

Chapter II. Role Playing and Preparation

THE REPRESENTATIVE

Delegates are fundamental to any Model UN Conference. A delegate's job is to research the positions of a UN Member nation, both on the specific topics that will be discussed at the Conference and as a general overview of that nation's policies. Delegates should then be able to prepare draft resolutions to be submitted for debate at the Conference.

Finally, delegates attend the Conference to *represent* their nation in discussing the resolutions presented. Delegates should always be concerned with accurately representing their assigned nation's views and policies rather than any individual views they may hold. **When delegates reach the floor of the Model UN Conference, they assume the role of the *Distinguished Representative from their country, with all the rights and responsibilities which that entails.***

At the Conference, Representatives in the role of their countries' spokesperson will debate the issues on the agenda for discussion. They will also draft and discuss resolutions, caucus with Representatives who are role playing other countries, and work to solve the problems facing the world. In the UN today, nations will usually debate an item in an attempt to reach a consensus that can be agreed to by all, or at least most, nations. The resolutions under discussion at UNIMUN can be accepted by consensus, adopted, amended, combined or even debated to the point that no final document can be produced on a given issue.

ROLE PLAYING

UNIMUN is a **simulation** of the UN. By its very nature, the quality and tone of debate will be dramatically different than in the "real" UN. In the UN, Representatives and their consular staffs spend months in preparation, "behind doors" caucusing, and interacting with other nations *before* an issue is brought to a vote. A UN Representative, Foreign Minister or Head of State, will almost always make a prepared speech that will not be "news" to the other Representatives present.

At UNIMUN, Representatives will only have three days to assume the role of their nation's Representative and simulate the actions of the UN. This consolidation of time leads to many different circumstances with which each country will have to contend. Among the considerations is the fact that Representatives will rarely have the opportunity to make a pre-written speech on a topic. Instead, they will often be forced to verbally react to circumstances as they arise, and they may be in a position where it is reasonable to reinterpret their nation's position in light of new facts. Representatives should not simply read from their country's established record on the issues presented; they should be prepared to compromise with the other nations represented, and adapt their policies where needed to meet the current circumstances of the world as simulated at the Conference.

Note that this in no way gives delegations license to act "out of character." Representatives should research and generally follow the policies of their country, modifying these as new circumstances dictate. Successful role playing involves walking a careful line on policy; avoid the extremes of either reading verbatim a country's past statements, **or** creating ad hoc policy with no previous basis.

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

As a general rule, Representatives should become familiar with several items in their preparations for the Conference, from the UN system as a whole, to the specifics of their country's position on the topics of discussion for their respective committees. Research and preparation can be looked at in six areas:

1. The UN 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. A well-prepared



Representative should not only know the basics of the UN's structure, but should have a good understanding of how the body they will be working on fits into the organization. In building this base of knowledge, Representatives will better understand what their simulation can or cannot do within the UN 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.

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

3. Specific background of the nation's viewpoints on the issues to be discussed at the Conference:

This is the center point of most Model UN preparation; focused research on the issues being discussed in each committee and on your government's position on those issues. Research can come from a variety of sources, beginning with UN documents (often found on the internet or in paper form in a library or documents depository) and moving to articles, periodical sources, books, and internet resources beyond the UN web site. UN 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 UN, and to what still needs to be done in the future. These documents also frequently provide voting information, which allows Representatives to quickly determine their country's past positions on issues. Contacting the represented country's Permanent Mission to the UN can also be helpful, but the level of assistance provided varies with each country's policies and the resources they have available to help others. Also, 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 representative preparing to make the best possible interpolations of what the country's policy would be, given the facts available. This might include knowing the country's background, their traditional allies, the stance of a regional group with whom 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 not always possible. Representatives should strive in their research to know as much as they can about the country and its stance on each topic, and to educate themselves enough to make reasonable policy assumptions on issues which are not totally clear.

