

Model UN Glossary

Model UN can be confusing to a beginner, not only because of the complexity of the issues and the pace of debate, but because of the strangeness of the language. So to simplify the entire process WORDZMUN'10 enlists for you some of the most frequently used terms.

Abstain - During a vote on a substantive matter, delegates may abstain rather than vote yes or no. This generally signals that a state does not support the resolution being voted on, but does not oppose it enough to vote no against it.

Adjourn - All UN or Model UN sessions end with a vote to adjourn. This means that the debate is suspended until the next meeting. This is for a long time (until next year's conference).

Agenda - The order in which the issues before a committee will be discussed. The first duty of a committee following the roll call is usually to establish the agenda by reordering it, if wanted.

Amendment - A change to a resolution can be of two types: a "friendly amendment" is supported by the original draft resolution's sponsors, and is passed automatically, while an "unfriendly amendment" is not supported by the original sponsors and must be voted on by the committee as a whole.

Binding - Having legal force in UN member states. Security Council resolutions are binding, as are decisions of the International Court of Justice; resolutions of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary councils are not.

Bloc - A group of countries in a similar geographical region or with a similar opinion on a particular topic.

Caucus - A break in formal debate in which countries can more easily and informally discuss a topic. There are two types: moderated caucus and unmoderated caucus.

Chair - A member of the dais that moderates debate, keeps time, rules on points and motions, and enforces the rules of procedure. Also known as President in some councils.

Dais - The group of people, usually high school or college students, in charge of a Model UN committee. It generally consists of a Chair, a Director, and a Rapporteur.

Decorum - The order and respect for others that all delegates at a Model UN

Model UN Glossary

conference must exhibit. The Chair will call for decorum when he or she feels that the committee is not being respectful of a speaker, of the dais, or of their roles as ambassadors.

Director - A member of the dais that oversees the creation of working papers and draft resolutions, acts as an expert on the topic, makes sure delegates accurately reflect the policy of their countries, and ensures that decorum is maintained during caucuses.

Draft resolution - A document that seeks to fix the problems addressed by a Model UN committee. If passed by the committee, the draft resolution will become into a resolution.

Flow of debate - The order in which events proceed during a Model UN conference.

Formal debate - The "standard" type of debate at a Model UN conference, in which delegates speak for a certain time in an order based on a speakers' list.

Moderated Caucus - A type of caucus in which delegates remain seated and the Chair calls on them one at a time to speak for a short period of time, enabling a freer exchange of opinions than would be possible in formal debate.

Motion - A request made by a delegate that the committee as a whole do something. Some motions might be to go into a caucus, to adjourn, to introduce a draft resolution, or to move into voting bloc.

Observer - A state, national organization, regional organization, or non-governmental organization that is not a member of the UN but participates in its debates. Observers can vote on procedural matters but not substantive matters. An example is the Holy See.

On the floor - At a Model UN conference, when a working paper or draft resolution is first written, it may not be discussed in debate. After it is approved by the Director and introduced by the committee, it is put "on the floor" and may be discussed.

Operative clause - The part of a resolution which describes how the UN will address a problem. It begins with an action verb (decides, establishes, recommends, etc.).

Point - A request raised by a delegate for information or for an action relating to that delegate. Examples include a point of order, a point of inquiry, and a point of personal privilege.

Model UN Glossary

Perambulatory Clause - The part of a resolution that describes previous actions taken on the topic and reasons why the resolution is necessary. It begins with a participle or adjective (noting, concerned, regretting, aware of, recalling, etc.).

Procedural - Having to do with the way a committee is run, as opposed to the topic being discussed. All delegates present must vote on procedural matters and may not abstain.

Quorum - The minimum number of delegates needed to be present for a committee to meet. In the General Assembly, a quorum consists of one third of the members to begin debate, and a majority of members to pass a resolution. In the Security Council, no quorum exists for the body to debate, but nine members must be present to pass a resolution.

Rapporteur - A member of the dais whose duties include keeping the speakers' list and taking the roll call.

Resolution - A document that has been passed by an organ of the UN that aims to address a particular problem or issue. The UN equivalent of a law.

Right of Reply - A right to speak in reply to a previous speaker's comment, invoked when a delegate feels personally insulted by another's speech. Generally requires a written note to the Chair to be invoked.

Roll Call - The first order of business in a Model UN committee, during which the Rapporteur reads aloud the names of each member state in the committee. When a delegate's country's name is called, he or she may respond "present" or "present and voting." A delegate responding "present and voting" may not abstain on a substantive vote.

Rules of Procedure - The rules by which a Model UN committee is run.

Second - To agree with a motion being proposed. Many motions must be seconded before they can be brought to a vote.

Secretariat - The most senior staff of a Model UN conference.

Secretary-General - The leader of a Model UN conference.

Signatory - A country that wishes a draft resolution to be put on the floor and signs the draft resolution to accomplish this. A signatory need not support a resolution; it

Model UN Glossary

only wants it to be discussed. Usually, Model UN conferences require some minimum number of sponsors and signatories for a draft resolution to be approved.

Simple majority - 50% plus one of the number of delegates in a committee. The amount needed to pass most votes.

Speakers' List - A list that determines the order in which delegates will speak. Whenever a new topic is opened for discussion, the Chair will create a speakers' list by asking all delegates wishing to speak to raise their placards and calling on them one at a time. During debate, a delegate may indicate that he or she wishes to be added to the speakers' list by sending a note to the dais.

Sponsor - One of the writers of a draft resolution. A friendly amendment can only be created if all sponsors agree.

Substantive - Having to do with the topic being discussed. A substantive vote is a vote on a draft resolution or amendment already on the floor during voting bloc. Only member states (not observer states or non-governmental organizations) may vote on substantive issues.

Unmoderated Caucus - A type of caucus in which delegates leave their seats to mingle and speak freely. Enables the free sharing of ideas to an extent not possible in formal debate or even a moderated caucus. Frequently used to sort countries into blocs and to write working papers and draft resolutions.

Working Paper - A document in which the ideas of some delegates on how to resolve an issue are proposed. Precursor to a draft resolution.

Veto - The ability, held by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States to prevent any draft resolution in the Security Council from passing by voting no.

Vote - A time at which delegates indicate whether they do or do not support a proposed action for the committee. There are two types: procedural and substantive.

Voting bloc - The period at the end of a committee session during which delegates vote on proposed amendments and draft resolutions. Nobody may enter or leave the room during voting bloc.