



## CHAPTER TWO

# CONFERENCE PREPARATION & POSITION PAPERS

### RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Research and preparation can be broken into six areas:

**The United Nations system as a whole:** It is vitally important for each Representative to understand the basics of the organization which they are simulating—the United Nations. Well-prepared students not only should know the basic structure of the United Nations, but also should have a good understanding of how the Committee they will be working on fits into the organization. Understanding this information will allow Representatives to better understand what their Committee can or cannot do within the United Nations system, what they can make recommendations on, what they can reasonably demand and what issues are beyond the purview of the body they are simulating and should be handled by another United Nations body. This handbook includes a brief description of each Committee's purview. This information is provided to assist Representatives in understanding the place of their work in the United Nations system, and it should be supplemented with additional research.

**Current statistical information and general background of the represented State's history and policies:** This is the first key to understanding what actions a State may prefer on specific issues. Research should include, but is certainly not limited to, areas such as population, government type, natural resources and trade data. Traditional allies and adversaries should also be noted. A country's history can be crucial to understanding its contemporary actions, including the question of whether that country was previously colonized or was a colonial power, when the country gained Statehood and what means were used in gaining independence (i.e., civil war, violent struggle, peaceful movement, etc.).

**Specific background of the State's viewpoints on the issues to be discussed at the Conference:** This is the central point of most Model United Nations preparation: focused research on the issues being discussed in each Committee and on the Member State's position on those issues. Research can come from a variety of sources, beginning with United Nations documents and moving to articles, periodical sources, books and Internet resources beyond the United Nations website. United Nations resolutions and reports on the issues under discussion are especially helpful because they provide a quick reference to what has already been accomplished by the United Nations and what still needs to be done. These documents also frequently provide voting information, which allows Representatives to quickly determine their country's past positions on issues. A number of relevant sources are provided in the bibliography section of each topic brief in this handbook. Contacting the represented country's permanent mission to the United Nations can also be helpful, but the level of assistance provided varies with each country's policies and the resources they have available.

For some countries, it will be very easy to find specific information to determine a position on most or all topics, and for others this information will be difficult to come by or simply not available. When clear-cut information is not available, it is incumbent on the students preparing to make the best possible inferences of what the country's policy would be, given the facts available. This might include knowing the country's background, its traditional allies, the stance of a regional group with which they tend to agree or a variety of other factors. Regardless of the

facts available, knowing *exactly* what a country would do in a given situation is typically not possible. Representatives should strive in their research to know as much as they can about their country and its stance on each topic and to educate themselves enough to make reasonable policy assumptions on issues that are not totally clear.

**The current world situation as it applies to the State:** This is a subset of the previous two areas of research, but it is important enough to be mentioned in its own right. There is a significant difference between the policies and perspectives of the only remaining superpower and a State with very little military might. Even more significant at the United Nations are the differences on many issues between the policies of relatively rich, industrialized countries and relatively poor, developing (and especially least-developed) countries. Additionally, a country which is currently involved in a civil war or a country which is under United Nations sanctions may have unique responses on some issues which are very different from the rest of the international community. Knowing where the State a student represents fits in the current world geopolitical context, as a complement to his or her country-specific research, can answer many questions which may arise during the simulation.

**The perspectives of States with differing viewpoints on the issues:** This is one of the more difficult areas of preparation. While it is reasonable to expect that a Representative will know who their general allies and adversaries are on a given issue, it is very difficult to have detailed information about the policies of each country in the simulation. Limitations in preparation time by definition require that Representatives focus primarily on the policies of their own country, often learning about others through references in their own research. This is an area where complete knowledge will serve participants well, but it is much more likely that each Representative will be learning the formal policies of the other countries in the Committee when they give speeches from the floor and confer behind the scenes in caucus sessions. In roleplaying, then, flexibility is key: Representatives must aggregate and assimilate new information they gain at the Conference with their pre-Conference research in order to reach consensus and compromise on complex issues.

