



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 Member States 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, *Rules and Procedures*, provides an overview of the committee rules and conference logistics with which representatives need to familiarize themselves.

Chapter One: The United Nations provides essential background information to give all representatives a common orientation to the history of the United Nations. This section begins with the origins of the United Nations and covers some important points about the organization. The chapter concludes with problems confronting the United Nations today.

Chapter Two: Conference Preparation & Position Papers outlines a recommended process for preparing for the AMUN Conference. Following these steps will place representatives well on their way to acquiring all the content knowledge necessary to be successful at AMUN. Representatives will also find general information about topic purviews and position papers.

The remaining chapters contain brief overviews of the topics to be discussed in the committees, councils, commissions and International Court of Justice at the Conference. These are intended as a guide and basis for representatives' further research. In keeping with this goal, each overview includes a bibliography to guide representatives to appropriate sources of additional information. Additionally, at the beginning of each committee's topic briefs, there is an explanation of the purview of the simulation—that is, what the body can and cannot do. The simulation purview provides context and limits for the goals and actions contained in a body's reports and resolutions.

The overviews provide background on each topic and state some areas of current United Nations 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 subsidiary issues—in such a case, the overview may direct representatives to concentrate their research on ozone depletion and limiting the destruction of the rainforests, only two of the many subsidiary issues. This format allows representatives to go into greater detail in their preparations without needing to research all aspects of a multifaceted main issue, and facilitates debate by ensuring all representatives are approaching the same issues.

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.*



CHAPTER ONE

THE UNITED NATIONS

Representatives participating in the American Model United Nations (AMUN) Conference should be familiar with the history of the United Nations and with the changing role the organization plays in international affairs. This section provides a brief background on the United Nations system and some of the issues it faces today.

ORIGINS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations came into existence on 24 October 1945. On that day, the United Nations Charter became operative, having been ratified by the 51 original Members. The concept of all States uniting together in one organization to settle disputes peacefully was born of the desire of “civilized” countries to avoid repeating the horrors of the First and Second World Wars. The United Nations developed as a successor to the League of Nations, which represented the first modern attempt by the countries of the world to achieve this unity.

In 1942, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt coined the term “United Nations,” when 47 countries signed the Declaration of the United Nations in support of the Atlantic Charter. In 1944, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and China met in Washington, DC, at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, where the first blueprint of the United Nations was prepared. In 1945, the final details for the United Nations were worked out at the Yalta Conference. Fifty-one States gathered from 24 April through 26 June 1945 in San Francisco to draft the Charter of the United Nations, which was signed on 26 June 1945.

PURPOSE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The primary purposes for which the United Nations was founded are detailed in Chapter I, Article 1, of the Charter:

1. “To maintain international peace and security...
2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
3. To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinctions as to race, sex, language or religion; and
4. To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.”

HOW THE UNITED NATIONS SEEKS TO ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSE

Since 1945, the United Nations has established itself as a forum for discussing international disputes. The United Nations seeks, both through its principal organs and various subsidiary bodies, to settle disputes through peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force. Member States recognize that the United Nations has an established machinery which can be used to solve international problems. It should be recognized that the United Nations is not a world government, nor does it legislate. Rather, the actions of the United Nations, in the form

of resolutions passed by its bodies, have a strong moral persuasive effect. Member States frequently find it in their own best interests to follow United Nations recommendations.

STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations has six primary bodies:

The General Assembly (GA): The General Assembly is the central deliberative organ of the United Nations. The General Assembly has been described as the nearest thing to a “parliament of mankind.” All Member States are Members of the General Assembly, and each Member has one vote. The General Assembly makes recommendations on international issues, oversees all other United Nations bodies that report to the General Assembly, approves the United Nations budget and apportions United Nations funds. On the recommendation of the Security Council, the General Assembly elects the Secretary-General and holds the authority to admit and expel Member States. Voting in the General Assembly is ordinarily by simple majority, but most of the body’s work is adopted by consensus.

The Security Council (SC): The Security Council’s primary responsibility is maintaining international peace and security. It has the power to employ United Nations forces and direct action against threats to the peace. Fifteen Members sit on the Security Council, including five Permanent Members (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States) and 10 at-large Member States, which the General Assembly elects for two-year terms. A majority in the Security Council consists of nine Members voting “yes”; however, a “no” vote by any of the Permanent Members has the effect of vetoing or blocking actions.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): The Economic and Social Council is the primary body dealing with the economic, social, humanitarian and cultural work of the United Nations system. It also has a mandate to coordinate the activities of United Nations technical and specialized agencies and programs. The Economic and Social Council oversees five regional economic commissions and nine functional, or subject-matter, commissions. The Economic and Social Council is composed of 54 Member States elected by the General Assembly for three-year, renewable terms.

