mechanisms for social and racial justice, and promote the full participation of women and historically marginalized groups, such as the SIDS. Therefore, the new UN Charter that Latin America and the Caribbean want and need is democratic, inclusive, and truly universal.

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<sup>8</sup> The L.69 group is formed by: Afghanistan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritius, Micronesia, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Vanuatu, and Venezuela.





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## **POSITION OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP ON THE UN CHARTER REFORM**

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The section presents the position of the Asia-Pacific regional group on the United Nations (UN) Charter reform, highlighting its low participation in the Charter's adoption. Despite many of its members sharing a colonial past, the section explores the diverse demands of the Asia-Pacific for a new UN, primarily concerning international peace and security architecture and the fight against climate change.

The Asia-Pacific is composed of 55 UN Member States. It includes major Asian countries, such as China and India; Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Fiji and the Solomon Islands; and Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, among others (United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, 2025). Although marked by diversity, most of its members share a history of inequality, colonization, and struggles for independence and sovereignty recognition. This situation is clear since the UN's founding in 1945, when only nine Asia-Pacific countries signed the Charter: India, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, the Philippines, the Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Turkey (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2025).

The Republic of China played an active role in the UN Charter negotiations. It became the first state to sign it and the only one in the group to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), due to its role in the Second World War. Despite the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Chinese seat at the UN continued to be occupied by the Republic of China until 1971, when the UN General Assembly (UNGA) approved resolution 2758, recognizing the PRC as the sole legitimate representative of China in the UN. Since then, the PRC has advocated for the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, as well as for a greater role of developing countries in the organization (Valente; Albuquerque, 2015, p. 694; p. 705-706; United Nations General Assembly, 1971).





India was still under British rule during the UN Charter negotiations and signing. After its independence in 1947, the country prioritized combating racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa, taking a key role in the UNGA in this sense during the 1960s (Hawksley; Ward, 2019; Mukerji, 2024). Japan was excluded from the UN Charter writing and adoption, being considered an enemy state, due to its participation in the Axis alliance (formed by Japan, Italy, and Germany) during the Second World War. After its surrender in September 1945, the Allies occupied Japan until 1952, when the Treaty of San Francisco ended the occupation. The country joined the UN in 1956, although the Charter was not amended to exclude its designation as an enemy country (Watanabe, 2011, p. 3-4; p. 8).

Several countries in the Asia-Pacific region were still European colonies at the time of the UN Charter's signing, such as Bangladesh, Brunei, and Malaysia, which were British colonies; Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, French colonies; and Indonesia, a Dutch colony. This was also the case for many SIDS, such as Kiribati and Timor-Leste<sup>1</sup>, which only gained sovereignty decades after the UN was established. Other group members did not formally exist at the time, as is the case with Pakistan, which became a sovereign state in 1947, after the independence and partition of India (Hawksley; Ward, 2019, p. 5).

With the advancement of the regional independence processes, these countries joined the UN and brought new agendas and demands. At the same time, their late entry highlighted the relevance of principles already enshrined in the Charter, such as sovereign equality and the self-determination of peoples, that could only be fully claimed by these countries after their independence (United Nations, 2025).

More specifically, article 2 of the UN Charter established sovereign equality as a central principle of international law and as a regulator of relations between states, alongside the revolutionary principle of self-determination of peoples, which became a core element in an international system still marked by colonial domination. In recognition of the colonial question, Chapters XI and XII established a trusteeship system for non-self-governing territories, reflecting the intention to promote their transition to self-government (United Nations, 2025; Patterson, 2009, p. 10-11).

However, the limited participation of Asian and African countries in the UN Charter drafting revealed a structural contradiction: The formal defense of equality coexisted with practical exclusion, given the prevailing colonial dynamics during the negotiation and adoption of the document. To address this, the UN's oversight of non-self-governing territories became one of its core functions, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, amid the decolonization movements (Patterson, 2009, p. 10-12). A landmark step in this context was the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the UNGA in 1960. The Declaration played a

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<sup>1</sup> Kiribati became independent from Britain in 1979, and Timor-Leste ceased to be an Indonesian territory in 2002 (Hawksley; Ward, 2019, p. 5-6).





crucial role by providing legal and political backing to the claims for sovereignty and self-determination of colonized peoples (United Nations General Assembly, 1960).

