

# BANJA LUKA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

## CONFERENCE GUIDE

### WHAT IS A MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE?

*Model United Nations (MUN)* is an academic simulation of diplomatic multilateral negotiation processes taking place at committees of *United Nations (UN)*. The main goal of every *MUN Conference* is education of young people in regard to current events, topics in international relations and diplomacy which had been discussed in actual *UN* conferences beforehand. *MUN* can be thought of as of a role playing game in which every participant is expected to take place of a real delegate of a country, which requires every one of his actions to be in accordance with the national policy of his/her country.

## BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Primarily, the participants should choose *country* they would like to represent, as well as the *committee* in which they would like to be placed. Each *country* can have only one delegate per *committee* and thus all participants are advised to choose countries several weeks before the beginning of conference. Furthermore, each delegate is advised to do research about his *country* and its policy on the topics that will be discussed during the conference. Although it is not obligatory, participants are invited to create a *resolution* for each topic, having their *country's policy* in mind. The preparation of a policy statement is also advised. If a participant takes the place of an *Ambassador*, he is obliged to give a minute-long speech during the opening ceremony.

The *Ambassador* is typically an experienced delegate who, in addition to conference duties also must give a speech expressing his/her country's national policy. The Ambassador is generally expected to join a *General Assembly committee* so as to represent his/her country's national policy in *General Assembly* debates.

The delegate is also expected to bring a *USB flash drive* on which he/she will store his/her *draft resolution* so as to speed up the printing process.

## REPRESENTING THE COUNTRY

In order to better represent the assigned country as a delegate in the MUN, one ought to first *research* as much as possible on that country's *national and international policy*. Topics of interest for the mentioned country should revolve around the country's representative political, social and economic structure (e.g. if it is a monarchy or a republic, who is the current prime minister/regent, the constitution, the political parties that form the majority in the parliament if there are any, presence and relations in the local region, membership of international alliances or blocs, dominant religion or religions, history, ethnic groups, membership of international trading organizations and many others). The *sources* for this information can vary – from consulting an *embassy* of the representative country over doing research in books, magazines, e-journals and

others.

Furthermore, the *topics in the agenda* should also be *expanded* on in the form of background papers, which are usually a few pages worth of information on the topic at hand and generally involve quick, briefly expanded information on the topic, perhaps involving a few *key questions* which could be debated over by the committee, as well as a brief summary of the issues themselves.

With the assigned *topic* in mind and the appropriate *research* conducted, the delegate can now attempt to *visualize* how his/her representative country would tackle the *issue*. Once again, information from *embassy* or consulate workers can prove quite valuable in this case, but simply thinking for oneself with the researched information in mind can yield adequate results. The delegate can then attempt to create a *policy statement*, which should represent his country's view on the matters involved and should technically serve as a formal document on the country's policy, be it more or less involved in the matters and as such, its consistency should match that of the delegate's representation. The policy statement can also serve as the representative country's *framework* for a first-draft resolution.

## DURING THE CONFERENCE

During the *BaLMUN* conference, there will be four differently-themed committees involved in the debating: *Security, Environment, Human Rights* and *Mediterranean*. The procedure of actions in all four is approximately equal, with minor variations depending on the nature of the councils.

Initially, The *Chair* performs a roll call of all the delegates involved in the committee. The *Chair* a figure who presides over the *debate*, recognizes the queue of the members, provides information for the participants, calls for votes after the initial discussion is over and in general supervises the course of discussion. After the *roll call* is performed, the *Chair* will then provide the delegates with the *agenda* for the day and then proceed to preside over the ongoing *debate*. The first day, however, has an exception in the period for the execution of the *lobbying* procedure. *Lobbying* is best explained as the creation of "*alliances*" based on similar policies between the

delegates, with the intention of creating several possible outcome-type resolutions which will in the end be formed into a *final resolution*, hopefully to be debated in the committee. After the lobbying period, the schedule is resumed and the delegates are to resume participation in the debate.

## MUN GLOSSARY<sup>1</sup>

***Abstain.*** During a vote on a substantive matter, delegates may abstain rather than vote yes or no. This generally signals that a state does not support the resolution being voted on, but does not oppose it enough to vote no. Frequently abstaining is banned in Model UN sessions for minor substantive matters, such as amendments or amendments to the 2nd degree, in order to force progress in a resolution.

