

# United Nations Security Council Reforms [UPSC Notes for GS II]

This article will describe in detail all about the United Nations Security Council Reforms. These UPSC Notes on the United Nations Security Council Reforms are aligned with the [UPSC Syllabus](#) and aspirants should prepare this topic for General Studies Paper II. The United Nations Security Council is often seen in the news and hence, this topic is relevant for the IAS Mains. [IAS Exam](#) aspirants can find more notes for UPSC Mains General Studies topics from the links given at the end of the article.

## United Nations Security Council Reforms

The UNSC (United Nations Security Council) is one of the 6 principal organs of the United Nations. For more on the role and functions, mandate, members and basic facts about the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#), click on the linked article.

### What constitutes UNSC reforms?

Five sets of issues have been identified by the [United Nations General Assembly](#). These are

1. Categories of membership
2. The question of the veto
3. Regional representation
4. Size of an enlarged Council and its working methods and
5. The Security Council-General Assembly

### Why reforms are needed?

- **Changing geopolitical situation:** The Security Council's membership and working methods reflect a bygone era. Though geopolitics have changed drastically, the UNSC has changed relatively little since 1945, when wartime victors crafted a Charter in their interest and awarded "permanent" veto-wielding Council seats for the Allied victors.
- **Reforms Long Overdue:** The UNSC was expanded only once in 1963 to add 4 non-permanent members to the Council. Although the overall membership of the UN has increased from 113 to 193, there has been no change in the composition of the UNSC.
- **Inequitable economic and geographical representation:** While Europe is over-represented, Asia is underrepresented. Africa and South America have no representation at all.
- **Crisis of legitimacy and credibility:** Stalled reform agenda and various issues including its interventions in Libya and Syria in the name of responsibility have put questions on the credibility of the institution.
- **North-South Divide:** The permanent UNSC membership portrays the big North-South divide in the decision making of security measures. For instance, there is no permanent member from Africa, despite the fact that 75% of its work is focused on that continent.
- **Emerging issues:** Issues such as deepening economic interdependence, worsening environmental degradation, transnational threats also call for effective multilateral negotiations among the countries based on consensus. Yet, all critical decisions of the UNSC are still being taken by the permanent members of the Security Council.

### India's chances

The position taken by the G-4 (India, Germany, Japan and Brazil) and the L-69 group of developing countries over UN reforms has the support of close to 110-115 countries out of 193 member states. This ensures a simple majority at the UNGA for any reforms resolution but unfortunately, the 1998 decision of the UNGA makes it necessary to secure a special majority (129 votes) for these sorts of amendments to the UN charter. So, India should keep working towards weaning away countries to support its position over UN reforms.

**Also read:** [RSTV Big Picture: UNSC & Permanent Seat for India](#)

India has displayed a great deal of flexibility to garner popular support. For example, India has expressed its approval to withhold the exercising of the veto power by new permanent members up to a 15-year review period.

India needs to obtain support at the UN for its initiatives by actively campaigning for core issues such as – climate change, counter-terrorism, global finance, etc. India has proposed a UN convention to combat terrorism; India also plays an important role in climate change negotiations and is actively working to reform the Bretton Woods institutions ([World Bank](#) and IMF) that are often seen as outdated institutions established in the post-Second World War era.

India should watch out for conflicting interests within the UNGA such as the Coffee Club (prime movers of the club include Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina and Pakistan) which could derail the process.

#### **Way forward:**

In the current circumstances, it has become crucial for the UNSC to reform itself and uphold its legitimacy and representatives in the world. However, for that to happen, political will, especially of the P-5 nations and strong consensus among all the nations is the need of the hour.