



THESSISMUN 2008

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Guide for Research and Effective Public Speaking



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General Research and advisory delegate information

As soon as you receive your country and committee assignment, you should begin your research. You may divide your research into the following categories:

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 student should not only know the basics of the UN's structure, but should have a good understanding of how the committee they will be working on fits into the organization. In building this base of knowledge, Representatives will better understand what their committee/council 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 was a colonial power, when the country gained statehood, and what means were used in gaining independence (civil war, violent struggle, peaceful movement, etc.).

- What are some basic facts about the country (e.g., Head of government? Population? Size? History? Resources? Growth?)
- What are the foreign policy objectives of the country? (e.g., Economic goals?)
- With which organizations and nations does the country work? (e.g., OPEC, GATT? Allies?)
- What role does the country play in the UN system? (e.g., Observer? Active member?)
- What is unique about your country compared to all other countries? (e.g., Exports?)



- Given a hypothetical issue, how would delegates expect their country to react to the problem? (e.g., Remain neutral?)
- As the representative of the country, how would a delegate handle the issue or problem? (e.g., Impose sanctions?)

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.

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 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.

- What is the issue or problem?



- What is the history of the issue?
- What countries are involved and/or most affected?
- What is the country's position on the issues?
- How has the country handled the issues in the UN in the past?
- Under what conditions would the country change its position?
- How should delegates approach these issues at the Model UN?

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 unique responses on some issues which are very different from those of the remainder of the international community. Knowing where the nation you represent fits in the current world geo-political context, as a complement 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 students 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. Evidence: Checking Your Research

- Did you use a variety of sources?
- Do you have documentation ready to prove the validity of your sources?
- Did you use evidence to support an argument? Evidence by itself is not an argument.
- Does your evidence prove what is claimed?
- Did you listen carefully to your opponent's evidence?
- Did you keep your argument brief?
- Did you emphasize key words and phrases?
- Is your evidence accurate?
- Are your facts and statistics recent?

7. The Burden of Proof

- A variety of sources demonstrate that you are resourceful and have done your homework. This impresses the judges.
- Do not say that you used CNN or Time magazine. Western popular media is not good proof. Try to quote from UN sources, resolutions, treaties, conventions, speeches, recognized documents such as the Declaration of Human Rights, etc.
- If you do quote from a source such as the UN Charter, quote the exact paragraph.
- A good practice is to use a variation of your topic sentence for your concluding sentence.

Bear in mind that many of your sources may be biased. If possible, try to find independent confirmation of the information you have obtained, from more than one source. Moreover, when gathering information it is important to distinguish between opinions and facts. Facts are used to support opinions. Whenever possible use facts to support your arguments. Eventually, you will be presenting an opinion and must defend it against other opinions, thus it is crucial for you to be



familiar with different viewpoints and opinions on your topic. Become familiar with arguments that are different from the one your country is likely to take on your topic. Remember, it is up to you to decide which particular points you want to focus on in your own arguments and this decision needs to be guided by your country's position. Bear in mind that you should speak in the name of the country that you are representing. Study already adopted UN resolutions on your topic to find out what issues tend to be discussed when your topic is debated. Resolutions passed by the General Assembly, Security Council, and ECOSOC can be found at the **UN Documentation Centre**.

Here are some common internet resources to help you get started:

- United Nations Website, www.un.org
- United States Embassies and Consulates web site, usembassy.state.gov
- United States Institute for Peace, www.usip.org
- The Central Intelligence Agency website, contains reports on economic, political and social conditions of most of the countries in the world, www.cia.gov
- The European Union website europa.eu.int
- The International Crisis Group website www.icg.org
- The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website www.france.diplomatie.fr
- The World Trade Organization website www.wto.org

Finally, if you have tried these different resources and still face difficulties finding information, send an email to the **ThessISMUN Board**.

Furthermore it is of critical importance to:

Review the ThessISMUN rules and procedures. These rules are intended to create a level playing field allowing each delegate/country to accomplish their individual goals in speaking about their policies while maximizing opportunities for the group to reach agreement or even consensus on the issue



Remember it is not your opinion you are illustrating and defending, but the country's you are representing. The Vice Chair of each respective Committee of the GA, the ECOSOC and the WTO, the Vice President of the Security Council and the Secretary General of the European Council, will be responsible under the Deputy Secretary General, for the adoption and the implementation of the Official Policy Guidelines, by the Country representatives in each Committee or Council. Delegates that diverge from their assigned country's official policy guidelines, will be advised towards the correction of their policy and provided with the appropriate material on this extend by the Deputy Secretary General.

Be aware of different political perspectives.

Attain a good knowledge of your allies and your opposition. In order to adequately represent your country during the model, you will need to interact with delegates from other countries. Knowing their positions on your topic will help you predict their arguments during debate. This will be very useful in helping you decide in advance where it might be useful to seek cooperation or compromise.