Upon joining the UN, the newly independent Asia-Pacific countries sought to strengthen their international standing by adhering to human rights, development, and disarmament treaties. Sovereignty and self-determination, linked to accountability for the colonial past and the right to development, remained central themes in their engagement (Le; Ho; Inoguchi, 2023, p. 5).

Although they share common agendas, the demands and interests of Asia-Pacific states also vary, as is the case with Japan and India, which advocate for expanding the number of permanent seats on the UNSC, aiming to become members in that capacity. China addresses this stance ambiguously, as the country recognizes the importance of UNSC reform, but avoids this discussion directly. Middle Eastern countries emphasize the need to ensure compliance with the UN Charter principles, placing less emphasis on UNSC institutional reform (United Nations General Assembly 2024 a; 2024 b; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2025; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2024). On the other hand, the SIDS call for urgent action, particularly on climate change, pointing to normative gaps that may lead to Charter reform.

The SIDS share significant socioeconomic and environmental vulnerabilities. Climate change has caused severe impacts on these Asia-Pacific countries, such as sea level rise, extreme weather events, and loss of biodiversity. In this context, it is estimated that up to 50% of the territory of states like Tuvalu and the Maldives could be submerged by 2050, highlighting how climate change threatens their territorial and identity integrity (United Nations, 2024).

The small island states are on the front lines in the fight against the effects of climate change, with their representatives emphasizing the consequences of a crisis that was not caused by these territories, yet whose effects are directly felt by their populations. In the face of this threat, states such as Antigua and Barbuda, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu not only raise concerns but also propose concrete solutions to address climate change, such as treaties against greenhouse gas emissions (Bardouille, 2024).

Antigua and Barbuda, for instance, proposed a Fossil-Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative to curb the environmental impact of fossil-fuel combustion. Additionally, SIDS have been promoting mechanisms to tackle the debt crisis they face. In this regard, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, aiming for sustainable development, advocated for reforms in the Bretton Woods institutions to make the international monetary and financial system fairer and address the indebtedness of developing countries. These countries also fight for greater development assistance and stronger responses to climate change impacts (United Nations, 2024; United Nations Development Programme, 2024).





To advance their demands, these states organized themselves, in the 1990s, within the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) (Laatikainen, 2020, p. 135-139). The AOSIS is a 39-country diplomatic coalition, including 14 from the Asia-Pacific, that represents the collective interests of SIDS in forums such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Conference of the Parties (COPs), and the UNGA (Bane, 2022, p. 75-80).

Although many SIDS are also part of the AOSIS, the Alliance is focused specifically on negotiations and political lobbying on the environmental, climate, and sustainable development agendas (Alliance of Small Islands States, 2023 a; 2023 b). The engagement of Asia-Pacific small island states through AOSIS focuses on combating climate change, promoting sustainable development, and preserving the oceans (Alliance of Small Islands States, 2023 a; 2023 b).

The Maldives played a central role in Paris Agreement negotiations, specifically advocating for limiting global warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. Fiji presided over the Conference of the Parties (COP) 23 in 2017 and proposed a participatory approach through the Talanoa Dialogue<sup>2</sup>, mapping collective actions in support of achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2025).

Nevertheless, internal divergence also exists. During the COP13, for example, Papua New Guinea supported the REDD mechanism<sup>3</sup>, aimed at commercializing carbon credits (United Nations Environment Programme, 2025; Laatikainen, 2020, p. 145-147). Carbon markets allow the trading of carbon credits, through CO2 emissions quotas from state and non-state actors, to achieve climate targets (United Nations Environment Programme, 2025). However, these markets pose several challenges for SIDS, such as limited technical and institutional capacity, high transaction costs, and the risk of unequal benefit distribution.

In this context, the growing nexus between climate change and international peace and security has led SIDS to insist on bringing this debate to the UNSC since 2007, when Papua New Guinea stated that climate change was already threatening the existence of more than 20 territories (United Nations Security Council, 2007, p. 26-27). Nevertheless, there is resistance to this discussion within the body, especially from permanent members, who do not consider environmental and climate issues as part of the UNSC's mandate (United Nations Security Council, 2021, p. 3-4).

Furthermore, SIDS are pushing for other institutional reforms within the UN to ensure greater representativeness in decision-making processes, particularly in the UNSC,

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<sup>2</sup> Dialogue platform convened at COP21, but formally launched only at COP23, hosted by Fiji (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> The REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) mechanism is an instrument to combat deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions, offering remuneration for forest preservation actions (Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia, 2025).





through an equitable regional redistribution of seats (Bardouille, 2024; United Nations, 2024; Aly; Perell, 2024). Such demands reinforce the need to reform both the body and the Charter, as the document does not address environmental issues and the climate crisis, which is increasingly urgent for the regional group.

