



# INTRODUCTION

The *Issues at AMUN Handbook* is published to assist Representatives in their preparations for the American Model United Nations (AMUN) Conference. When used in conjunction with research students conduct on the nation they represent and the topics of discussion, this handbook provides Representatives with all the substantive information they will require to function effectively at the simulation. Its sister handbook, *AMUN Rules and Procedures*, provides an overview of the Committee/Council rules and Conference logistics with which Representatives need to familiarize themselves for the simulation.

The following pages contain brief overviews of the topics to be discussed in the Committees and Councils at the 2008 Conference. These are intended as a guideline and basis for Representatives' further research of the issues involved. In keeping with this, each overview includes a bibliography to guide Representatives to appropriate sources of additional information.

The overviews give a brief background into each topic and state some areas of current United Nations (UN) and international activity on the topic. In many cases, the overviews will frame the topic in terms of a few, limited parts of a highly complex issue. For example, the general issue of "the Environment" may have dozens of sub-issues — in such a case, the overview may provide direction for Representatives to concentrate their research on "Ozone Depletion" and "Limiting the Destruction of the Rain Forests," only two of the many smaller issues. This format allows Representatives to go into greater detail in their preparations, without the need to research all aspects of the multifaceted main issue.

In addition, *Chapter I - The United Nations* provides essential background to give all Representatives a common ground about the history of the UN. This section begins with the origins of the UN and covers some important points about the organization. Finally, the chapter focuses on problems confronting the UN today.

AMUN's philosophy in providing these topic overviews is to give Representatives *direction* in their research, but to leave the work up to them. **These overviews are not intended to be the sole source of Representatives' research on the topics prior to the Conference.**

## USE OF THE INTERNET

Note that many of the works cited in this *Issues at AMUN Handbook* are resources located on the World Wide Web. Full text of many of these periodical sources are available to AMUN participants on-line. Feel free to visit AMUN's homepage at [www.amun.org](http://www.amun.org) for a full list of recommended research links.

Three on-line sources of particular note are the United Nations homepage, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org), the *New York Times* on-line, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), and the *UNWire*, [www.smartbrief.com/un\\_wire/](http://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/). *UNWire* is a daily briefing on UN issues provided by the United Nations Foundation; note that *UNWire* articles published prior to August, 2004 can be found at [www.unwire.org](http://www.unwire.org). These sources are heavily referenced throughout the issues briefings in this handbook. Additionally, links to all documents cited in the *Issues* bibliographies that are available on-line can be found on the AMUN homepage. For a more thorough discussion of on-line research sources, see "Utilizing the Internet" on page 11 of the *AMUN Rules and Procedures Handbook*.

## THE PURVIEW OF EACH SIMULATION

Each simulation's background guide contains a brief overview of that simulation's purview. This provides a general outline of the types of discussions each simulation might have on the topics in question. This is extremely important in the UN system, where a variety of different Committees and Councils may discuss different aspects of the solution to an international problem. Representatives should exercise great care in researching a topic, so that their deliberations can focus on the piece of the problem considered within their simulation's purview. These purview briefs should be considered as guidelines for the discussions of each body.

An excellent example of this shifting focus is the Palestinian question. The First Committee might discuss aspects of the situation dealing with weapons shipments. At the same time, the Second Committee may discuss a variety of financing initiatives to help the Palestinian Authority. Similarly, the Third Committee, or in some cases ECOSOC, might discuss the social and humanitarian considerations that arise from Israeli occupation of various territories. And the Fourth Committee may discuss the various political implications of the question of Palestine, possibly including independence issues if this is specifically encompassed in one of that Committee's topics. Only the GA Plenary Session would discuss the problem in its entirety, including the possible creation of a legal Palestinian State or member status for that State. The Security Council would deal with any peace and security issues that it deemed appropriate on the situation. Thus, it can be seen from this one situation that different aspects of a problem are regularly discussed in different bodies. More importantly, at the UN, delegations are typically careful to *only* discuss those aspects relevant to their own Committee/Council, leaving other aspects for others in their delegation.