***Adjourn.*** All UN or Model UN sessions end with a vote to adjourn... This means that the debate is suspended until the next meeting. This can be a short time (e.g., overnight) or a long time (until next year's conference).

***Agenda.*** The order in which the issues before a committee will be discussed. The first duty of a committee following the roll call is usually to set the agenda.

***Amendment.*** A change to a draft resolution on the floor. Can be of two types: a "friendly amendment" is supported by the original draft resolution's sponsors, and is passed automatically, while an "unfriendly amendment" is not supported by the original sponsors and must be voted on by the committee as a whole.

***Amendment to the 2nd Degree.*** A change to the draft amendment on the floor. Can also be either a "friendly" or an "unfriendly" amendment. In some formats of debate, passing the amendment to the 2nd degree is equivalent to passing the original amendment; in others it merely means debate continues on the now altered amendment. In the Security Council amendments can be permitted to multiple degrees in order to allow an amendment to be designed to be acceptable to all countries.

***Background guide.*** A guide to a topic being discussed in a Model UN committee usually written by conference organizers and distributed to delegates before the conference. The starting point for any research before a Model UN conference.

***Binding.*** Having legal force in UN member states. Security Council resolutions are binding, as are

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/getting-started/model-un-glossary> , 5.3.2013.

decisions of the International Court of Justice; resolutions of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council are not.

**Bloc.** A group of countries in a similar geographical region or with a similar opinion on a particular topic.

**Caucus.** A break in formal debate in which countries can more easily and informally discuss a topic. There are two types: moderated caucus and unmoderated caucus.

**Chair.** A member of the dais that moderates debate, keeps time, rules on points and motions, and enforces the rules of procedure. Also known as a Moderator.

**Committee.** Participants choose to be in different committees, and discuss with others on topics related to the committee. For example, 'Economics and Social' committee will debate the question of 'Refugee Crisis'.

**Decorum.** The order and respect for others that all delegates at a Model UN conference must exhibit. The Chair will call for decorum when he or she feels that the committee is not being respectful of a speaker, of the dais, or of their roles as ambassadors.

**Delegate.** A participant acting as a representative of a member state or observer during a Model UN conference.

**Delegation.** The entire group of people representing a member state or observer in all committees at a particular Model UN conference.

**Director.** A member of the dais that oversees the creation of working papers and draft resolutions, acts as an expert on the topic, makes sure delegates accurately reflect the policy of their countries, and ensures that decorum is maintained during caucuses.

**Division of the question.** During voting bloc, delegates may motion to vote on certain clauses of a resolution separately, so that only the clauses that are passed become part of the final resolution. This is known as division of the question.

**Draft resolution.** A document that seeks to fix the problems addressed by a Model UN committee. If passed by the committee, the draft resolution will become a resolution.

**Faculty adviser.** The faculty member in charge of a Model UN team, class or club.

**Flow of debate.** The order in which events proceed during a Model UN conference. See Flow of Debate chart.

**Gavel.** The tool, shaped like a small wooden hammer, that the Chair uses to keep order within a Model UN committee. Many conferences give the gavel used in a committee to the delegate recognized by the dais as the best in that committee; therefore, the term is frequently used to refer to the award given to the best delegate, even in cases where no actual gavel is given.

**Formal debate.** The "standard" type of debate at a Model UN conference, in which delegates speak for a certain time in an order based on a speakers' list.

**Head delegate/ambassador.** The student leader of a Model UN club or team. Responsible for ceremonial actions required of the delegation at a conference or answering specific questioning, such as in the Security Council.

**Member state.** A country that has ratified the Charter of the United Nations and whose application to join has been accepted by the General Assembly and Security Council. Currently, there are 193 member states. The only internationally recognized state that is not a member state is the Holy See.

**Moderated caucus.** A type of caucus in which delegates remain seated and the Chair calls on them one at a time to speak for a short period of time, enabling a freer exchange of opinions than would be possible in formal debate.

**Moderator.** See Chair.

**Motion.** A request made by a delegate that the committee as a whole do something. Some motions might be to go into a caucus, to adjourn, to introduce a draft resolution, or to move into voting bloc. See our Charts of Rules and Motions.

**Observer.** A state, national organization, regional organization, or non-governmental organization that is not a member of the UN but participates in its debates. Observers can vote on procedural matters but not substantive matters. Examples are the Holy See and the State of Palestine.

