

IV. Organising a Model UN

The organization of a Model United Nations conference takes months of planning and a strong commitment from all staff-members, regardless of the size of the conference. Large or small, a well organized conference can be a huge success. Good planning is the key to providing delegates with a memorable experience, giving them an accurate glimpse into the workings of the United Nations system. This chapter is an overview of what is needed to organize a Model UN.

A. Select a target audience

Selecting the correct target audience is essential when organizing a Model UN conference. In order to ensure its success, it is important to attract people from a diverse field of interests. Students from the field of political science, business, law, science, medicine and various others will produce a wide variety of viewpoints throughout debate.

When organizing a *high school* conference, it is important to appeal to a range of interests, as it is difficult to immediately identify participants' interests. This is accomplished through the selection of the committees you will host at your conference. For a large conference, you can have a number of specialized agencies (WHO, UNSC, IMF, etc.) to directly appeal to a number of interests. For a smaller conference, you can hold General Assembly committees which are able to encompass a wide-range of issues such as disarmament, security, and sustainable development to name a few.

For a *Post-Secondary* (College/University) Model UN, it may be easier to identify and market to your target audience through classes in Political Science or International Relations. By participating in these classes, students demonstrate an interest in world affairs, identifying themselves as possible delegates. Knowing that these outlets exist is a definite advantage when determining which committees and topics to host, as you will be able to cater to the interests of this target market.

B. Structuring your Conference

Role description

Model UN is structured to reflect the United Nations. Staff members adopt titles such as Secretary-General to allow them to better understand how the UN works. Here are some examples of these titles with a description. However, it should be remembered that these may be modified according to the needs of your conference.

Secretariat

The secretariat is the coordinating, supervising and problem-solving body of the conference. Although these individuals will be actively involved in the management of events during the conference, they will not be involved in the moderation of debate – see Dais below for moderator's job descriptions.

Secretary General

This person is in charge of the conference in all its general aspects. This person usually has the final say in resolving problems or issues. The Secretary General ensures that all organizational aspects of the conference are dealt with.

Deputy Secretary General (Chargé d'Affaires)

This person reports directly into the Secretary-General and will be in charge of delegate registration, faculty advisors and any other participation issue related to the conference.

Chief of Staff

This person will coordinate the selection and training of all the conference staff and will address any arising issues relating to staff before and during the conference.

Under-Secretary-General for Committees

This person (or more than one person depending on the size of the conference) will coordinate the activities of each committee, select which committees will be hosted at the conference, assist committee staff members with researching, writing and editing background guides and ensure that all staff members respect established deadlines.

Treasurer/Director of Financial Affairs

This person coordinates all budgetary, fundraising and sponsorship aspects of the conference. Should a conference be very large, positions to coordinate the technological aspects of the conference (website, computer resources at the conference, etc.) or to cover the advertising/media relations aspects may be required. (There is no required conference set-up. However, it is easier for participants to know whom to speak with to resolve a particular issue when these suggestions are used because several existing Model UN conferences already use these titles,.)

Dais

Each committee has a set of dais staff who are the moderators of debate in session throughout the conference. The dais guides debate and approves working papers and resolutions before they are presented to the committee.

The Dais consists of:

The *Chair*, who is the leader of the committee and is responsible of ensuring that the committee background guide is submitted within the proper deadlines, moderates the debate and ensures that the rules of procedures are followed. This person is also responsible for all committee proceedings;

the *Director*, who is responsible for reviewing and approving resolutions, substantive issues, and moderating debate upon request from the Chair. In the case of crisis committees, the director is also responsible for the creation of the crisis scenario, and coordinates the crisis team;

the *Rapporteurs*, who are the administrative assistants of the committee and are responsible for maintaining and updating the speaker's list, monitoring the speaking time, assisting the director to review the resolutions and ensuring distribution to delegates. They also assist in answering questions from the committee and may be required to moderate upon request from the chair; and,

the *Pages*, whose services are often offered within larger committees. One important aspect of being a delegate to a Model UN conference is passing notes. Countries may use this means to find out what other delegates think about an issue, request support for a draft resolution, etc. Pages are responsible for passing these notes to the appropriate delegates.

