



## ***Chairing a Model UN Conference***

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Adapted from materials by Flint-Central High School

### **Before you go:**



Think about these ideas:

- The best chair makes every delegate feel s/he as a stake in the committee.
- Objectivity and control are key. Leave your ego at the door.
- Calm and clarity are critical.
- Use terms and language appropriate to the UN. Set the tone.
- Be Pro-Active! Anticipate delegate needs and questions and find positive solutions for them.
- Have a set of written goals for the committee delegates, what you want them to accomplish. This doesn't mean what a resolution looks like, but what must be debated, what skills you want to see in delegates, the atmosphere you want the committee to achieve, and even alternative outlines of how you think the committee might reach their goals by the end of the conference.

### **At the conference:**



1. Introduce yourself and any co-chairs, legal counsel, rapporteurs, or other officials in the committee room. Be sure everyone is in the right place— announce the committee and topic. Welcome the delegates!
2. Call roll, reminding delegates to respond formally (“Present,” “Present and Voting,” or ‘Here”). (No “Yo!”)
3. Quickly establish quorum for the committee and determine the numbers for a simple majority and 2/3 majority so you have them ready for later. Announce them to the committee, if you wish.
4. Give the delegates a “road map” of the day. This might include the process of debating, taking their time and working at details before agreeing too quickly to a resolution, what you will help with and what they will have to work out in debate or caucus, and how to deal with questions they might have through the conference. Let them know the proper form for asking questions (“Point of Inquiry to the Chair,” for instance).

Help them understand why something is being done as it is, what they need to do to make something happen, etc. This accomplished

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two things: it demonstrates to them that you have thought about the committee and see the big picture; it also helps them feel you are looking out for them—they will feel safe with you. Remember, most delegates are new and nervous. Show them that your power will come from their involvement and inclusion, not their exploitation.

5. If necessary, set the agenda. (Have chosen an equitable method for this early.)
6. Call for opening statements. If there is no response, you can tell the delegates that you will call the roll and ask each delegate to make a 30 second opening statement on the topic. How do they see the issue before the committee? (Remember to thank the delegates for their remarks! Often you are the only one to respond directly to them and this is good positive reinforcement.)
7. After the statements, ask if there are any points or motions on the floor. (Be ready to explain what this means and that you will be saying it often during the day.)
8. If no one makes a motion, your next move could be one of two things:
  - Draw up a speakers list of those who wish to examine the major points of the topic and begin to focus delegates on the issues involved.
  - Suggest that the committee move into a caucus. (Make clear that the purpose of the caucus is to meet with other delegates whose positions may be similar to their own, to begin to outline key points, develop rationale, formulate arguments, etc. Direct them in these early stages to seek out members of their own blocs and begin to form alliances— based on their policies, not on their friends from their own school!)
9. After caucus, draw up a speakers list. The job of the committee (and your job, too!) is to listen to the ideas generated by the caucuses, begin to see whether certain key ideas have emerged, and whether this committee is headed for consensus or competing proposals.

If consensus seems too easy (no one want to disagree or everyone is too timid to debate), send notes to two or three delegates pointing out that ideas being considered are nothing with which their nations could agree and that you want them to address the committee and say so. In other words, quietly stir the pot!

If two or three competing blocs emerge, encourage them to continue their good thinking so that they may sure to defend their own ideas and be able to constructively criticize the alternatives.
10. Eventually, someone will have to call for caucus time so that your different groups will have time to put their ideas down on paper. (Suggest someone with neat handwriting be the scribe.) Have them first start with an informal working paper. You are concerned with the ideas to be included now, not the form of a proper resolution.

11. Once you have two or three good working or idea papers, put them on the wall and set the stage to begin formal debate. Consider only one paper at a time. This is important—otherwise no one will be able to follow the focus of the debate. Number the papers and ask for a motion to consider one of them. Call—per your rules—for one in favor and one opposed to consideration. Then have the delegates vote. The one they select is the one they will debate until it is passed, rejected, or tabled.

You will draw up a speakers list “for,” “against,” and “to.” You will certainly have to explain “to” if you haven’t already done so. Entertain motions for length of speaking time. Explain (and maybe display) the procedure for questions to the speaker.

If someone wants to move a section out of one of your other papers into one being debated, that is in order, but it will have to be proposed as an amendment. When *that* passes, fails, or is tabled, you will return to your original debate until the committee reaches a decision about the paper being debated.

12. If debate on the first paper is short, call for motions to move the debate to another paper. Repeat the process until the committee reaches resolution.

### **Other Ideas:**

- At the end of the day, if time is short, you may want to ask two or three delegates if they would put the ideas from a paper passed by the committee into a formal resolution form. The committee can then fine tune their work by formally passing their ideas as a resolution.
- If your committee wishes, and some people know how to write a resolution, they may choose to present and debate their ideas in resolution form rather than as working papers. You can help them make the choice depending on their experience.
- The key in all this is the *orderly debate of ideas*, not whether the final product takes the form of a working paper or a formal resolution.
- Watch the clock. Keep track of break times for meals, press conferences, etc. Pace your committee’s day so that they won’t end too early, but will also finish in time to feel successful.

*Congratulations ahead of time!  
You will do a great job!*