Therefore, FAMUN 2025 delegates representing Asia-Pacific states must review the Preamble and Chapters I and V of the UN Charter, considering their historic growing participation in the organization, as well as taking into account fundamental principles of the group, such as the right to self-determination. Representatives should also prioritize issues such as climate change and the rising challenges to international peace and security, to ensure that the UN can respond, with legitimacy and effectiveness, to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## POSITION OF THE EUROPE AND OTHERS GROUP ON THE UN CHARTER REFORM

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This section aims to present the position and interests of the countries in the Europe and Others<sup>1</sup> regional group in three different moments. First, we analyze the negotiations of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and the role of its sponsors. Then, during the Cold War, we present the contradictions of the European States, which defended the development of a human rights agenda while maintaining the exploitation of Asian and African peoples. Finally, we highlight the contributions of European countries to the advancement of human rights at the UN. At the same time, proposals to reform the UN Security Council (UNSC) confronted the interests of the permanent members.

European countries played an important role in the creation of the UN and were present at the San Francisco Conference (1945) (see Chart 1). The United States (US), the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union (USSR), winners of the Second World War (1939–1945), were central to formulating the Charter of the future international organization. At conferences before San Francisco, such as the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944), the three<sup>2</sup> countries were sponsors of the draft UN Charter, which contained, among other issues, the creation of the UNSC with permanent members and veto power (Khan, 2012, p. 268).

Despite agreement on the UNSC's mandate, there was no consensus between the three countries on the veto of the permanent members. The USSR's position diverged from the other sponsors, pushing for the implementation of the permanent members'

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<sup>1</sup> Countries that make up the Europe and Others group: Western and Eastern European states, Canada, the United States, Russia, Australia, and New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the US, the United Kingdom, and the USSR, France and China were invited to participate in the pre-San Francisco conferences and supported the draft UN Charter that was presented. The talks with China at Dumbarton Oaks took place separately from the talks with the USSR, since at that time China and the USSR were not allies, as the Soviets supported the Chinese Communists against the Chiang Kai-shek government (Khan, 2012, p. 269). China's interests have been analyzed in this Research Guide in the section on the Asia-Pacific regional group.





veto power, including in situations where they were directly involved (Khan, 2012, p. 269). This issue was left open to be decided later, at the San Francisco Conference.

The United States, a leading country in the negotiations in 1945, submitted proposals to other UN bodies, such as the General Assembly (UNGA). One of these proposals empowered the UNGA to recommend measures for the promotion of human rights, which was not accepted by the USSR and the United Kingdom (Khan, 2012, p. 269–270). Another proposal presented by the US was the possibility of convening a General Conference to Review the UN Charter, which became article 109. The convening of a review conference would take place with the approval of a simple majority of the UNGA and the seven (currently, nine) members of the UNSC, including the five permanent members (Rao, 1955, p. 360). The proposal had the support of the United Kingdom and China, but the USSR was against the possibility of convening a review conference of the UN Charter, because it could lead to initiatives to end the veto formula in the UNSC (Rao, 1955, p. 360).

France refused to be a sponsor of the draft UN Charter, so that the country could have an independent position during the San Francisco Conference. However, the French delegation accepted the proposals presented by the other sponsors in the negotiations, especially its accession as a permanent member of the UNSC. In addition, France ensured that the new organization respected the principle of sovereignty and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Member States (article 2.7), intending to defend its colonial possessions (Fischer, 1955, p. 366; Khan, 2012, p. 269).

The Axis countries (Japan, Italy, and Germany) did not participate in the negotiations in San Francisco due to their defeat in the Second World War and were mentioned in the UN Charter as enemy states<sup>3</sup>, as a result of the organization's goal of suppressing totalitarian regimes and acts of aggression perpetrated by these nations (United Nations, 2025).

After three months of negotiations, on 26 June 1945, fifty States adopted the Charter of the United Nations. The document consolidated the Western position in defense of liberal democracy and human rights, in opposition to the Soviet bloc, and marked the beginning of the Cold War. Article 1 of the Charter established the maintenance of international peace and security as one of the primary purposes of the Organization, while also emphasizing cooperation in the field of socioeconomic development and the promotion of human rights (Mazower, 2004, p. 391–393; United Nations, 2025).