4. The current world situation as it applies to the nation: This is a subset of the previous two areas of research, but is important enough to be mentioned in its own right. There is a significant difference between the policies of the only remaining superpower and a nation with very little military might. Even more significant at the UN is the difference between the policies of the relatively rich, industrialized nations and the relatively poor, developing (and especially least developed) nations on many issues. Additionally, a nation which is currently involved in a civil war, or a nation which is under UN sanctions, may have contrary and unique responses on some issues which are very different than those of the remainder of the international community. Knowing where the nation you represent fits in the current world geo-political context, as a compliment to your country specific research, can answer many questions which will come up during the simulation.

5. A specific background of the perspectives of nations with differing viewpoints on the issues: This is one of the more difficult areas in preparation. While it is reasonable to expect that a Representative will know who their general allies and adversaries on a given issue should be (regional partners, long-standing allies, etc.) it is very difficult to have detailed information on what the policies of each country in the simulation will be on a given issue. Limitations in preparation time by definition require that participants 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.



6. The rules of procedure for UNIMUN (provided in this handbook): While substantive discussions of the issues form the basis of any good simulation of the UN, the rules of procedure are what is used to facilitate the substantive debate which occurs. In general, these rules are intended to provide an even playing field, allowing each country to accomplish its individual goals in speaking their 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 UN participants, it is recommended that each person has a working knowledge of the principle motions which can be made during the simulation, as encapsulated on the Rules Short Form in the back of this book. The President of each body will assist Representatives in using these rules on the first day of the Conference, and assist in bringing everyone onto an even playing field. For experienced Representatives, we suggest reading UNIMUN's rules in-depth, both as a refresher on these rules of procedure and to note differences from other Model UN Conferences. Most Model UN Conferences use at least slightly 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 as laid out for this Conference.

THE FACULTY ADVISOR

Many participants will attend UNIMUN as individuals, and thus will not necessarily have a Faculty Advisor. For those school's which do have a Faculty Advisor, UNIMUN suggests that this person's main role be in working with and preparing the school's delegation(s) before they attend the Conference. Regardless of whether the Faculty Advisor is a class professor or club sponsor, this person can greatly assist the delegation in both logistical and content preparation for the Conference.

Logistically, the Faculty Advisor may be the main contact with both the Conference and the school administration. This role could include working with finances and group organization, registering the school for the Conference, making hotel reservations, preparing travel arrangements, and a host of other preparations. Alternately, these roles could be delegated and assumed by the delegation leaders or club officers at a school.

In helping a delegation prepare for the content issues they will face at the Conference, a Faculty Advisor could either run a full curriculum class, or serve as a resource for a Model UN Club or other organization. They may use a well-established, proven curriculum, or utilize this handbook as a guide to preparing the participants who will attend. The United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-USA) also provides excellent background materials for preparing participants to attend a Model United Nations conference.

Also, the Faculty Advisor can coordinate and run mock sessions to better prepare students for the Conference.

DELEGATIONS WHICH ARE "OUT OF CHARACTER"

Since individuals attending the Conference are not career diplomats representing their country, and since most representatives will not have lived or been raised in the country they are representing, questions do sometimes arise at a Conference as to whether the actions of an individual are "out of character" in relation to their delegation's policy in the real world. UNIMUN has several specific suggestions to address this issue.

First, and most importantly, **being "in character" is the responsibility of each delegation.** There is no possible substitute for extensive preparation on your country and the issues to be discussed **BEFORE** attending the Conference. UNIMUN expects that the members of each delegation will enter the Conference prepared and knowing more about their individual country, and their country's stand on the issues, than any other Representative present.

If you, or your delegation, feel that a Representative has not done sufficient research and is misinformed or acting "out of character" on a particular issue, UNIMUN recommends several steps which can be taken:

C First, please revisit the actions taken by the Representative in question. Is the



Representative “out of character” given the particular resolution and situation on the floor? Have circumstances (either in the real world or at Conference) changed such that the Representative could *realistically* modify their country’s stance on a particular issue? Are you **certain** that you know the actual stance of the country in question on the issue? Many cases of a Representative appearing “out of character” are actually just misinterpretations of what was said, or of a country’s previous stated policies.