Congratulate the members of your delegation (and fellow delegates representing different countries and viewpoints) on their contributions to the committee sessions.

Effective Public Speaking

As a Model United Nations delegate, you will assume the role of a nation's representative. You will be asked to play that role with as much accuracy as possible on such aspects as political ideology, religious affiliations, demography, economic, social, cultural and geographic realities. That is what is called "being in character".

One very important aspect of participating in a Model UN activity is acquiring effective speaking skills. A good speech is based not only on what you say but also on how you say it:

- Use notes. Writing a lengthy text will make it hard to appear natural.
- Trust yourself that your research and preparation will fill in the gaps.



- Pace yourselves, talk slowly, take the time to breath. Don't worry about pausing in your speech.
- Use body language & facial expressions. Keep your hands out of your pockets and use them.
- Be confident, relax. You are the expert on your position and topic.

Getting the Attention

You are trying to persuade others so you must attend to their feelings and logic. To convince others however, you must first get their attention. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Begin with a quotation: a short quotation, proverb, saying, poem, etc. will often sum up the situation.
- Begin with a startling statement. Make it lead directly to the problem. (if not, "imagine that....")
- Begin with a rhetorical question, something that the audience will know the answer to.
- Begin with a specific example of the problem. Zero in on one concrete aspect and then build from there.
- Be aware of any time limits on your speech, and give yourself time for a strong finish.
- Use the "machine-gun" technique: use rapid-fire examples, piling up the evidence.
- Humour is a dangerous technique in debate, particularly when discussing serious topics.

Maintaining the Attention

Once you sit down with many other delegates, ask yourself: How will you be remembered? Here are a few tips to maintain this attention:

- Demonstrate the extent of the problem. Use examples, statistics, and expert opinion.
- Demonstrate the effects of the problem. How does it affect the people? Use examples and facts.
- Demonstrate the causes of the problem. This might be difficult.
- Demonstrate how the problem affects the others. Be vivid.
- Present your solution or even better, a joint solution from several delegates.



- Try to use visual images as opposed to dry expressions.
- Demonstrate how your solution will: reduce or eliminate the cause(s) of the problem; reduce or eliminate the symptoms; help people; result in advantages; reduce costs; increase efficiency.

Diplomacy

Why is diplomacy so important? Without it, countries are unable to negotiate properly. Using your diplomatic skills can greatly influence the outcome of a discussion. You can use it to convince people rather than alienate them. It is important to develop this skill especially since you will be negotiating with many different countries with a variety of goals. The Secretariat and fellow delegates feel very strongly about respect and it is one of the main principles in the United Nations.

- Use formal language when making public speeches.
- Never make statements about the individual behind the ambassador.
- Respect your fellow delegates even if you don't agree with them.
- Never use threats or insults.
- Talk to others as you want them to speak to you.
- Be professional.

Key Concepts in Negotiation

Interests

Your interests may be determined by asking why? Their interests - place yourself in their shoes; forget your perception of the facts.

Options

Once you know each side's interests, you can try to develop creative options. These are possible agreements or parts of agreements. Effective diplomats must learn how to expand the pie rather than slice a diminished area.



Standards

A contest of wills degenerates into a conflict of egos. Effective negotiators search for fair and mutually satisfying solutions. Fair standards are useful measuring sticks that will help lead to fair solutions. These include the law, precedent, equal treatment, market value, UN resolutions and such.

Alternatives

The purpose of negotiation is not always to reach an agreement. The purpose of negotiation is to explore whether you can satisfy your interests better through an agreement versus pursuit of your own best alternative to a negotiated agreement. (BATNA) This is a significant issue. The better your BATNA, the more leverage and power you will enjoy.

Proposals

Try to select an option that satisfies your interest, particularly one better than your BATNA.

- Aspirations: countries that begin with realistically high aspirations often enjoy better agreements. Realistic aspirations are bound however, by standards of fairness and the other's BATNA.
- Content with: what agreement, far from perfect, would satisfy my basic interests to make me reasonably content?
- Live with: What agreement would satisfy my interests marginally better than my BATNA?

Techniques From Other MUNers

- Dress appropriately, business attire is in order.
- Remember that it is not your opinion you are expounding but the country you have been assigned to represent.
- Be willing to continuously improve and refine your capabilities.
- Do mock trials with your team members and neighbouring teams.



- Technique matters - so practice it.
- Be aware of different political perspectives - East vs. West, North vs. South.
- Compromise is an art, treat it that way.
- Get hooked on MUN, this will change your life.
- Learn from your experience.
- Mistakes happen - don't worry.
- Hold a debriefing session each evening with your team to discuss things that worked and things that did not. This can also keep the team spirit going after a long day of work, which might seem discouraging at some points.
- The Dias is there to guide you, approach them if you need assistance.
- Keep a record of your feedback and plan for improvement.
- You can never be too prepared.
- Congratulate your team members (and other delegates!) on their contributions to the team and the conference.