

The Process of Debate: Understanding the Conference

Committee sessions include two main modes: formal session and informal session. During formal debate, the committee rules are enforced and delegates are expected to participate and remain attentive and in decorum. Informal session (also known as a suspension of the meeting) includes caucusing and meal and evening breaks. While the rules of procedure are suspended during informal session, delegates are still expected to afford one another diplomatic respect. These two modes of debate are described in further detail below.

Opening Session

After a brief introduction of the dais and some announcements, the committee will move directly into formal session. The Chair will open a speakers' list to hear formal speeches from delegates regarding the order of the agenda topics. At this point, delegates may move to set the agenda, or they may wish to suspend the meeting to discuss the order in which the committee will address agenda topics while in formal and caucus sessions. After resuming formal session, delegates may propose to set the agenda topics in a particular order; the committee will then vote on a motion from the floor to set the agenda in a proposed order, and will continue to vote on such motions until one passes by a majority vote. If the committee fails to reach agreement on the agenda order by the conclusion of the first evening, the agenda will be set in the order given in the committee background guide. After the agenda has been set, the chair will entertain motions for the opening of the speakers' list to address the first agenda topic.

Formal Debate

During formal debate, the committee is in session and attentive. The main feature of formal debate is the use of the speakers' list, which allows individual members and observers to express their opinions and solutions before the entire body. During formal debate, all members of the committee inside of the chambers must be quiet and respectful to the delegate who has the floor.

Speakers' Lists

A new speakers' list is opened at the beginning of discussion on each new topic. Once the committee moves into substantive debate, the chair declares the speakers' list on the topic area to be open. The chair only declares the speakers' list open at the beginning of each new topic. After this time, and throughout debate on a topic, the delegates must request opening or closure of the speakers' list. Motions can be made to close the speakers' list at any time or the speakers' list can be closed by exhausting the list. If a motion is passed by simple majority to close the speakers' list, a separate motion can be brought forth to reopen the speakers' list by a simple majority. Once the speakers' list has been exhausted, a motion cannot reopen the speakers' list.

The speakers' list is the main forum of formal debate on the topic area and all delegates are eligible to speak on any topic. A Member State, observer, expert, or NGO may

address the committee as many times as it would like, but it must wait until it has spoken before placing its name back on the speakers' list. Once the chair has opened the speakers' list, he or she will ask for the names of those wishing to be placed on the speakers' list.

When a Member State is recognized to speak, that country must speak within the set speaker's time. Delegates are not required to use all of the allotted time. There is no yielding of excess time to any party. A motion to set the speaker's time must specify the time limit, and the motion requires approval by a simple majority of the committee members present. The speaker's time should be suitable for the committee size. If there are 150 delegates on the speakers' list, a shorter time may be appropriate in the interest of allowing all delegates to speak. In a smaller committee, a longer time will allow each delegation to fully express its views on the issues. *Multiple motions on speaker's time may be ruled dilatory at the discretion of the Secretariat if they become disruptive to the committee.* This rule should be used in the spirit of diplomacy to give each delegation an opportunity to express their views; it is not a tool to hinder debate or slow the substantive work of the body.

If the speakers' list is exhausted, debate on the agenda topic will be considered closed, even without a motion to close debate. At that time, the committee will move directly into voting procedure. The committee will then vote on all draft resolutions submitted and approved up to that point in time. If there are no resolutions on the floor, the topic is tabled. All delegates should remain aware of the status of the speakers' list to avoid being caught off guard by premature or inadvertent exhaustion of the list.

Informal Debate

Formal, substantive debate via the speakers' list is an effective tool for expressing opinions about the topics, but it is not as conducive to formulating agreement about the topic or to drafting resolutions. Because it is impossible under NMUN rules to ask speakers any questions during formal debate, the way to actively discuss the issues and draft resolutions is to suspend the meeting. This suspension of the meeting is often called a caucus. A caucus is essentially a procedural "time out," as formal session temporarily ends and the committee can break down into smaller groups for the purpose of discussing the topic, drafting resolutions, or debating the merits of various resolutions. The committee volunteer staff and officers play no part in caucusing and the rules of procedure are not in effect because the committee is technically not in session. When made, the motion should specify the length of the suspension, and requires a majority vote to pass.