C. Preparing a traditional MUN committee

Traditional committees are at the very core of Model UN activities. They are the easiest to run and most delegates will attend a traditionally-run committee.

Step 1: Select the committee.

Most committees are based on a UN body or specialized agency. General Assembly committees are commonly run, although it is interesting to attempt to simulate a regional committee. Choosing a range of committees that cater to a variety of interests (health, disarmament, human rights, environment, etc) will ensure that delegates from any background will be interested in attending your conference. It is also possible to focus the overarching scope of your conference around a single theme, allowing for an in-depth analysis of a specific issue.

Step 2: Create the background guide.

The background guide should contain the following:

- A general overview of the committee (history, past actions, etc.);
- an introduction of the topic (general definitions, important concepts, etc.);
- current issues (any major crisis? Major conflicts? etc.);
- block positions, regional blocks in the case of general committees or general country positions in the case of regional committees (What are the main positions on the issue across the members of your committee, who is generally allied with whom?);
- questions to consider (point form, what questions or points should delegates consider in their research); and,
- resources (list websites, books and articles).

Step 3: Prepare Draft Resolutions.

In the case of shorter or some high school conferences, a sample draft resolution may be provided. Delegates will then need to debate the draft resolution and modify it rather than write it from scratch. University level conferences will usually leave it up to delegates to create their own resolutions during the sessions at the conference.

D. Preparing a crisis committee

Traditional crisis committees include a Security Council or a NATO simulation. By their nature, these committees usually have only a handful of participants, which encourages more intensive debate. Experienced delegates are attracted to these committees as they are the most challenging, and are often the most creative committees. It is important that these committees be well prepared if the simulation is to run smoothly, and that staff-created scenarios are well planned out and adaptive to delegates' strength. It is very important to create a highly charged, dynamic atmosphere requiring fast-thinking and quick reactions.

Establishing your committee's crisis scenario

Choosing a stimulating crisis can be very difficult. The situation chosen must be complex enough to provide many alternative paths of action but not too complex as to impede on the discussions. Because such a

committee is created months before the conference takes place, it is important to try to foresee whether upcoming world events will impact your committee, sometimes making the issues a moot point.

Step 1: Break down your committee's timeline.

It is important to have an idea of when events will take place, so crises are well spread out over each committee session. Perhaps schedule 1 hour of "real-time" to be equivalent to 1 day of simulated events. Delegates need to be aware of this timeline to effectively evaluate how much "real-time" they have to react to a situation.

Step 2: Establish a general outline of your scenario.

- Plan 2 or 3 major events for the duration of each committee session (usually lasting between 4 to 5 hours). These major events should be the pillars of your crisis committee. However be prepared to slightly modify these events according to how delegates have reacted to previous situations.
- Plan 1 or 2 smaller events per hour to keep the delegates engaged. Some of these events may be created to distract delegates from the real crisis.
- Create alternative events or scenarios. Delegates will expect the staff to acknowledge their reactions while creating the situations. It is very important to try to predict the many different paths of action delegates may take to avoid creating unrealistic situations.
- Make sure to leave enough time between crises for delegates to properly react to the previous one. Do not forget that the purpose of a committee is to come to some sort of consensus or resolution.

Step 3: Create a number of ways in which to present the crisis.

- Prepare the first few press releases you will issue delegates to inform them of a crisis. Usually most press releases will need to be written once the conference has begun, since it is important for the staff to take into account delegate reactions.
- Prepare any maps or props you may require, well before the conference. Some conferences will simulate "kidnappings", terrorists movements etc. Prepare all your costumes and other props early on.

Step 4: Create the background guide.

