

# World Federation Of Trade Unions: Notes for UPSC

The World Federation of Trade Unions was established in 1945 at the International Trade Union Conference held in London and Paris.

It is one of the many organisations on whom questions will be asked during the UPSC Exam.

## Background of the World Federation of Trade Unions

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) is an international federation of trade unions. The organisation was founded in 1945 to replace the International Federation of Trade Unions. Its aim was to create an umbrella organisation, structured similarly to the United Nations, where all the trade unions of the world would come under its banner. There were many disputes regarding the implementation of the Marshall plan that saw the departure of many trade unions to form the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), while the WFTU was made up primarily of unions affiliated with or sympathetic to communist parties. At the height of the Cold War, the WFTU was often portrayed as a Soviet-backed proxy organisation with the aim of destabilizing the economy of capitalist western nations.

## Overview of World Federation of Trade Unions

Some brief facts about the WFTU is given in the table below:

Overview of World Federation of Trade Unions	
<b>Date of establishment</b>	October 3rd, 1945
<b>Predecessor</b>	International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU)
<b>Members</b>	92 million from 126 nations
<b>Location</b>	Athens, Greece
<b>Objective of the Organisation</b>	Protection and implementation of Worker Rights.
<b>President</b>	Michael Mzwandile Makwayiba

## Developments in the WFTU post the Cold War

The WFTU went into decline following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the socialist governments of Eastern Europe with many joining the ICFTU as a result declined as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist governments in Eastern Europe, with many of its former constituent unions joining the ICFTU. The period of decline apparently came to an end during the congress in Havana in 2005, when a new leadership under the Greek union activist, Georges Mavrikos was elected.

The headquarters of the WFTU was shifted in January 2006 from Prague, Czech Republic to Athens, Greece. The organisations began to actively put focus on organizing regional federations of unions in the Third World, by organizing campaigns against racism, poverty, loss in biodiversity and exploitation of workers under capitalism and in defense of full employment, social security, health protection, and trade union rights. The organisation spends most of its time and energy devoting resources to issuing statements about protecting labour laws, organizing conferences, and making educational materials for trade union leaders.

As part of its efforts to advance its international agenda, the WFTU develops working partnerships with national and industrial trade unions worldwide as well as with a number of international and regional trade union organizations including the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU), the Permanent Congress of Trade Union Unity of Latin America (CPUSTAL), and the General Confederation of Trade Unions of CIS countries.

The WFTU holds consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNESCO, FAO, and other UN agencies. It maintains permanent missions in New York, Geneva, and Rome.

## **Relevant Questions for World Federation of Trade Unions**

### **What is meant by a union federation?**

A global union federation is an international federation of national trade unions organizing in specific industry sectors or occupational groups. Many unions are members of one or more global union federations, relevant to the sectors where they have their members.

### **What were the ideological differences between WFTU and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)?**

While the WFTU was primarily made up of trade unions that were socialist and left-leaning in nature, the ICFTU was more western oriented and had elements of capitalism in them as they were mainly backed by the NATO nations and their allies.

### **What are the four types of trade unions?**

There are four types types of trade unions:

- Craft Union
- Industrial Union
- General Union
- Federations.

Trade unions fight for workers' rights. Thus, they strive to ensure that the basic needs and rights of the workers are upheld and not tampered with.