Caucusing is a parliamentary term for diplomatic negotiation. Effective multilateral caucusing methods vary considerably depending on the respective policies of individual Member States or NGOs and the forum in which deliberation is taking place. For example, the caucusing method employed by the United States of America in the Security Council will be quite different than that of the People's Republic of China. Similarly, caucusing methods used by a delegate in the GA will differ from those employed by the same Member State participating in ECOSOC.

Informal caucusing, the type employed by delegates at the NMUN Conference, occurs

when the committee is not in formal session and can take place through personal discussions within the committee chambers. Unlike some other MUN simulations, the NMUN does **not** allow a *moderated caucus* during which questions are posed to speakers. Delegates who wish to stage a moderated caucus during a suspension of the meeting may do so, but the committee volunteer staff and officers cannot participate in any manner.

The Foundation for Effective Caucusing²

Delegates should gain a historical understanding of the individual topic within their respective States, and then seek out those who may share common concerns. For example, two island States may caucus and decide to combine forces on issues related to climate change. Additionally, two States otherwise historically divided on ideological issues may find themselves collaborating when an issue of mutual concern is the topic under discussion. This is a rare occurrence, but one that is in character in a limited number of instances. Delegates should realize though that the real delegates work with each other every day and rhetoric is usually used solely for the benefit of people back home, while delegates usually used much more conciliatory tactics while caucusing.

Regional and trade blocs represent a basic starting point for delegate caucusing endeavors. On a regional level, the UN recognizes five blocs: African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States, and Western European and Other States. Additionally, States operating within trade blocs such as NAFTA, the EU, or ASEAN will often consult and work with one another on many global issues.

Implementing a more advanced negotiation strategy, a delegate will employ international instruments pertinent to the topic of discussion and, through caucusing efforts, gain cumulative support for a resolution. In the course of political and security-related debate, for example, many delegates will design potential resolutions based upon historical treaties such as the Geneva or Hague Conventions. The ability to achieve consensus through caucus is facilitated by enlisting these past and broadly acclaimed principles of conduct. Additionally, any potential decision of the international community is considerably reinforced with the application of historical global convention. Conversely, delegates must also be aware of potential opposition, and those Member States from whom it should be expected. For instance, the Western Bloc (the United States of America, Canada, and the European States) will routinely ally themselves, whether in support or opposition, on the overwhelming majority of topics deliberated by UN. However, this bloc also maintains radically different policies regarding a few specific issues. For example, deliberation regarding *The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, particularly in relation to fishing rights, typically finds States within the Western Bloc amid heated conflict. To be effective, delegates must give full consideration to who has or has not been supportive of international Convention related to the topic under discussion.

Informal Caucusing

As previously noted, the majority of successful diplomatic negotiation occurs within

² Originally authored for and presented at the 1999 Model United Nations Summit and Leadership Conference by Kurt Herminghausen. Reprinted with permission.

informal caucusing sessions between delegations. While formal debate is employed specifically for public announcement regarding the policy of delegations, much of the exchange occurring within informal caucus is off-the-record and designed to inspire negotiation on resolutions or reports. Delegates should exploit informal caucus sessions to introduce State policy initiatives, as well as gather the input of other Member States, observers, experts, and NGOs regarding options for resolutions. Additionally, informal caucusing is employed to remedy contrasting opinions regarding broad policy proposals and the specific language of formal resolutions and reports.

An effective use of informal caucus sessions may also include negotiations extending beyond the current topic under deliberation. For example, in an attempt to garner a broad consensus of support on a resolution regarding the situation in Iraq, the Western Bloc may be willing to grant concessions to China regarding a human rights topic scheduled for the future consideration of the committee.

All delegates must remain aware that in both the UN and Model United Nations forums, too much focus on an individual proposal or the language contained therein can halt the momentum of the committee. Therefore, an effective delegate will be recognized by her or his ability to employ negotiation strategies designed to expedite resolution of the topic under discussion. Informal caucus sessions provide the best opportunity for the deployment of negotiation strategies.