**AMUN Rules of Procedure:** While substantive discussions of the issues form the basis of any good simulation of the United Nations, the rules of procedure are used to facilitate the substantive debate which occurs. In general, these rules are intended to provide an even playing field, allowing each State to accomplish its individual goals in advocating its policies while also maximizing opportunities for the group to reach agreement, or even consensus, on the issues. Several levels of preparation are possible on the rules. For new Model United Nations participants, it is recommended that each person have a working knowledge of the principal motions which can be made during the simulation, encapsulated on the Rules Short Forms on **pages 35–36** of the *AMUN Rules & Procedures Handbook*. The dais staff of each Committee will assist Representatives in using these rules and assist in bringing everyone onto an even playing field. For experienced Representatives, especially those who have not attended AMUN in the past, we suggest reading AMUN's rules in-depth, both as a refresher on these rules of procedure and to note differences from other conferences a school might attend. Most Model United Nations conferences use different rules of procedure, and in some cases the contrasts are significant. In order to



best facilitate everyone's experience, it is incumbent upon every participant to learn and use the rules established for this Conference.

## PREPARING AS A GROUP

Research on the areas described above is the essential element in preparing for AMUN. It is strongly recommended that Representatives use a combined effort whenever possible in doing research. Representatives can fully take advantage of all the people in the delegation by assigning various topics to each individual to research and report on to the group. Some areas will naturally lend themselves to group research and discussion, while others will be more individually-based.

In particular, researching the United Nations system and the specific background on a country can be more easily accomplished by a group effort. Each student can be assigned a specific area, such as historical background of the country, current statistics, etc. Individuals can then report back to the group on their findings, possibly including a written or oral report, and allow for greater knowledge-sharing among the delegation members.

By contrast, research on the topics discussed in each Committee will, by its nature, be more individualistic. This does not mean, however, that the other members of the delegation will not benefit from a briefing on each topic. Topic briefings can both give the entire delegation a broader picture of country policy as well as give individual Representatives valuable practice in consolidating the information they discover and in making a public presentation to the group. These briefings may also assist the entire delegation in gaining a comprehensive perspective on its country's policies.

## GENERAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

AMUN recommends the following general sources of information to use when researching a country and the issues for the Conference. Many of these sources are available on the Internet, either publicly or through subscriptions held by school libraries.

- United Nations Today (United Nations Department of Public Information)
- The World Almanac or The Universal Almanac
- Permanent Missions to the United Nations (e-mail for information on your nation and the specific issues under consideration)
- United Nations Department of Public Information (e-mail for a publications list)
- The Europa World Yearbook (Available in most library reference sections; contains detailed background on all countries and international organizations in the world)
- United Nations Handbook (Published annually by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
- Various periodicals, including the *United Nations Chronicle*, *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Economist* (Weekly), and *Keesing's Record of World Events* (Monthly).

## USING THE INTERNET

**AMUN website:** When using the Internet, a great starting point is AMUN's website, which includes links to these and many other United Nations-related sites. This website is updated with United Nations links as they become available and includes a great deal of background information to assist in your preparations for Conference. AMUN's website can be reached at [www.amun.org](http://www.amun.org).

**News sources:** Most major newspapers and news organizations are available online and are an excellent source for country and topic information, allowing you to access a daily synopsis of worldwide news.

**United Nations documents:** Most United Nations resolutions, documents, speeches and other resources can be accessed through the Internet. Most United Nations agencies are represented, along with databases containing information on various regions around the world.

In particular, the main United Nations Website at [www.un.org/en/](http://www.un.org/en/) provides up-to-date information on United Nations Documents passed in the General Assembly, Security Council and ECOSOC, as well as historical information from these bodies, reports of the Secretary-General on various issues and other useful documents.

Most United Nations Members now have websites for their permanent missions in New York and Geneva. When a website is available, it often includes details on the State's policy and may include the text of speeches given by Representatives at the United Nations. These addresses can be found at [www.un.org/en/members/](http://www.un.org/en/members/).

The United Nations also provides public access to its Official Documents System (ODS), which includes nearly all of the documents published by the United Nations, including many that are not available on the main website of the United Nations. The ODS system is available at [documents.un.org](http://documents.un.org). Please note that the search engine available on ODS is not always easy to use, but it is very easy to find files if you know the United Nations document number. The bibliography section of each topic brief in this handbook contains references to several United Nations documents and can act as a starting place for your preparations. You may want to utilize the UNBISNET search engine to find your document name/number and then move to ODS to find the actual document. UNBISNET also provides access to voting records and country speeches, and is found online at [unbisnet.un.org](http://unbisnet.un.org).