The Trusteeship Council (TC): In 1945 there were 11 Trust Territories, which were regions without their own governments. These 11 regions were placed under the Trusteeship Council, which helped them prepare for and achieve independence. With the admission of Palau as a United Nations Member State in 1994, the Trusteeship Council has now completed its original mandate. Today, the Trusteeship Council is inactive but is formally composed of the permanent Security Council Members.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ): The International Court of Justice, or World Court, is the primary judicial organ of the United Nations and decides international legal disputes. All United Nations Member States are automatically able to bring matters before the International Court of Justice; however, States must agree to accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice before it can decide



a dispute involving that State. Fifteen judges serving nine-year terms sit on the Court.

Secretariat: The Secretariat is composed of the Secretary-General and the United Nations staff. Approximately 44,000 people are employed as the staff of the United Nations, only 5,000 of whom work at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The vast majority work for various subsidiaries of the United Nations. The Secretary-General serves a five-year renewable term.

In addition to the six main bodies, the United Nations system includes a number of autonomous technical and specialized agencies and programs. Examples include the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). While most of these agencies and programs have independent governance structures, the Economic and Social Council coordinates their activities.

BLOC POLITICS

Historically, Member States with mutual interests have used a system of bloc politics to organize their efforts within the United Nations. These blocs tend to be made up of Member States with similar political, historical or cultural backgrounds. They are often, but not exclusively, formed on a geographical basis. By organizing themselves with other Member States that hold similar interests, bloc members hope to increase their influence above the level that they would have as a single Member State in the General Assembly.

Regional groups were formally established at the United Nations in 1957 with an endorsement by the General Assembly. As the number of Member States increased, the groups were realigned to form today's five groups: Latin America and the Caribbean group (GRULAC), the Asia-Pacific group, the Africa group, the Eastern European group and the Western Europe and Others group (WEOG). These regional groups are still used today to manage elections. Security Council seats are allocated by regional group, and the Vice Presidents of the General Assembly are chosen by regional groups, with the actual election mostly a formality. Other, smaller regional blocs, such as the Nordic countries or the JUSCANZ group (Japan, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), also exist, though they lack the formal recognition granted to the five regional groups.

Regional groups are not the only blocs active at the United Nations. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in 1967 as a group seeking a middle course between the Western and Eastern blocs of the Cold War, rapidly became an active body for the coordination of action at the United Nations for developing countries. While its importance has diminished since the end of the Cold War, it is still active on numerous issues at the United Nations. The Group of 77 (G-77) was founded in 1964 as a coordinating body to protect the economic interests of small and developing countries. With 134 members, the G-77 is the largest United Nations bloc, though coordination among members is fairly loose.

Blocs often attempt to form a consensus among members, allowing them to act as a cohesive group. The effectiveness of any given bloc in exerting its positions in the General Assembly depends upon the bloc's ability to form a consensus among its own members and then get its

members to vote accordingly. These acts of compromise form the basis of United Nations politics and often occur within the various caucusing groups. They also form the starting points for debate in the larger United Nations body.

Bloc politics have changed considerably over time. Some blocs are still coherent, like the Nordic countries, while others, like the Western European and Others Group, lack continuing cohesion. In general, their viability as a political tool is diminishing, and blocs are falling out of use as a predictable measure of votes. Often, blocs get together to draft resolutions which will begin the discussion in the larger body, but ultimately, each Member State will usually vote in its own interest, regardless of bloc memberships. States may be part of multiple blocs with diverging or competing interests, which further complicates the issue.

However, blocs are not completely irrelevant; often they are used to get an initial proposal to the floor when consensus cannot be found quickly in the larger body. Today, the most common blocs are small, temporary negotiating groups that gather around one issue to try to overcome stalemate in the larger membership bodies. Additionally, developing countries often bind together to maximize their power, especially in the face of a relative lack of economic power. Some blocs have their own secretariat staff whose job is to draft proposals and find solutions that the larger body is unable to find. Some of the more well-funded and organized blocs have a formally recognized role as permanent observers with permanent observer missions at the United Nations headquarters. Examples include the African Union, the Caribbean Community, the European Union, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. These blocs are powerful examples of Member States coming together to advance goals that may be independent of the regions they represent.

At AMUN, blocs are not to be treated as official bodies. Representatives are encouraged to caucus in their bloc groups only when appropriate. Representatives should be aware that the State they represent may no longer actively participate in bloc politics or may vote outside of its traditional bloc based on the circumstances. Above all, remember that you represent your State and your State's interests, regardless of your participation in a bloc while caucusing and drafting.



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 representatives should not only know the basic structure of the United Nations but also 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 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 (e.g., civil war, violent struggle, peaceful protests, 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 UN 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 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 delegation's permanent mission to the United Nations can also be helpful, but the level of assistance provided varies with each country's policies and available resources.

It will be very easy for some States to find specific information to determine a position on most or all topics, while 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 about 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 that is currently involved in a civil war or a country under United Nations sanctions may have unique responses on some issues. 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 that 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 his or her 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 necessarily 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 policy goals 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, we recommend 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 40 and the Inside Back Cover** of the *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, who have not attended AMUN in the past, we suggest reading AMUN's rules in depth, to note differences from other conferences they have attended. AMUN veterans should re-read the rules as a refresher. Most Model United Nations conferences use different rules of procedure, and in some cases