

Arab League: Notes for UPSC International Relations

The Arab League is a regional organisation of Arab states in the Middle East. Formal Name - Al-Jamia ad-Duwal al-'arabiyah (Arabic) and it has its headquarters at Cairo, Egypt.

The League's main goal is to "draw closer the relations between member states and coordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries"

The Arab League is a topic featured often in the International relations segments of the UPSC Exams, as India has relations with the league. As such, candidates will find the details from this article to be of immense use.

Origin and Development

The Arab League came into being after a Pact of the League was signed at Cairo on March 22, 1945 by the countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jorda, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen that had achieved independence by then. The Pact was an initiative of the then Prime Minister of Egypt, Nahas Pasha, and was supported by the British government. The League was later joined by 14 other nations and the PLO. Palestine is considered independent *de jure*.

Objectives of the Arab League

The objectives of the League, as stated in Article 2 of the Pact, are to draw closer the relations between member-states and coordinate their political activities; safeguard their independence and sovereignty; promote the interests of the Arab countries; mediate in disputes between members or between members and a third party; promote cooperation in the matters relating to trade, customs, currency, agriculture, industry, communications including railways, roads, aviation, navigation, and posts and telegraphs, cultural matters and matters connected with nationality, passport, visas, execution of judgments and extradition, social welfare matters and health matters.

Structure of the Arab League

The League consists of the Council, the Special Ministerial Committees, the General-Secretariat and the Specialised Agencies. The Council is the principal political organ, consisting of foreign ministers of all the member-countries. It meets twice a year to supervise the execution of agreements between the member-states, set guidelines for cooperation with other international organisations in the political, economic and social spheres, and mediate in disputes between

members or a member and a country outside the League. Each member has one vote on the Council, and decisions are binding only on those states that have voted for them.

The Special Committees are attracted to the Council. They draw up common policies for the regulation and advancement of cooperation in their respective fields (information, internal affairs, justice, housing, transport, social affairs, youth and sports, health environment telecommunications and electricity). The General-Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General elected by the Council for a five-year term. It executes the decisions of the Council and is largely responsible for internal administration.

India and the Arab League

Being conferred observer status in 2007, India was the first member to enter the League although it does not have an Arab community, nor does it have an indigenous Arabic speaking population.

Trade between India and Arab League members was valued at US\$30 billion in 2007. India's major exports to Arab League countries are chemicals, automobiles, machinery, foodstuff and other fast moving products, while it is a large importer of Arab oil and gas. India also has a large diaspora in the Arab League countries of about 5 million, of which some 20% are professionals.

Oman and India enjoy particularly good relations, an example being; both countries exchange ship visits on a regular basis. Recently, Oman has granted India berthing rights for Indian naval ships. The Indian navy has also been training Omani naval forces for many years