C If you still feel that the Representative(s) is “out of character”, UNIMUN asks that you talk to the Representative about the issue before bringing the problem to the Secretariat. This can be easily done in a **non-confrontational** manner by stating something like: “*I hadn’t realized that was your country’s position on the issue, where did you see that?*” -or- “*I thought I read something in (state your source) about your country having a different opinion on this issue, have you seen that information?*” Directly confronting a Representative to say “*You’re wrong on this*” will likely not succeed, and could damage your diplomatic relations in the future.

C The Representative will likely respond in one of three ways to your question, either with information to justify their statements, with a statement like “*I did the research and this is my country’s view on the issue,*” or with interest in the new information you have provided. If this response answers your question, the problem is resolved. If a Representative is interested in more information, please send that person(s) to the Delegate Library office, which has many files and resources to help with questions. If the Representative is non-responsive or chooses not to answer your question, you can bring the issue to the attention of the simulation’s President, who will request that the Delegate Library Secretariat look into the situation.

C Please note that UNIMUN Presidents are specifically instructed to NOT provide advice to Representatives on the issues being discussed. UNIMUN Presidents are specifically trained on the Rules of Procedure, while Delegate Library Secretariat and Rapporteurs are trained on assisting Representatives with content questions.

If a delegation or individual is found to be acting “out of character,” UNIMUN’s goal is to provide them with the information needed to correctly represent their country on a given issue.

Since all participants at UNIMUN are learning about the United Nations as they participate, these situations may occur. UNIMUN expects that all delegations will take the time necessary to prepare and correctly portray their country on each issue under consideration. UNIMUN also asks that Representatives not jump to conclusions on other delegations’ role playing without having detailed background on the other country’s position on the issue(s). Finally, UNIMUN asks that Representatives on all sides handle potential “out of character” situations with the utmost of diplomatic courtesy for all parties involved.

GENERAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

UNIMUN recommends the following general sources of information to use when researching your country and the issues of the Conference:

- ! Basic Facts about the United Nations (UN Department of Public Information)
- ! A Guide to Delegate Preparation (UNA-USA Publication)
- ! Model United Nations Preparations Kit (UNA-USA Publication)
- ! A Global Agenda: Issues Before the General Assembly (UNA-USA Publication)
- ! The World Almanac &/or The Universal Almanac
- ! Permanent Missions to the United Nations (Write for information on your nation and the specific issues under consideration)
- ! UN Department of Public Information (Write for a publications list)
- ! Various periodicals, including: *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *UN Chronicle*, *The Economist* (weekly), *Keesing’s Record of World Events* (monthly)

Addresses for the United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-USA) and the UN Department of Public Information are:

- ! UNA-USA Publications, 801 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017-4706, (212) 907-1300, E-mail: modelun@unausa.org, Web site: <http://www.unausa.org>.. Request both a catalog and information from the Office of Model UN & Youth



Programs.

- ! UN Department of Public Information/Publications, Room DC2-0853, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, (212) 963-1234. Request a Model United Nations Kit and a UN DPI Catalog. The Model UN kit contains many of the most useful UN documents for your preparations at a low charge. Also, most UN publications are for sale, and many will be provided for free if your delegation offers to handle any shipping charges.

Participants can also contact the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in their country to request any specific document published by the United Nations at no charge, so long as the document number is known. These document numbers can usually be found through Internet searches.

UTILIZING THE INTERNET

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

In particular, the main United Nations Home Page at <http://www.un.org>, provides up-to-date information on UN 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 very useful documents, along with excellent search capabilities.

The UN home page can also be used to locate the mission e-mail address for the nation you are representing. Additionally, many UN members now have home pages for their permanent missions in New York and Geneva. These addresses can be found at: <http://www.un.org/members/>

An excellent source of very up-to-date information on a wide variety of UN topics is the **UN Wire**. This e-publication, sponsored by the UN Foundation, reports five days a week on over 20 issues of interest to the UN community. You can sign up on-line for a free subscription, or go to their web site at <http://www.unfoundation.org> to look at the current issue and search back issues.

If you are using the Internet, a great starting point is the home page of one of UNIMUN's co-sponsors, American Model United Nations (AMUN) International. This page includes links to these and many other UN-related sites. The page is updated with UN links as they become available, and includes a great deal of background information to assist in your preparations for the UNIMUN Conference. AMUN's Home Page is at: <http://www.amun.org>