Sample Caucusing Strategies

Developed Country A:

Diplomatic Objective: Stop global warming, but not at the expense of the economy

Potential Allies:

1. Industrial and Industrializing Member States
2. Development-focused NGOs
3. WTO and UNCTAD

Potential Opposition:

1. Island States
2. Environment-focused NGOs

Negotiating Tools:

1. Stabilization of the global economy
2. Economic and political clout over natural resources necessary to make the difference
3. Multilateral contributions to the UN
4. Bloc alliances
5. Bilateral treaty agreements

Pertinent Treatise:

1. Annual Report of UNCTAD

Potential Diplomatic Liability:

1. Developed world emits significantly more pollution per capita
2. Developed world has centuries-long history of profiting from exploitations of global resources
3. Imbalance in distribution and control of resources
4. Threat of loss or reduction of economic resources

Diplomatic Strategy:

1. Seek long-term agreement to slow emission on greenhouse gases over a period of thirty years
2. Seek with reservation agreements dependent upon the state of economic growth
3. Avoid “polluter pays” principle at all costs

Developing Country B:

Diplomatic Objective: Stop global warming, but not at the expense of the economy

Potential Allies:

1. Industrial and Industrializing Member States
2. Development-focused NGOs
3. WTO and UNCTAD

Potential Opposition:

1. Island States
2. Environment-focused NGOs

Negotiating Tools:

1. State has massive rainforest and mineral resources and sovereign right to either conserve or exploit
2. Bloc alliances

Pertinent Treatise:

1. Declaration on the Right to Development
2. Annual Report of UNCTAD

Potential Diplomatic Liability:

1. Possibility of damaging diplomatic relations with important allies and trading partners
2. Loss or reduction of economic resource

Diplomatic Strategy:

1. Approve long-term and non-binding agreement to reduce greenhouse emissions
2. Seek debt-for-nature swaps and sustainable development exchange
3. Avoid “polluter pays” principle at all costs

Island State C:

Diplomatic Objective: Stop climate change

Potential Allies:

1. UNEP
2. Environment-focused NGOs
3. “Green” Member States

Potential Opposition:

1. Industrialized and Industrializing States
2. Development-focused NGOs
3. WTO and UNCTAD

Negotiating Tools:

1. International treatise
2. Appeals to global morality
3. Future diplomatic support

Pertinent Treatise:

1. UN Convention on Climate Change
2. International Bill of Human Rights

Potential Diplomatic Liability:

1. Possibility of damaging diplomatic relations with important allies and trading partners

Diplomatic Strategy:

1. Moral plea for immediate action
2. Introduction of supportive statistics
3. Summons international treatise supportive of cause
4. Implementation of “polluter pays” principle

Analyzing Proposed Resolutions

The task of analyzing resolutions involves identifying first the topic, then the sponsor(s), and finally the intent. Once these have been established, the resolution can be examined in greater detail for the specific actions proposed. The tone of the resolution should be noted. A mild, conciliatory resolution would call on parties to seek a peaceful settlement to a dispute through negotiations and might not make any reference to a specific solution or outcome. A stronger resolution could take a clear stand by condemning certain actions by a country or countries and calling for specific actions to solve the dispute.

Bear in mind that some resolutions are intentionally vague, while other resolutions are more comprehensive and bring in specific details from many different sources to guide future actions. Both types can be used to gain widespread support. The structure of the committee itself will dictate the strength of the resolution; if the committee is only advisory, then the wording of the resolutions will use phrases such as “suggests” and “supports.” Language can be stronger in various committees depending on the mandate of the committee. If your committee has its own budget and its own Executive Council, then the resolution should be a detailed outline for future committee actions in that topic area.

The precise wording of the resolution must be examined carefully when you are debating whether to support it in negotiations and how to vote. The references in the preamble should be checked; delegates should know if their State opposed a certain UN resolution or opposes items mentioned in the preamble. If a State’s policies support the general goal of the resolution, but delegates have reservations about certain wording in sections of the resolution, they should attempt to seek changes in the language to make the resolution more acceptable. The basic objective of the simulation is for students to learn the process of negotiation and how to reach consensus on the topics before the committee, despite differences of position.

A few committees at NMUN 2011 will require consensus for passing a resolution and/or will allow only the passage of one final document. Delegates in these committees must keep this requirement in mind at all times and include it in their negotiation strategies.

Amending Proposed Resolutions

An amendment is a clarification or a change in a resolution that incorporates additional interests or concerns after the resolution has been formally submitted to a committee. Keep in mind that prior to formal submission of a resolution changes can be incorporated into the resolution without resorting to the amendment process if all the sponsors are in agreement. This should be done during caucus sessions.