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<sup>3</sup> Article 53.2 affirms that: “The term **enemy state** as used in paragraph 1 of this article applies to any state which during the Second World War has been an enemy of any signatory of the present Charter” (United Nations, 2025, our highlight). Another example is article 107: “Nothing in the present Charter shall invalidate or preclude action, in relation to any state which during the Second World War has been an **enemy** of any signatory to the present Charter, taken or authorized as a result of that war by the Governments having responsibility for such action” (United Nations, 2025, our highlight).





**Table 1: States of Europe and Others group present at the San Francisco Conference (1945)**

| <b>Member States</b> | <b>Date of signature of the UN Charter</b> | <b>Date of ratification of the UN Charter</b> |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| United States        | 26 June 1945                               | 8 August 1945                                 |
| United Kingdom       | 26 June 1945                               | 20 October 1945                               |
| USSR                 | 26 June 1945                               | 24 October 1945                               |
| France               | 26 June 1945                               | 31 August 1945                                |
| Belgium              | 26 June 1945                               | 27 December 1945                              |
| Norway               | 26 June 1945                               | 27 November 1945                              |
| Luxemburg            | 26 June 1945                               | 17 October 1945                               |
| Netherlands          | 26 June 1945                               | 10 December 1945                              |
| Greece               | 26 June 1945                               | 25 October 1945                               |
| Denmark              | 26 June 1945                               | 19 October 1945                               |
| Yugoslavia           | 26 June 1945                               | 19 October 1945                               |
| Czechoslovakia       | 26 June 1945                               | 19 October 1945                               |
| Canada               | 26 June 1945                               | 9 November 1945                               |
| Australia            | 26 June 1945                               | 1 November 1945                               |
| New Zealand          | 26 June 1945                               | 19 September 1945                             |
| Italy                | 14 December 1955                           | 9 April 1956                                  |
| Japan                | 18 December 1956                           | 18 December 1956                              |
| Germany              | 18 September 1973                          | 18 September 1973                             |

Source: Own elaboration.

Accordingly, while the pillar of the maintenance of international peace and security is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations through the mandate of the Security Council (Chapters V, VI, VII and VIII of the Charter), the pillar of the promotion of human rights – incorporated into the Charter as an immediate response to the crimes committed by the Nazi and fascist regimes – did not result in the establishment of specific bodies or binding norms. At the same time as condemning the violations of human rights perpetrated by the Nazi regime, European States, including France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Portugal, maintained colonies in Asia and Africa. From the beginning, the European Powers contributed to the construction of an international system marked by double standards, demonstrating the selective nature of their commitment to human rights (Mazower, 2004, p. 386–387; United Nations, 2025).

In 1948, under the considerable influence of Eleanor Roosevelt, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted; however, the document did not address colonization or its prohibition (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). In the European context, the Council of Europe adopted the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950, aimed at protecting the rights of European citizens, while the exploitation of other peoples in the colonies was disregarded (United Nations, 1946, p. 148–150). The United States supported the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but resisted ratifying binding international treaties, reflecting domestic debates that culminated in the Bricker Amendment, which intended to prevent international agreements from prevailing over the country's Constitution (Henkin, 1965, p. 512).





During the Cold War, the United Nations' human rights agenda was shaped by the polarization between the United States and the USSR. For many years, the debate reflected divergent priorities between the Western States, which emphasized civil and political rights, and the Soviet bloc, which advocated for economic and social rights<sup>4</sup>. This deadlock weakened and delayed the development of human rights norms, leaving the matter subject to the geopolitical disputes between the blocs, which undermined the establishment of a more robust international normative framework (Hernandez, 2010, p. 56-57).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the decolonization process accelerated following the defeat of European Powers in wars of independence. On 14 December 1960, the UN adopted Resolution 1514, declaring the end of colonialism (United Nations General Assembly, 1960). The socialist bloc supported decolonization in defense of national sovereignty, while colonial Powers such as Belgium and the United Kingdom continued to exert influence over the former colonial territories, despite losing them. France and Portugal, however, engaged in conflicts against their colonies in attempts to retain control over those territories. These contradictions exposed the inconsistencies between European and Western colonial discourse and practice (Burbank; Cooper, 2010, p. 426-428).

