

MORE TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE RESOLUTION

Provided courtesy of the Memphis University School Government Club

GENERAL BACKGROUND:

The United Nations is a community of its member states. It exists for two general purposes:

- 1) To maintain peace and security, and prevent aggression, amongst nations. The Security Council is the only UN body with the authority to pressure or punish countries through military or economic means.
- 2) To improve the quality of life for the people of the world. This is carried out through one of the dozens of UN organizations and committees.

The United Nations is **NOT** a world government. It cannot violate the “national sovereignty” of a member nation; that is, the right of a nation to control its own internal affairs. Hence, UN.

SPECIFICS ON RESOLUTIONS:

Resolutions are merely suggestions, requests, or statements of “world opinion.” (The exception to this is the “peace and security” function of the Security Council).

The General Assembly and its committees are the bodies in which all member nations discuss world problems and propose solutions. The purposes of GA resolutions are to define and describe problems and propose solutions. More specifically:

- 1) A resolution may propose that specific nations alter their behavior in order to be in line with principles and guidelines stated in one of the dozens of agreements, treaties, declarations, reports, or protocols that most nations have previously signed. Examples range from the UN Declaration of Human Rights to the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming to the UN Charter itself, and many, many others. Specific punishments may be **suggested**, if desired, for nations who are in violation.
- 2) A resolution may call on member nations to adopt by their vote a new position or viewpoint regarding a more specific international issue (for instance to “request action to solve” this or “condemn or oppose” that).
- 3) A resolution may seek to develop and gain approval for a specific program or course of action to be carried out by one of the UN organs (Examples of such organs are the UN Commission on Human Rights, the UN Children’s Emergency Fund, The UN Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Disarmament Commission, the UN International Drug Control Programme, and many, many more).

A resolution can create a new organization or committee, but be careful because an organ already exists for practically every matter of world concern. (The UN needs creative solutions and will power, not more bureaucracy).

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO WRITE A GOOD RESOLUTION?

1) Your country's outlook and priorities. Aside from having a general knowledge of your country's geography, culture, economy, government and recent history, there are UN-based sources, such as the book, *A Global Agenda: Issues Before the General Assembly of the UN*, published annually by the UN Association of the USA (called UNA-USA).

Another very possible "short-cut" would be to go to the web site your country's Permanent Mission to the UN. Here your country issues position statements, as press releases, regarding the selected issues currently before the General Assembly (<http://www.un.int/brazil> or **whatever your country is**).

2) The pressing issues or needs confronting the UN today, and which would concern your nation directly (as a national or regional need) or indirectly (as a concerned "world citizen").

3) What UN declarations, statements, reports, or protocols now exist concerning your issue or topic. If none exist, then you may propose that a new statement of opinion/goals be adopted. But again, make sure none already exist before doing this.

4) What UN organizations or commissions already exist to deal with your issue or topic.

OTHER THINGS I MIGHT WANT TO KNOW:

There are some topics or problems of general concern about which you may not be writing a position paper. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with a few of these in order to be an effective delegate in general. Those broad, general topics include: improving health and education, fighting crime or terrorism, promoting economic development (agricultural and industrial or high technology), debt relief for poor nations, reforming the UN system or its finance, protecting the environment, eliminating or limiting weapons of mass destruction, improving the lives or protecting the rights of women and children, assisting refugees fleeing economic or military disasters, and so on.

With these problems of *general* concern, remember that long-term complex problems require long-term detailed solutions. Hence, in many cases, your resolution alone is probably not going to entirely solve those problems. Think of it as the first, even if limited, step toward a later, more comprehensive solution. Or, your resolution may identify a small, but important, problem that exists with a UN program. In this case, you could propose a specific reform which "fine tunes" that UN program.

Remember that unless a problem is totally unique to your nation or region, or a dire emergency exists, it is not a good idea to personalize an assistance effort (for instance, to improve literacy in *my country* only). With most problems, such as those related to health, education, or economic

development, a large number of country's face those problems in common. So, think in terms of general programs and solutions.

Keep in mind the UN financial resources involved with your plan or solution. You will probably be asked this question in debate. This would be decided by the magnitude or severity of the problem. How extensive is the problem? How many nations and people are affected by it? One idea would be to go to the UN budget and see what the UN organization or commission in question spends on comparable problems. Where does your topic fit in that organization's, or the world's, priorities?