There are two types of amendments

- **Friendly:** A friendly amendment is proposed by any member of the body and accepted by the original sponsors of the resolution. It is typically used to clarify a point. Upon agreement of all the original sponsors, the change is incorporated into the resolution without a vote of the committee. As all sponsors must concur for an amendment to be friendly, drafters of a resolution should carefully consider whom they accept as co-sponsors.
- **Unfriendly:** An unfriendly amendment is a modification that can be proposed by any member of the body but does not have the support of all of the sponsors. Unfriendly amendments must be formally submitted to the Director in writing with a given number of signatures (this number varies by committee and will be provided by the Director during the second committee session). A vote will be taken on all unfriendly amendments to a resolution immediately prior to the vote on the entire resolution. It should be noted that the term 'unfriendly' does not mean that such amendments are intended to degrade or contradict the resolution in anyway. It merely means that the amendment has not received the support of all of the resolution's sponsors.

Acceptable amendments may add and/or strike words, phrases, or full clauses of a resolution. The addition of new operative clauses is also acceptable. Please note that only operative clauses can be amended. Preambular clauses cannot be changed in any way (except to correct spelling, punctuation, or grammar) following formal submission of the resolution to the floor of the committee. Corrections in spelling, punctuation, or grammar in the operative clauses are made automatically as they are brought to the attention of the dais and do not need to be submitted as official amendments. All amendments, whether friendly or unfriendly, must be presented to the dais and approved prior to the onset of voting procedure. Time permitting, the Director will have amendments printed and distributed to the committee before voting procedure. Otherwise, the Director will read the amendment to the committee before the vote.

Conference Overview

The Role of Volunteer Staff Members

NMUN Conferences provide a large volunteer staff that has been trained to facilitate the running of the Conferences. Volunteer staff members may serve in any one of the following capacities and are selected for these roles through an application process that takes place shortly after the preceding Conference. Please note that some of these roles may not be filled at all NMUN Conferences. For contact information for these staff members at your conference, please read the appropriate appendix.

Secretary-General

The Secretary-General (SG) is the chief administrative officer of the Conference. The SG serves as the primary contact point for schools, consults with other senior staff regarding the hiring and training of the Conference volunteer staff, designs invitational mailings, provides country assignments for participating schools, works in conjunction with the Directors-General to hire the senior volunteer staff, and develops the Conference budget with the Executive Director. In addition, the SG serves as the principle liaison between the Conference, the Faculty advisors and the attending delegates. Questions regarding any of these aspects of the Conference can be directed to the Secretary-General.

Directors-General

The Directors-General (DG) are the chief substantive officer of the Conference. The responsibilities of the DGs include: working in conjunction with the SG to hire the senior volunteer staff, finalizing hiring decisions with regard to substantive volunteer staff positions; assisting the Secretary-General in the selection of the Chief of Staff; review and approval of committee and topic selections; editing of background guides; finalizing the Conference rules of procedure; volunteer staff training; and overseeing the substantive and procedural functioning of the committees at the Conference.

Chiefs of Staff Team

The Chiefs of Staff Team (COS) Team includes the Chief of Staff and Assistant Chiefs of Staff. The Chief of Staff (COS) prepare volunteer staff newsletters throughout the course of the year and solidify arrangements for volunteer staff and delegate social events, such as the delegate dance. At the Conference, the responsibilities of the COS include ensuring the committee chambers are properly supplied and maintained, as well as coordinating volunteer staff and hotel security. The Assistant Chiefs of Staff (A-COS) work closely with the Chief of Staff as they organize the logistical needs of the conference.

Assistant Secretaries-General for Internal and External Affairs

The Assistant Secretaries-General (ASGs) provide support and assistance to the Chief of Staff, Directors-General, and Secretary-General. In addition, the ASGs are specifically responsible for organizing the NMUN Speakers Program and preparing the conference awards. The ASGs also work with the Secretary-General and the COS in maintaining

and updating the Conference Web site and is responsible for publicity and media outreach for the NMUN Conference.

Under-Secretaries-General

As head of a substantive department, the Under-Secretaries-General (USG) coordinate the planning, preparation, and execution of that department. If you have any questions concerning procedures or topics that cannot be answered by your committee director, either prior to or during the Conference, the Under-Secretary-General is the next highest authority to consult. In addition, the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services oversees the printing of resolutions, supervises the Delegate Resource and Information Technology Center, and performs related office procedures.