With the end of the Cold War, human rights emerged as a global priority, enabling progress on this agenda within the UN. With the support of Europe, the 1993 Vienna Conference reaffirmed the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. As a result, in 1996, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was established as part of the Secretariat (Hernandez, 2010, p. 67). In the 2000s, Europe led the reform of the UN human rights system, with Switzerland playing a key role in promoting the establishment of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2006 (Hernandez; Rosa, 2018, p. 6-8). By contrast, the Russian Federation maintained a critical stance towards the human rights agenda, prioritizing State sovereignty and rejecting Western-led humanitarian interventions. Meanwhile, the demands put forward by the United States regarding the HRC were not accepted, leading the country to vote against the creation of the body in 2006 (Hernandez; Rosa, 2018, p. 3-6).

Despite advancements in the human rights agenda within the UN, including the adoption of international treaties and the establishment of new bodies, proposals for the democratization and transparency of the UNSC have remained stagnated since 1963 – the year of the Council's only reform – when the number of seats was increased from 11 to 15, expanding the number of non-permanent members from six to ten (United Nations General Assembly, 1963). Efforts to reform the UNSC have been consistently obstructed by the permanent members, particularly the United States and the Russian Federation.

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<sup>4</sup> In 1966, the two international human rights covenants were adopted: The International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which reflected not only the East-West divide, but also the North-South divide in the UN.





Within this context, European countries have participated in groups and coalitions advocating for UNSC reform. The G4, composed of Germany, India, Brazil, and Japan, was established in 2004 and proposed the creation of six new permanent seats on the Council – initially without veto power – with four of them occupied by the G4 members. This proposal has been opposed by the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group, which includes countries such as Italy, Spain, Canada, and Turkey. The group rejects the addition of new permanent members with veto rights and advocates instead for an increase in geographically distributed non-permanent seats (Weiss; Young, 2005, p. 146; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2025). Liechtenstein has also put forward the Veto Initiative, aimed at holding permanent members accountable for the use of the veto (Liechtensteinische Landesverwaltung, 2025).

The US maintains an ambiguous stance on UNSC reform. While giving partial support to the G4 proposal and the inclusion of Germany and Japan, the country rejects initiatives that would increase the number of permanent members or eliminate the veto. Currently, the United States prioritizes efficiency and supports a moderate expansion of the Council (Weiss, 2005, p. 8; United States Mission to the United Nations, 2025). The Russian Federation, on the other hand, does not formally endorse any reform initiative or the addition of new permanent seats but expresses support for the expansion of at least four non-permanent members (Weiss, 2005, p. 23–24).

Both the United Kingdom and France support the inclusion of emerging powers such as Brazil and India, as well as two African countries, as permanent members of the UNSC. The United Kingdom insists on maintaining the veto power of the permanent members, while France advocates for greater inclusion of underrepresented regions. Both countries support enhancing the transparency and legitimacy of the Council's decision-making processes (Mission Permanente de la France Auprès des Nations Unies à New York, 2025; Weiss; Young, 2005, p. 148).

Other countries from the European and Others Group also advocate for UNSC reform. A particularly relevant example today is the coalition of Nordic countries, led by Finland and Denmark. The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT) seeks a more representative and transparent Security Council (Finland Abroad, 2022; Denmark United Nations Security Council, 2024 a) and supports the expansion of permanent membership with greater representation for the African continent. The Nordic countries also defend accountability mechanisms regarding the use of the veto – such as Liechtenstein's initiative – and have expressed support for the eventual abolition of the veto (Swart; Perry, 2013; Embassy of Sweden, 2024; Denmark United Nations Security Council, 2024 b).

Thus, despite being a heterogeneous group, European countries – especially those from the European Union – have distinguished themselves by supporting both the strengthening of the human rights agenda, including the reinforcement of core bodies such as the HRC, and reform of the UNSC. Currently, the rise of far-right governments in Europe and, more recently, in the US, has weakened multilateralism. The Trump





administration's attacks on the UN system, Israel's aggression against Gaza, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine underscore the obsolescence of the UNSC structure – established in 1945 – and the disservice that the veto represents to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Moreover, the disregard for international human rights norms by global powers has undermined the multilateral system built after World War II. For these reasons, it is necessary and imperative that the countries of the European and Others group align their interests to bring about a reform of the UN Charter that addresses current global challenges, reinforces collective and horizontal decision-making – without the hierarchy imposed by the veto and the UNSC – and strengthens the role of the Organization in the protection of human rights.

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