## WHY DRAFT A POSITION PAPER?

Well-crafted position papers can serve as an excellent preparatory tool for Model United Nations conference participants. A position paper can be used both as a device for internal preparation among the members of a delegation and as a public statement of your delegation's positions on the issues being discussed at the Conference. AMUN requests that all delegations submit public position papers to the Conference but also strongly suggests that each delegation prepare internal position papers which more clearly and completely define their country's perspective.

AMUN believes the most important information a delegation can furnish to other delegations prior to the Conference is its basic public policy on each issue to be discussed.

## INTERNAL POSITION PAPERS

This type of position paper is intended as a preparatory tool for the individuals on your delegation and for the delegation as a whole. While these are not required, AMUN strongly recommends that groups preparing for the Conference use position papers as one step in their preparations. Internal position papers, which are often called white papers in the international community, are a broad-based statement of your country's policies on a specific issue. These might include what



you publicly tell other Member States, your knowledge of any behind-the-scenes diplomacy (e.g., what deals have been made on the sidelines), information on allies and adversaries on each topic, your negotiating position on the topic and what your country hopes to accomplish on the topic. This might also include your bottom line negotiating position, the things you will press for in discussions and what (if anything) your government must see (or not see) in a draft resolution before it can provide support.

Internal position papers are very valuable tools for individual preparation, as they force Representatives to think about the full complexity of the issues they are confronting from their delegation's perspective. Also, by asking Representatives to put their ideas in writing, an internal position paper can force each Representative to condense a large amount of research and ideas into a concise, more comprehensible argument from their State's perspective.

These types of position papers do not need to be more than one or two pages in length and may be written either in paragraph form or with bullet points for each unique idea or issue in the topic area. Also, the entire delegation can benefit from each individual's work if these papers are shared with each group member, thus providing a more well-rounded view of the represented country's positions on all issues.

## PUBLIC POSITION PAPERS

Public position papers are intended as a public statement of a country's positions on the topics being discussed at the AMUN Conference. Each paper should include brief statements about where the country stands on the issue in question and on what the United Nations has done to confront this issue. It should also include the country's public position on the options for the United Nations in the future, noting proposals that a delegation has (or intends to have) sponsored, supported or not supported and why. Public papers do not need to go into detail about the country's negotiating positions or other behind-the-scenes issues but should rather be seen as something that a diplomat might say in a public speech on the topic.

## ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN PUBLIC POSITION PAPERS

While the position papers sent to the Conference can include any material that the delegation deems appropriate for public consumption, a number of items should be included in a well-written position paper. First, each section of the paper should specifically state the one or two key points that the country believes are the most important on each topic. While other important issues can be included, no more than two should be highlighted. The paper can then go into specific details about why these points are important and what the country believes should be done by the United Nations or its Member States to improve the situation in question. Many papers will then sum up by recapping the most important points.

There are a number of other items that you might include in a public position paper depending on the specific topic, the available information and the country's particular situation. Representatives should consider incorporating some or all of these elements in their position papers:

- References to past United Nations resolutions and international treaties, providing the specific number or name of that document and the year it passed;

- References to the United Nations Charter, as appropriate for the topic;
- Past statements by the Secretary-General, a senior United Nations Secretariat member or by a Representative of a United Nations agency on the topic;
- Reference to the work the United Nations has already done on the topic, whether by specialized agencies, regional bodies or working with non-governmental organizations;
- Past statements on the topic by Representatives of your government, especially if these mention the significance of the specific issue to your country;
- Specific suggestions of actions that your State will support in solving the issue in question.

Finally, it is important to note that a well-written public position paper is not about a specific country, but rather about what the country would like to accomplish on the topics of discussion in each simulation. Thus public position papers should not talk about the problems facing a specific country, but rather the problems facing the international community. If a country is a clear example of a successful United Nations program in action, or if the country is a member of an affected group, Representatives may want to include a brief reference to that in their paper; otherwise, there is usually no need to even mention specifics about the country in a position paper.

## SUBMISSION OF POSITION PAPERS

AMUN requests each delegation submit a position paper to the Conference, covering each Committee on which it is seated, **no later than 25 October**. These papers should be no more than one-half page on each topic that is covered in the Committee. All delegations should submit a paper covering the Concurrent General Assembly Plenary and each of the four General Assembly Committees, including both topics for each Committee. Delegations represented on ECOSOC should also include the two main topics of discussion for that Council. Delegations represented on the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) should also include the two topics of discussion for the Commission. Delegations represented on the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) should also include the two topics of discussion for the Commission. Delegations represented on the Security Council or Historical Security Councils should choose up to three topics they think are the most important for their respective Council to discuss and include these in their position paper. If a delegation chooses to place a Representative on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), a section for that Committee should also be included.