Directors and Assistant Directors

The committee Director and Assistant Director will have a thorough understanding of the rules of procedure and the topics under discussion in your committee. These volunteer staff members construct the committee background guides, update materials, evaluate position papers, and, therein, will serve as experts on questions regarding the topics before the committee.

Office & Network Managers

The Office Managers are responsible for overseeing the Administrative Assistants and various tasks with the USG for Conference Services. The Network Manager sets up and oversees the maintenance of computer services.

Administrative Assistants

The Administrative Assistants are responsible for the production of all papers, resolutions, statements, and any other material printed throughout the Conference week. These volunteer staff members work closely with the USG for Conference Services to assist delegates with their work in the Delegate Resource and Information Technology Center.

Conference Services

The Department of Conference Services provides various functions at NMUN. Staff members are on hand to answer questions and guide delegates through the use of the computers and research resources. At each venue delegates will find a computer lab, which is free to use. All sample papers relating to working papers, resolutions, and reports can be viewed in the computer labs.

Delegates are entitled to print off one copy of any document they require. Multiple copies of any document are charged a minimal rate. Conference Services also ensures that the final reports and resolutions are made available at the end of the conference.

Conference Services is more than printing and photocopying! Conference Services provides a lost and found service, which has proved exceptionally useful in previous years. Lost badges and placards can be replaced there. Delegates can also buy the official NMUN t-shirt from Conference Services (when available). Conference Services

staff members are there to help delegates and support their work throughout the conference.

A Delegate's ABC (and D)

Attire

In keeping with the spirit of the simulation, delegates are *required* to wear professional business attire. Delegates can be asked by the committee staff to change attire if it is determined to be inappropriate. For guidelines on appropriate attire, please refer to www.nmun.org/nmun_faqs.html (question 20). Further, national symbols of any kind are forbidden in committee chambers, in accordance with practices of the UN. Symbols associated specifically with the United Nations (e.g., the seal of the UN) are allowed in committee chambers

Being a Diplomat

The most important aspect of participating as a delegate to the NMUN is your assumption of the role of a foreign diplomat and/or expert. In this role, delegates are acting as representatives of the government and the peoples of the Member State or NGO to which they have been assigned; experts serving in the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues are entrusted with issues at the heart of the United Nations and the aims laid down in its Charter. Delegates are reminded that professional diplomats conduct themselves, and regard one another, with the utmost dignity and respect, regardless of foreign policy affiliation or personal feelings. Even those who observe severely conflicting ideological perspectives will work closely together within the UN on diplomatic matters of mutual concern. Likewise many delegates are forced to work together despite personal conflicts.

While in preparation for and throughout the duration of the Conference, delegates may find personal disagreement with the foreign policy of the country they are representing or with the policy of the NGO they are representing. Delegates' personal opinions are entirely inapplicable during the course of the simulation, unless they are serving as a technical expert in a judiciary committee. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for all delegates to arrive well-versed in the dynamics of their State's or NGO's or their role as expert. The simulation's quality depends on the collective preparation of its participants.

Delegates should also exhibit the ability to negotiate and compromise, demonstrate leadership, and the ability to influence by gaining the professional respect of fellow delegates. Delegations maintain specific and adaptive policy methods and goals to allow delegates to function in the negotiation process.

Caucusing

Caucusing is an important and logistically difficult component of the United Nations simulation. These informal meetings between voting blocs, as well as between States with positions that are diametrically opposed, often produce compromises acceptable to all parties. However, delegates are required to address issues within a week's time

which, in many cases, the international community has failed resolve after years of debate and negotiation. As a result, the bulk of informal negotiation and the construction of working papers will occur within, or in the close proximity of, the committee chambers. In consideration for the other Conference participants, delegates are asked to respect the formal proceedings occurring both within and between all committees participating at the Conference. Finally, given the importance of decorum within committee chambers, all caucusing should occur outside of the committee chambers while committee is in session.

Decorum

Decorum is a *de facto* rule throughout the week of the simulation. In both large and small committees, the ability to conduct normal business while in formal session is an arduous task when decorum is not maintained. Delegates will be asked for their assistance in this endeavor.