Introduction to The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) stands as a beacon of unity and human rights in a continent once torn by conflict. Founded on May 5, 1949, in the aftermath of World War II, it emerged from a visionary idea: to prevent future atrocities by fostering cooperation among European nations. Ten founding members, including France, the United Kingdom, and Belgium, signed the Treaty of London, establishing the CoE in Strasbourg, France—a symbolic location bridging Western Europe.

Unlike the European Union, the CoE isn't about economic integration but rather safeguarding democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Today, it unites 46 member states, stretching from Iceland to Turkey, representing over 700 million people. Its mission crystallized with the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950, a groundbreaking treaty that gave citizens the power to hold governments accountable through the European Court of Human Rights.

The CoE's work touches everyday lives—whether through banning the death penalty across its members, protecting free speech, or promoting cultural diversity. Its key institutions, like the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, bring together delegates to debate and shape policies that ripple across borders.

Why does it matter? In a world facing new challenges—migration, disinformation, and inequality—the CoE remains a steady voice for justice and collaboration. It's not a perfect system, but its legacy is undeniable: a Europe more peaceful and rights-focused than ever before.

European Convention on Human Rights

The **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)** is an international treaty that protects human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. It was drafted by the **Council of Europe** and signed in **Rome on November 4, 1950**. The Convention entered into force on **September 3, 1953**.

Purpose and Importance

The ECHR was created in response to the horrors of World War II, aiming to protect individuals from government abuses and ensure democratic values across Europe. It serves as a legal framework for human rights protection among member states of the **Council of Europe**.

Key Rights Protected by the ECHR

The Convention guarantees several fundamental rights, including:

1. **Right to life (Article 2)** – Protects individuals from unlawful killings.
2. **Prohibition of torture (Article 3)** – Bans inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
3. **Right to liberty and security (Article 5)** – Ensures protection against arbitrary arrest and detention.
4. **Right to a fair trial (Article 6)** – Guarantees impartial judicial proceedings.
5. **Respect for private and family life (Article 8)** – Protects individuals from government interference in personal matters.
6. **Freedom of expression (Article 10)** – Grants the right to express opinions freely.
7. **Freedom of assembly and association (Article 11)** – Ensures the right to form and join groups, including trade unions.
8. **Prohibition of discrimination (Article 14)** – Prevents discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or other factors.

Enforcement and the European Court of Human Rights

The **European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)**, based in **Strasbourg, France**, is responsible for enforcing the ECHR. Individuals and groups can file complaints if they believe their rights have been violated by a member state. The Court's decisions are legally binding, and countries must comply with its rulings.

Impact of the Convention

- It has helped protect millions of people from human rights violations in Europe.
- It has influenced national laws and policies to align with human rights standards.
- It has set a global example for human rights protection.

United Nations Charter

The **United Nations Charter** is the founding document of the **United Nations (UN)**. It was signed on **June 26, 1945**, in **San Francisco, USA**, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization. The Charter came into force on **October 24, 1945**, marking the official establishment of the UN.

Key Principles of the UN Charter:

1. **Maintaining International Peace and Security** – The UN works to prevent conflicts and mediate disputes among nations.
2. **Promoting Human Rights** – The Charter upholds fundamental human rights and freedoms for all people.
3. **Respect for Sovereignty** – The UN respects the sovereignty and equality of all its member states.
4. **Encouraging Social and Economic Development** – The UN supports economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social progress.
5. **International Cooperation** – The UN fosters global collaboration to address global issues such as poverty, health crises, and climate change.

Main Organs of the UN as Defined in the Charter:

The Charter establishes six principal organs that operate under its framework:

1. **The General Assembly** – A forum for all member states to discuss global issues and make recommendations.
2. **The Security Council** – Responsible for maintaining international peace and security, with five permanent members (USA, UK, China, Russia, France) and ten rotating members.

3. **The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** – Works on global economic, social, and environmental policies.
4. **The International Court of Justice (ICJ)** – Settles legal disputes between states.
5. **The Secretariat** – Carries out the day-to-day operations of the UN, led by the Secretary-General.
6. **The Trusteeship Council** (inactive since 1994) – Originally helped non-self-governing territories achieve independence.

Impact of the UN Charter:

- The Charter established the UN as an organization committed to preventing future world wars.
- It laid the foundation for international diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and conflict resolution.
- It has been amended several times to accommodate the growing needs of the global community.