- Generally, the background guide written for a crisis committee should contain the following:
 - General overview of the committee;
 - history or important facts that will impact the committee;
 - a timeline of events;
 - a position profile (basic description of each position on the committee);
 - questions to consider (point form, what questions or points should delegates consider in their research); and,
 - resources (please make sure to list websites, books and articles).
- If your committee is historical, make sure to clearly mention the starting point of the events. This way, delegates will know to be very familiar with events prior to that point in time and ignore following events.
- If your committee is futuristic, a timeline of events between "today" and the starting point of your committee must be established. Otherwise, delegates might find it difficult to adequately prepare and the realism of your scenario will be diminished.

Step 5: Select the crisis staff.

- The crisis staff assists the director with the creation of the scenario. Delegates in crisis committees are expected to send occasional notes to the staff, referring to them as their “home government”. Delegates will need a variety of information throughout the simulation, such as intelligence from their governments, the number of troops available for military action or the amount of money available for foreign aid. The crisis staff will answer these inquiries. It should be stressed that the crisis staff is not there to answer questions about foreign policy or domestic policy; these issues should have been covered by the delegates’ research.
- The crisis staff will pose as “actors” when simulating “kidnappings” or other events in front of delegates. They may take on the roles of experts or other characters that delegates may request.
- The crisis staff assists the director with writing press releases and helps gauge delegate reactions when modifying the scenario.

E. Preparing a tribunal

Tribunals (i.e. International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court) are an interesting variation to a traditional Model UN committee because they provide delegates a chance to review certain aspects of international law as well as giving staff the chance to engage more actively with delegates. The first half of the committee will usually be taken by the case itself: lawyers questioning witnesses, question periods, etc. The second half will involve judges rendering their judgements and examining international law.

Step 1: Select the staff.

- Because of the committee’s trial format, “lawyers” may be required and these roles can be filled by conference staff members who prepare the background information on the case(s) to be discussed. Delegates will act as judges or jurors and will review the case. Extra staff members may be needed to act as “witnesses”.

Step 2: Prepare the case.

- The committee staff (“lawyers”) will establish the case and layout the facts in the committee background guide. This will include information on the prosecution and the defence’s case as well as witness testimonials. The staff should ensure they do not lead the delegates (“judges”) towards a conclusion but should provide enough opposing arguments to allow them to clearly examine all the facts.

Step 3: Create the background guide.

- The background guide should include most of the facts about the case as well as mention any cases of jurisprudence. Delegates sitting on a tribunal do not have to be law students, but knowledge of and an interest in international law will make the experience more beneficial.
- Include a list of all important documents, conventions and covenants on which they should base their decisions.

F. Preparing a conference schedule

Well before the conference dates, it is very important to prepare a conference schedule. Write out all events and staff duties in time blocks for each day of the conference. Walk them through in your mind, think of all the logistical needs of each activity, and make sure each responsibility is assigned to a staff member and taken care of. Keep a list of all these jobs, and as the conference approaches, ensure all arrangements are made beforehand, as good planning will make the conference run much smoother.

The schedule itself should note when delegates will be in committee session. All dais and crisis staff will be occupied during this time, while organizing staff (Deputy Secretary General, Secretariat Staff, etc.) will be unoccupied. These staff members should be kept busy during these times, preparing for the next event (lunch break, guest speakers, etc.).

G. Funding your conference

Conference funding can come from many sources. The more fundraising you do will reduce the cost to the participants, making it accessible to more students. It can be extremely difficult for a new Model UN to secure strong funding, because it has not yet made a name for itself. Yet, universities often have resources for student initiatives, and Model UN's are very appealing investments as they draw students to the university while promoting an international consciousness. Three main sources of funding at universities are student government, faculty and department offices, and the university administration itself.

Another great funding resource is corporate sponsors. Securing a corporate sponsorship can be very beneficial, yet be aware that corporate sponsors will want something in return. Select your sponsors with foresight, as their name and logo will be associated with your conference. Advertising in delegate materials and on your website can be a way to thank all of your sponsors.

