



# INTRODUCTION

The *Issues at AMUN Handbook* is published to assist Representatives in their preparations for the American Model United Nations (AMUN) Conference. When combined with students' own research on the nations 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, Councils and International Court of Justice at the 2010 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 concerning each topic and states 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 aspects of a complex issue. For example, the general issue of "the environment" has dozens of sub-issues — in such a case, the overview may direct 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.

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.**

In addition, *Chapter I - The United Nations* provides essential background information to give all Representatives a common orientation to 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.

## USE OF THE INTERNET

Many of the works cited in this *Issues at AMUN Handbook* are resources located on the Internet. Full text of many periodical sources is available to AMUN participants online. Please visit AMUN's homepage at [www.amun.org](http://www.amun.org) for a list of recommended research links.

Three online sources of particular note are the United Nations homepage ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)), the *New York Times* online ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)), and the *UNWire* ([www.smartbrief.com/un\\_wire/](http://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/)). The *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. Most documents cited in these bibliographies can be found with the help of an internet search engine. For a more thorough discussion of online 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, which 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 an international problem. Representatives should exercise great care in researching a topic, so their deliberations can focus on the piece of the problem considered within their simulation's purview. These purview briefs are guidelines for the discussions of each body.

An excellent example of this shifting focus among Committees and Councils 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 the Economic and Social Council, might discuss the social and humanitarian considerations that arise from Israeli occupation of various territories. And the Sixth Committee may discuss the legal aspects of treaty violations in the region 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 appropriate peace and security issues that arose on the situation. Clearly, different aspects of a single 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 to others in their delegation to address in the appropriate forum.