**On the floor.** At a Model UN conference, when a working paper or draft resolution is first written, it may not be discussed in debate. After it is approved by the Director and introduced by the committee, it is put "on the floor" and may be discussed.

**Operative clause.** The part of a resolution which describes how the UN will address a problem. It begins with an action verb (decides, establishes, recommends, etc.).

**Page.** A delegate in a Model UN committee that has volunteered to pass notes from one delegate to another, or from a delegate to the dais, for a short period of time.

**Placard.** A piece of cardstock with a country's name on it that a delegate raises in the air to signal to the Chair that he or she wishes to speak.

**Point.** A request raised by a delegate for information or for an action relating to that delegate. Examples include a point of order, a point of inquiry, and a point of personal privilege. See our Charts of Rules and Motions.

**Position paper.** A summary of a country's position on a topic, written by a delegate before a Model UN conference.

**Preambulatory clause.** The part of a resolution that describes previous actions taken on the topic and reasons why the resolution is necessary. It begins with a participle or adjective (noting, concerned, regretting, aware of, recalling, etc.).

**Procedural.** Having to do with the way a committee is run, as opposed to the topic being discussed. All delegates present must vote on procedural matters and may not abstain.

**Quorum.** The minimum number of delegates needed to be present for a committee to meet. In the General Assembly, a quorum consists of one third of the members to begin debate, and a majority of members to pass a resolution. In the Security Council, no quorum exists for the body to debate, but nine members must be present to pass a resolution.

**Rapporteur.** A member of the dais whose duties include keeping the speakers' list and taking the roll call.

**Resolution.** A document that has been passed by an organ of the UN that aims to address a particular problem or issue. The UN equivalent of a law.

**Right of reply.** A right to speak in reply to a previous speaker's comment, invoked when a delegate feels personally insulted by another delegate's speech. Generally requires a written note to the Chair to be invoked.

**Roll call.** The first order of business in a Model UN committee, during which the Rapporteur reads aloud the names of each member state in the committee. When a delegate's country's name is called, he or she may respond "present" or "present and voting." A delegate responding "present and voting" may not abstain on a substantive vote.

**Rules of procedure.** The rules by which a Model UN committee is run. See our Charts of Rules and Motions.

**Second.** To agree with a motion being proposed. Many motions must be seconded before they can be brought to a vote.

**Secretariat.** The most senior staff of a Model UN conference.

**Secretary-General.** The leader of a Model UN conference.

**Signatory.** A country that wishes a draft resolution to be put on the floor and signs the draft resolution to accomplish this. A signatory need not support a resolution; it only wants it to be discussed. Usually, Model UN conferences require some minimum number of sponsors and signatories for a draft resolution to be approved.

**Simple majority.** 50% plus one of the number of delegates in a committee. The amount needed to pass most votes.

**Speakers' list.** A list that determines the order in which delegates will speak. Whenever a new topic is opened for discussion, the Chair will create a speakers' list by asking all delegates wishing to speak to raise their placards and calling on them one at a time. During debate, a delegate may indicate that he or she wishes to be added to the speakers' list by sending a note to the dais.

**Sponsor.** One of the writers of a draft resolution. A friendly amendment can only be created if all sponsors agree.

**Substantive.** Having to do with the topic being discussed. A substantive vote is a vote on a draft resolution or amendment already on the floor during voting bloc. Only member states (not observer states or non-governmental organizations) may vote on substantive issues.

***Unmoderated caucus.*** A type of caucus in which delegates leave their seats to mingle and speak freely. Enables the free sharing of ideas to an extent not possible in formal debate or even a moderated caucus. Frequently used to sort countries into blocs and to write working papers and draft resolutions.

***Veto.*** The ability, held by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States to prevent any draft resolution in the Security Council from passing by voting no.

***Vote.*** A time at which delegates indicate whether they do or do not support a proposed action for the committee. There are two types: procedural and substantive.

***Voting bloc.*** The period at the end of a committee session during which delegates vote on proposed amendments and draft resolutions. Nobody may enter or leave the room during voting bloc.

***Working paper.*** A document in which the ideas of some delegates on how to resolve an issue are proposed. Frequently the precursor to a draft resolution.

***Yielding.*** The movement that delegate A, who is standing at the front, make to pass the right of front speaking to delegate B who agrees with the idea offered previously by delegate A and will keep extend the idea to gain more votes from the floor. It is moderated by chairs.