H. Advertising your conference

To attract the desired number of delegates, a conference should be well advertised. Your target audience must be made aware of your conference if they are to attend. A listserv, message-board, and posters are great ways of getting the word out, but you must also be 'aggressive' in your recruiting. Once you have determined your target audience, search out contact information for groups within your school, and at other schools who share similar interests. Most universities have Model UN clubs on campus and should not be difficult to find. Compile a list of what groups you want to invite and send an invitation package to each of these groups. A good invitation package will include;

- An invitation letter;
- an overview of the conference – include a list of committees and topics;
- details on the registration process and contact info;
- a list of fees, available hotels and other logistical details; and,
- sample posters for them to advertise the event on their campus.

The more groups you approach, the more delegates you will attract. Advertise and recruit early – give prospective delegates ample time to prepare themselves. Make yourself available for their questions, as the more adaptive you are, the easier it is for them to attend.

High school conferences can do the same type of recruiting. Contact the local high schools – Social Studies or History departments are most likely to have the interest to organize a Model UN delegation.

I. Rules of Procedure & Staff:

Sample rules of procedure/rules of procedure writing

Extensive sample rules of procedure are provided in Chapter V. Most rules of procedure used at Model UN conferences are based on Robert's Rules of procedure. They can be modified as needed to fit the level of experience of your delegates. When you select which rule to use, it should be kept in mind that rules are used

to simplify, ease and facilitate debate; not to complicate the process. Rules of procedure are designed to guide the debate and resolution process. The more detailed they are, the less confused delegates will be about the process. However, the Chair, acting as a moderator, should be given some leeway in the interpretation so that things run as smoothly and efficiently as possible during committee.

Staff training ideas

A well trained staff will make the difference at a Model UN. A dais that is weak on procedure cannot run an effective committee, and will aggravate delegates. It is thus important to start training your dais staff soon after they are hired. Set out how they should prepare their background guides, and help them to write them as they go. Each member of the dais should be involved in some aspect of the background guide, as it will get them working together and you will learn their work-habits. When choosing dais staff, it is advisable to team experienced staff with newcomers, as they will be able to learn from one another.

When training staff on procedure, use the experience you have on staff – it is good to rotate the training leader between experienced/well-seasoned staffers, as it will expose the new people to different chairing methods. The lead-trainer should give a detailed overview of general procedure, speakers' lists, quorum, caucusing, resolutions, voting, etc. and provide written guidelines to dais staff, so there is no question of what the rules are. Once staff members gain an understanding of the rules, training sessions should simulate committee sessions, with each staffer having the chance to chair the mock-session. Practicing moderating is the only way to be really ready to chair once simulation begins. Again, using this method, staffers can learn from each others' experience and be active in the training sessions.

J. What happens at the conference?

For organizers, the bulk of the work will be done prior to the conference dates, yet the conference itself is the busiest time of the entire process. You will need registration tables ready for delegates to submit final payment and pick-up their placards and other materials. Make sure to provide participants with conference schedules so they are aware of when and where they are expected to be. Once committee sessions start, delegates will be occupied in their committee rooms, with dais staff moderating their debate. If the location allows, it is a good idea to have an extra room for delegates to debate informally and prepare resolutions so they do not disrupt their committee.

Keep in mind that all dais staff will be occupied during committee sessions. With this in mind, make sure to have enough staffers on hand to arrange for upcoming activities. Moving tables and chairs is not a glamorous job but is not an uncommon task, as rooms are often used for multiple purposes. Good pre-conference planning will be appreciated at this point, as knowing what all needs to get done makes getting it done that much easier.

Have a delegate services/resource centre available at all times. Problems may crop up unexpectedly and the conference staff should be there to assist. A resource centre with computers and internet access will provide delegates an opportunity to do extra research and type resolutions on their own. Ensure that you have staff covering these rooms at all times.

When hosting speakers or other events, ensure all logistical details are arranged in advance, and that you have staff in charge of each event. Last minute running around can be very stressful and unproductive.

The Secretary-General must always be accessible during committee sessions as they will act as the final decision-maker in procedural matters if a problem arises. They must also be able to deal with staffing or delegate issues. The success of the conference is determined on how smooth it runs, allowing no major

interruptions during debate. Thus, the Secretary-General is ultimately responsible, being the primary organizer and final authority on procedural matters.

