



Model UN Vocabulary

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.

Adjourn: All UN or Model UN sessions end with a vote to adjourn. This means that the debate is suspended until the next meeting.

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 set to the agenda.

Amendment: A change to a draft resolution that will be voted. It must be submitted to the Chair in writing.

Background guide: A guide to a topic being discussed in a Model UN committee usually written by conference organizers and distributed to delegates before the conference. The starting point for any research before a Model UN conference.

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

Dais: The group of people – usually high school, educators, or college students, in charge of a Model UN committee.

Decorum: The order and respect for other that all delegates to a Model UN conference must exhibit. The president will for decorum when he/she feels that the committee is not being respectful of a speaker, of the dais, or of their roles as ambassadors/delegates.

Delegate: A student acting as a representative of a member state or observer in a Model UN conference.

Delegation: The entire group of people representing a member state or observer in all committee at the Model UN conference.

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 a resolution.

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

Foreign policy: The vision and proposals of a country towards all the topics in the international community. It's the way in which a country responds to different international topics.

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.

Gavel: A tool, shaped like a small wooden hammer, that the Chair uses to keep order within a Model UN conference.

Member state: A country that has ratified the Charter of the United Nations and whose application to join has been accepted by the General Assembly and Security Council. Currently there are 192 member states.

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, enabling an exchange of positions from countries.

Motion: A request made by a delegate that the committee as a whole should do something.

Observer: A state, national organization regional organization, or non-governmental organization that is not a member of the UN General assembly participates in its debates.

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

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.

Placard: A piece of cardstock with a country's name on it that a delegate raises in the air to signal to the Chair that he or she wishes to speak.

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

Position Paper: A summary of a country's position on a topic, written by a delegate before a Model UN conference.

Pre-ambulatory 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.)

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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.

Unmoderated Caucus: A type of caucus in which delegates leave their seats to mingle and speak freely, enabling the free sharing of ideas to an extent not possible in a moderated caucus. An unmoderated caucus is frequently used to sort countries into blocs and to write working papers and draft resolutions. This time may be also used to freely the room.

Quorum: The minimum number of delegates needed to be present for a committee to meet. In the General Assembly, a quorum consists of the majority of members to pass a resolution or written paper.

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

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.

Roll call: The first order of business in a Model UN committee, during which the Chair reads aloud the names of each member state in the committee. When the name of a delegate's country is called, he or she may respond "the delegation of (name of country) present and voting."

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

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

Secretariat: The staff 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. Usually, Model UN conferences require some minimum number of sponsors and signatories for a draft resolution to be approved.

Simple majority: Half plus one of the numbers of delegates in a committee. The amount of votes needed to pass most motions.

Speakers' List: A list that determines the order in which delegates will speak. When 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 Chair.

Sponsor: One of the writers of a draft resolution.

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.

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. Votes are non-binding.

Working Paper: It is document delegates write that contains ideas on how to resolve an issue, and it is frequently the precursor to a draft resolution.

Voting procedure: The period at the end of a committee session during which delegates vote on proposed amendments and draft resolutions. Nobody may enter or leave during this time. Delegates are permitted from communicating with each other or using technology.