

U.N. makes first ever cut in staff

30th December, 2013



The United Nations is cutting staff for the first time in its history. The U.N. General Assembly approved a staff cut for the first time since the international

body was created in 1945. The decision means a reduction of 219 positions, which represents two per cent of all U.N. posts. In addition, the General Assembly authorised freezes on pay rises for one year and benefits for two years. It acted in response to pressures from member states to reduce spending. Many governments around the world say they are struggling to meet their share of contributions to fund the global organisation. Many nations are still suffering from austerity measures taken after the global financial crisis.

The United States' ambassador to the U.N. Joe Torsella said the cuts were "crucial" and would "eliminate unnecessary, duplicative or outdated posts". He told the General Assembly: "At a time when the budgets and crucial services of many...organisations have been squeezed, these measures will hold compensation costs in place, until we can act in the next session." He added: "Our shared goal should be to ensure that the United Nations can maximise the results that it delivers with the amount of resources that member states are collectively able to provide." The United States, which pays 22 per cent of the U.N. budget, is the biggest financial contributor to the United Nations.

Sources: *Bloomberg / BusinessWeek / Reuters*

Writing

There is no need for the United Nations. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

United Nations / staff cuts / pay rise / pressure / benefits / reduce spending / austerity / ambassador / crucial services / budgets / compensation / maximize results / provide

True / False

- This is only the second time for the U.N. to announce job losses. T / F
- About two per cent of U.N. staff will lose their jobs. T / F
- There will be no pay rises (UK) raises (USA) for two years. T / F
- It is difficult for many countries to contribute financially to the U.N. T / F
- The US ambassador to the UN said many unnecessary jobs had to go. T / F
- The ambassador said this in a speech he made at the White House. T / F
- The ambassador said the UN needed to utilise its resources better. T / F
- Less than 20% of the UN budget comes from the USA. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. cutting staff | a. vital |
| 2. approved | b. actions |
| 3. body | c. give |
| 4. response | d. authorised |
| 5. measures | e. reaction |
| 6. crucial | f. make certain |
| 7. eliminate | g. axing jobs |
| 8. ensure | h. monetary |
| 9. provide | i. organisation |
| 10. financial | j. remove |

Discussion – Student A

- Should member countries have more control over the U.N. budget?
- Would the U.N. be as effective if U.N. posts were voluntary?
- How can the U.N. maximize the results it delivers?
- What's the biggest way in which the U.N. has helped the world?
- What criticism do you have of the United Nations?
- Is it right that the USA pays 22% of the UN budget?
- If the USA pays 22%, should they have more power in the UN?
- What questions would you like to ask the head of the U.N.?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. cutting staff for the first time | a. to meet their share |
| 2. The decision means a reduction | b. measures |
| 3. freezes | c. services |
| 4. they are struggling | d. on pay rises |
| 5. austerity | e. that it delivers |
| 6. The United States' | f. of 219 positions |
| 7. crucial | g. contributor to the UN |
| 8. Our shared | h. in its history |
| 9. maximise the results | i. ambassador to the UN |
| 10. the biggest financial | j. goal |

Discussion – Student B

- How important is the United Nations?
- Would you like to work for the United Nations?
- What do you think of the cut in staff?
- Are you surprised there haven't been any cuts in staff before?
- Should the U.N. streamline so nations don't need to spend so much?
- Is it fair to freeze the pay and benefits of U.N. staff?
- What are the most important roles of the U.N.?
- What would the world be like without the U.N.?

Spelling

- apervpdo a staff cut
- which enrstrespe two per cent of all U.N. posts
- ustderohai freezes on pay rises
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- The United States' rmsobadaa to the U.N.
- the cuts were larcciu
- naitmelie unnecessary, duplicative or outdated posts
- seimxmai the results
- states are letccieoyllv able to provide
- the biggest financial ttuobrnrioc

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. e	5. b
6. a	7. j	8. f	9. c	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Security Council

You think the Security Council is the most important U.N. body. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): UNESCO, the General Assembly or the WHO.

Role B – UNESCO

You think UNESCO is the most important U.N. body. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): the Security Council, the General Assembly or the WHO.

Role C – General Assembly

You think the General Assembly is the most important U.N. body. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): UNESCO, the Security Council or the WHO.

Role D – WHO

You think the WHO is the most important U.N. body. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): UNESCO, the General Assembly or the Security Council.

Speaking – U.N. Services

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- peacekeeping
- human rights
- landmine clearing
- Security Council
- cultural promotion
- world health
- humanitarian assistance
- International Court of Justice

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.