

### **What is the Security Council?**

The UN Charter established six main organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council. It gives primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.

All members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to member states, only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.

### **Maintaining Peace and Security**

When a complaint concerning a threat to peace is brought before it, the Council's first action is usually to recommend that the parties try to reach agreement by peaceful means. The Council may:

- ☐ set forth principles for such an agreement;
- ☐ undertake investigation and mediation, in some cases;
- ☐ dispatch a mission;
- ☐ appoint special envoys; or
- ☐ request the Secretary-General to use his good offices to achieve a pacific settlement of the dispute.

When a dispute leads to hostilities, the Council's primary concern is to bring them to an end as soon as possible. In that case, the Council may:

- ☐ issue ceasefire directives that can help prevent an escalation of the conflict;
- ☐ dispatch military observers or a peacekeeping force to help reduce tensions, separate opposing forces and establish a calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought.

Beyond this, the Council may opt for enforcement measures, including:

- ☐ economic sanctions, arms embargoes, financial penalties and restrictions, and travel bans;
- ☐ severance of diplomatic relations;
- ☐ blockade;
- ☐ or even collective military action.

A chief concern is to focus action on those responsible for the policies or practices condemned by the international community, while minimizing the impact of the measures taken on other parts of the population and economy.