

Touchstone Story #3 United Nations



Photo Caption: Lions Clubs International has worked with the United Nations since its founding in 1945 to bring help to people in need around the globe.

As World War II raged, leaders of the Allied nations looked beyond the end of the conflict and held talks on a world body for preserving peace—an entity that would be stronger than the toothless League of Nations. Lions rallied behind the idea. In 1943 in Cleveland at their international convention, Lions endorsed a U.S. House of Representatives resolution calling for an international peacekeeping mechanism once the fighting ended.

In February 1945, Lions' founder Melvin Jones gathered with leaders of other national groups to meet with Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. and Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Archibald MacLeish to discuss forming a United Nations. In April Lions headquarters asked clubs to hold a United Nations week to show support for the initiative.

Lions Clubs International was one of the first nongovernmental organizations invited to assist in drafting the U.N. Charter. Jones, International President D.A. Skeen of Salt Lake City, Utah, and future International President Fred W. Smith of Ventura, California, helped to formulate the NGO section of the charter and participated in developing the



U.N.'s humanitarian mission. On June 26, 1945, the U.N. charter was signed by the representatives of 50 countries.

Two years later in 1947, in recognition of the importance of Lions Clubs to its mission, the United Nations gave Lions consultative status with the U.N. Economic and Social Council, committed to the welfare of people worldwide. For generations, Lions and the U. N. have shared many common goals and worked together to further peace and prosperity.

Each year Lions and the U.N. celebrate their relationship. Begun in 1978, Lions Day with the U.N. calls together leaders from government, business and the nonprofit sector to explore solutions to pressing global needs. The annual event features a keynote address by a recognized world leader, expert panel discussions and, since 1989, the awards ceremony for the winners of the Lions International Peace Poster Contest encouraging young people to express their perspectives on peace. Lions Day is punctuated with a reception for U.N. diplomats, Lions, speakers and guests to celebrate this special and enduring relationship.