**Format of Papers:** One comprehensive position paper should be submitted online for each *delegation*, combining all of the Committees on which that delegation is seated. A sample position paper, along with full submission instructions, is available at AMUN's website: [www.amun.org/sample-position-papers/](http://www.amun.org/sample-position-papers/).

The AMUN Secretariat will not judge the position papers other than to check for completeness and general germaneness. Position papers will be collected and organized by the AMUN Secretariat, posted on the AMUN website prior to Conference and then made available in the Home Government office for public perusal during the Conference. As public documents, position papers must conform to the standards laid out in AMUN's policy on plagiarism (see below).





**Submission Specifications:** All position papers must be submitted via AMUN's online web form, available at [www.amun.org](http://www.amun.org). Additional submission information will be sent in the fall to all registered schools. AMUN reserves the right to reject any position paper that fails to address one of the topics as stated in the *Issues at AMUN* handbook, does not comport to basic standards of diplomatic courtesy or is determined to violate the policy on plagiarism.

**Extension of Due Dates:** AMUN realizes that some schools are on quarter or trimester systems and thus have a later start date. Any school with a late fall start date may request a one week extension to the official due dates listed above by e-mailing the AMUN Executive Office at [mail@amun.org](mailto:mail@amun.org) before 25 October.

## POSITION PAPER AWARD CERTIFICATES

AMUN will provide a Position Paper Award Certificate for each delegation that submits an approved, completed position paper, including sections for each topic in all assigned simulations, by 11:59 p.m. Central Time on 25 October. Note that this must include sections for the Concurrent General Assembly Plenary, all GA Committees, and any other simulation on which the delegation has a Representative seated. If a school is representing multiple countries, each delegation will be considered separately for Position Paper Award.

For answers to any questions about writing or submitting position papers or about Position Paper Awards, please contact the AMUN Executive Office at [mail@amun.org](mailto:mail@amun.org).

## PLAGIARISM

AMUN strives to create a simulation of the United Nations which is as realistic as possible while still allowing for the fulfillment of our participants' and the organization's educational goals. As such, the AMUN policy regarding plagiarism focuses on an educative rather than a punitive goal. At AMUN, plagiarism involves the substantial, verbatim or near-verbatim copying of language, without attribution, in published or unpublished texts, speeches or documents. Representatives should adhere to their country's policies at all times, but this does not give license to plagiarize existing materials. Thus, parts of speeches or position papers may be derived or paraphrased from previous speeches or papers, but should not be copied verbatim.

Similarly, it is expected that all Representatives are familiar with past resolutions at the United Nations, but the work of the United Nations should be expanded on in Representatives' work, not copied verbatim. There are some exceptions: for example, Representatives are not necessarily expected to expand upon a phrase that is often or always used when a country gives a formal speech or a clause that is repeated verbatim through several years of resolutions on a topic. Generally, it is not necessary to explicitly credit such sources, although if substantial language is quoted, it should be acknowledged and cited. Final determinations on plagiarism and its consequences are at the discretion of the AMUN Secretariat.

## 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 United Nations system, where a variety of different Committees, Councils and Commissions 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, Councils and Commissions is the issue of development. The First Committee might discuss the relationship between disarmament and development. At the same time, the Second Committee may discuss a variety of financing initiatives to assist Least Developed Countries. Similarly, the Third Committee might discuss the social and humanitarian considerations that stem from a lack of development, including gender issues, economic concerns or the impact on underrepresented populations such as the elderly or disabled. And the Fourth Committee may discuss the development issues of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The GA Plenary might discuss the problem in its entirety or address issues that cut across the mandates of the Committees. By contrast, the Economic and Social Council would focus on how the United Nations specialized and technical agencies work with Member States to support economic and social development. The Security Council would address the interlinkages between peace, security and development.

Clearly, different aspects of a single problem are regularly discussed in different bodies. More importantly, at the United Nations, delegations are typically careful to only discuss those aspects relevant to their own Committees, Councils and Commissions, leaving other aspects to others in their delegation to address in the appropriate forum.