

WRITING RESOLUTIONS

Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions are the primary reason that delegates meet in committee at the United Nations. They reflect decisions made by these bodies to solve global problems in a democratic process (one nation, one vote, generally through simple majority decisions). A resolution becomes part of international law once it is passed by either body. However, only resolutions passed by the Security Council are binding on nations, under Article 25 of the *UN Charter*, and are usually enforced by the United Nations. Resolutions passed by the General Assembly and other committees are considered to be non-binding and lack the force of Security Council Resolutions. The General Assembly's primary role is to serve as an open forum and the sounding board for the world.

Resolutions are the primary tools used by United Nations organs to make policy or take action. A resolution is the authoritative word of the organization on the issue under consideration in your committee or council. There are a wide variety of resolutions which include recommendations, condemnations, criticisms, opinions, conventions, treaties, executive orders, and other actions. The resolutions you will be writing for this conference will generally be recommendations.

As you conduct your research, you should develop specific policy positions that your country embraces on the issues that you will negotiate during the deliberations. Once you are in committee (that is, conducting negotiations during the session), you will need to summarize these policy positions into Working Papers, share them with delegates from other countries, and eventually submit them to the Dais (the Chair or Moderator) as Draft Resolutions. A resolution is a one-sentence proposal that calls for some kind of action to be taken by an organ of the United Nations, which can include directives to member states, various UN organizations, the Secretariat, or combinations of these three groups. You can also draft resolutions that condemn the actions of a particular country. You will write a resolution by combining your research with your nation's position on the issue under consideration, and then inserting that information into the Preamble and Operative Clauses of a Draft Resolution. The content, as well as the style and language, that you should include in the Draft Resolution will play a major role in the passage or rejection of your proposal (Draft Resolution), so it is critical that you carefully draft and word your document.

A strong Working Paper or Draft Resolution should initiate some kind of action that will address the issues under consideration by your body. It should be well planned and clearly state how this action will accomplish an objective (ideally to solve the problem). Finally, a good Draft Resolution will directly address the controversy or make sure that another committee or UN agency will take over responsibility for solving it (while at the same time avoiding tough decisions and simply passing the problem on to another body). Because General Assembly Resolutions are limited to moral suasion (with the exception of treaties and conventions, but these documents are binding only to countries that sign them), a good Draft Resolution will attempt to gain the signatures of as many delegates as possible, more than the required simple majority; this will reflect global consensus on the solution to the problem. Yet, you should simultaneously avoid drafting a "watered-down" resolution that is broadly supported but lacks "teeth" or a plan of action that will solve the issue.

Developing a Successful Resolution

There are three major steps in negotiating and writing a successful resolution at a Model UN conference:

1. Working Paper: With the opening of the floor at the beginning of your committee meeting, you should compose a rough draft of how your country thinks the issue under consideration should be addressed and solved. A Working Paper is your first step; it is a document that has not yet been formally introduced to the committee. It does not yet have Sponsors or Signatories because it is a work in progress (more on this below). Once written, and this can simply be in outline form, you should share your Working Paper with other delegates (especially those that you have identified as being friendly to your country in your preliminary research) to get their opinions and input. This will undoubtedly lead to

compromise and revisions as other delegates share their ideas to achieve their objectives in the document. Once the drafters of the Working Paper feel that it is ready, they should submit the document to the Dais for approval.

2. Draft Resolution: Once you have acquired the necessary Sponsors and Signatories (a minimum of one Sponsor and two Signatories in the Security Council and a minimum of two Sponsors and a minimum of 20 percent of the members of the Quorum, including Sponsors, as Signatories in General Assembly Committees), you can present your Working Paper as a Draft Resolution to the Dais. The Sponsor(s) are the authors of the document while the Signatories are delegates who would like to see the draft debated on the floor by all of the delegates (they do not necessarily support the document but see some merit for its consideration). The Chair or Moderator then reviews the Working Paper and if it meets all of the criteria laid out below, the Dais accepts it as a Draft Resolution. The Chair will then give the document a number for identification purposes.

The Sponsor(s) then introduces the Draft Resolution on the floor (this means reading the document and providing a general rationale for its adoption), takes general questions from other delegates through the Chair, and then the delegates debate the benefits and deficits of the draft. Once submitted and on the floor, the Draft Resolution can be changed in two ways:

A. Friendly Amendment: A Draft Resolution can be amended by a delegate when the Signatory and Sponsors agree to a revision in the wording of the Operative Clauses. Revisions include adding to, deleting, or changing the wording of the clauses: it can change portions of the Operating Clauses, single words in clauses, or it can strike out an entire Operating Clause. A delegate offering a Friendly Amendment must submit the Amendment in writing to the Chair and include the number of the Draft Resolution which will be revised. As the Sponsor of the Amendment, the delegate must sign the document as well as obtain the signatures of the other Sponsors and Signatories (this indicates that they accept the proposed revisions making the document a Friendly Amendment). The Chair or Moderator will review the introduced Friendly Amendment and ask the Sponsor(s) or Signatories if they had indeed signed the document. If everything is in order, the Dais will simply announce the change to the Draft Resolution to the committee. No vote is necessary to introduce a Friendly Amendment and remember that the clauses in the Preamble cannot be amended.

B. Unfriendly Amendment: In the event that a delegate seeks to revise the wording of an Operative Clause but does not have the support of all of the Sponsor(s) or Signatories (it takes only one to refuse to accept the changes to make the document an Unfriendly Amendment), then the delegate can introduce an Unfriendly Amendment (or simply an Amendment). The delegate should submit the Amendment to the Chair and include the number of the Draft Resolution which will be revised as well as the delegate's signature. The Chair will review the Amendment and, if all is in order, will allow the Sponsor to introduce the document to the members of the committee. Once the delegate moves to introduce an (Unfriendly) Amendment, it is considered by the members of the body. The motion to consider an Amendment does not require a vote. For the Amendment to be passed or rejected, it must undergo a vote during the voting procedure. A word of caution, be careful with Unfriendly Amendments because they can easily undermine or completely destroy a Draft Resolution if they are passed.

3. Resolution: After debate and negotiation, delegates can decide it is time to vote on the Draft Resolution. If the body goes into the voting procedure and the Draft Resolution passes by the required majority, the process is completed and it becomes a Resolution. Different bodies have different requirements for the passage of Draft Resolutions:

A. Security Council Resolution: If the Draft Resolution is passed by nine member states and is not vetoed by any of the permanent members (it takes only one of the five permanent members), it becomes part of international law.

B. General Assembly Committee Resolution: If the Draft Resolution is passed by a simple majority of the members of General Assembly Committee (these bodies meet as a Committee of the Whole, or in other words, all the member states are represented in each committee), the document is

passed on to the Plenary Session of the General Assembly for action. This Model UN conference will not hold a Plenary Session and any Resolutions passed by the Committee will be considered successful Resolutions.

C. General Assembly Resolution: If the Committee Resolution is passed by a simple majority of the members of the General Assembly, the Resolution becomes the body's official policy. It should be noted that for Important Questions, as defined by Article 18, Section 2 of the *UN Charter*, a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is needed for passage. Important Questions deal with international peace and security; the election of states to UN bodies; new members to the organization; suspension of the rights and privileges, or even expulsion of members; and budgetary issues.

Critical Parts of a Draft Resolution

A Draft Resolution is composed of four major sections: the Heading, the Subject, the Preamble, and the Operative Clauses. A copy of a [Security Council Draft Resolution](#) and a [General Assembly Draft Resolution](#) are included as examples.

1. The Heading clearly identifies the Draft Resolution and states the following points: where the Draft Resolution is directed; what is the issue under discussion; and who is (are) the author(s). As a result, the Heading should include: the committee or organ that that is the target of the proposal (in this conference, either to the Security Council or one of the General Assembly Committees); the subject that is covered by the document; and the countries proposing and sponsoring the Draft Resolution. The Sponsor(s) and Signatory States should be listed in alphabetical order with the Sponsor(s) on one line and the Signatories on the next line.

2. The Subject is the next section of the Draft Resolution. It states which organization is proposing a particular action or will take action to address the issue or problem stated in the Heading. (again, in this conference either the Security Council or one of the General Assembly Committees). It serves as the subject of the proposed resolution (keep in mind that the final resolution is one long sentence). The body identified in the Subject should be written or typed in capital letters and end a comma.

3. The Preamble is the third section of the Draft Resolution and sets up the Operative Clauses. The clauses in the Preamble summarizes the history of the issue under consideration; it defines why action to solve a problem should be adopted by reviewing past actions and explains the reasons why the body should adopt the Draft Resolution that you are proposing. The goal of the Preamble is to define the purpose of your proposal and provide evidence to support the following Operative Clauses, which are drawn from your research on the issue at hand. Each clause of the Preamble usually begins with a gerund (verbs that end in -ing) and are underlined. Regarding the proper format of the Preamble (you are still writing a single sentence), you should indent the first sentence of each clause and end every clause with a comma.

4. Operative Clauses are the final section of a Draft Resolution and states what action the body should take to address the issue under discussion. The Operative Clauses are the most contentious for the committee since they are the only parts of the Draft Resolution that can be amended (with the exception that Sponsors and Signatories can be added or removed when the Draft Resolution is under debate on the floor). The Operative Clauses serve to establish a solution to the problem or to suggest an alternative approach to rectify the situation. The most important and comprehensive Operative Clause should be listed first, and each clause that follows should be less important or help enact the first clause. The first word of each Operative Clause should be an action verb (in the present tense—ending in s) and underlined. The first sentence of each clause should be numbered and indented; sub-clauses should be indented a second time and start with lower case letters. Each clause in this section should end with a semi-colon, except for the final sentence with ends with a period (since it is the end of the Draft Resolution).

Draft Resolutions to Avoid

Some Draft Resolutions look good on paper but do not accomplish much in terms of solving the problem under consideration. Such proposals are known as “omelets” and may reflect some of the following characteristics. A weak draft will contain a large number of clauses in the Preamble but offer only a few Operating Clauses to rectify the situation. In such a case, the thrust of the proposal is simply to set up a committee to address the issue or to send the problem to another General Assembly Committee or specialized UN agency. This is viewed as simply “passing the buck” to another body for their action. It is important that you do not write Draft Resolutions that are omelets. The Chair or Moderator will not take such proposals lightly because they do not accomplish anything and your committee will waste time considering and debating it.

However, you should also recognize that omelets are part of the negotiating process. Sometimes Resolution Drafts are watered down so much through compromise language that a final version takes only minimal action to solve the problem. Delegates can be over eager to get the largest number of nations to support and vote in favor of a Draft Resolution that it can become superfluous. In addition, if it is your national goal to avoid reaching a consensus on this issue, you might deliberately draft such a Draft Resolution to slow down deliberations while appearing to be an active participant to the proceedings. This can be a dangerous tactic and may raise the ire of the Chair if you are perceived as being an obstructionist.

How to Prepare to Write Working Papers and Draft Resolutions

After you have begun your research on the country that you will represent and the issue under consideration by your committee, you should start practicing writing Draft Resolutions. Using the [List of Preamble Phrases](#) and [List of Operative Phrases](#), you should attempt to write clauses that will be incorporated into your proposal. By writing practice clauses, you will be better prepared to draft a proposal at the conference, offer amendments, or negotiate revisions in a draft.

It is recommended that you prepare and bring along some rough Working Papers with you to the conference. In your Research Notebook, you should have a list of national goals that you hope to achieve in response to each of the issues your committee will address, ideas for Operative Clauses, and your policy statements and research material. It is not recommended that you compose complete Draft Resolutions before you arrive, since this will be a waste of your time and effort. You could spend a great deal of valuable time writing a great Draft Resolution that meets the national objectives of your country only to have it immediately shot down or ignored by other delegates. In practice, you will be composing Draft Resolutions with a number of other delegates which will require you to caucus, compromise, and revise Working Papers. Once the negotiations begin, it is important to share your Working Drafts and determine what ideas you all approve. Write down these points and then make a list of recommended Operating Clauses. The Sponsors (authors) then must sit down and write the Draft Resolution, which is supported by your Signatory States. Once the Chair accepts the Draft Resolution and the Signatories introduce the document, the process of debating, compromising, and revising the Draft Resolution with a majority of the delegates is the next step. Ideally, this will lead to the adoption of a successful Resolution.

Improving Draft Resolutions

You should take into consideration the following points to improve your Draft Resolution so that it will adopted by a majority of the members of your committee:

1. While it is important that you use formal language to draft your proposal, your statements should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to understand; proposals that are ambiguous, vague, or confusing will undermine your efforts to achieve your objectives.
2. Remember that you are drafting a document that will strive to solve a problem; therefore, every word and clause included in your proposal should focus on the issue under consideration.

3. Resolutions and especially Operative Clauses should remain on point; they should not go off topic and introduce external or unnecessary recommendations.

4. Shorter clauses are far easier to work with because they are readily understandable, clearly explain a course of action, and are easier to amend to reach a general consensus through compromise or Friendly Amendments. Long clauses are susceptible to extended negotiations, revision, and amendment which may result in important sections being stricken from the proposal.

5. Be sure to include a mixture of details and general language as well as ambitious and positive recommendations which will appeal to a broad audience and garner support for your Draft Resolution.

6. While it is important for you to write your own Draft Resolutions, you are not required to pull proposals out of thin air. You should consult and modify existing UN documents as the basis for your proposals as long as you fully comprehend the original texts and are sure that they apply to your conference issue.

7. Clauses in the Preamble should only provide background information of the issue under consideration; they should not provide any recommendations (which should instead be inserted as Operative Clauses) or take an overly provocative or critical stance which could alienate some delegates.

8. Peaceful recommendations are far more acceptable to delegates in relation to calls for aggressive actions.

9. Whenever possible, cite UN resolutions, treaties, conventions, and actions in your Draft Resolution. This demonstrates that your proposal is building on earlier UN decisions and warrants serious consideration to solve an outstanding issue. You should try to promote these earlier policies because Draft Resolutions that reverse, nullify, or come into conflict with established precedent is generally a bad idea and will not be welcomed by other delegates.

10. Avoid rambling on in a clause; focus your proposal on concrete and feasible solutions and recommendations that will solve the problem. When you propose an action, identify the means, objectives, and especially funding to achieve a solution.

11. Try to be as objective and impartial as possible in the clauses of your Draft Resolution, even if such an approach is personally distasteful. You should always keep in mind that your proposal is a universal document and that you are seeking a broad consensus to supporting the passage of your measure. Remember that it is easier to catch flies with honey instead of vinegar.

12. Finally, be receptive to other delegates' perspectives as an important step towards compromise, support, and eventual success. The solution of the issue under debate in your committee cannot be solved by one or only a few countries; it will require an international effort.