



HOW TO RESEARCH

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Table of Contents

- I. How to Research for Your MUN Conference The UN System as a whole
- II. The History and Operation of the Committee
- III. Background and Demographics of the Country Allotted to You
- IV. Specific Stance of the Nation on the Issues to be Discussed
- V. Understand the Various "Sides" in the Debate
- VI. Learn about the Country you are representing
- VII. Final Comments

Important Research Links Tips for Researching Your Country

- I. Important Resources for Research
- II. How to Find UN Documents in Five Steps or Less
- III. How to Find Resolutions Passed on Any Topic
- IV. How to Find Voting Records for a General Assembly or Security Council Resolution
- V. How to Find Speeches on an Issue Delivered by Your Country's Representatives
- VI. How to Find All Press Releases on a Topic
- VII. How to Find an ICJ Decision on a Specific Topic



How to Research for Your MUN Conference

As soon as you receive your country and committee assignment, you should begin your research. You must never underestimate the time it takes to do effective research, read and then formulate your ideas and arguments. While researching for your topics there are several points delegates must consider so that the research they do is of practical application in a committee.

The UN System as a whole

Gather background information of the United Nations and develop not only an understanding of the basics of the UN's structure, but also a good understanding of how the committee you will be working on fits into the organization. In building this base of knowledge, you will better understand what your committee/council can or cannot do within the UN system, what you can make recommendations on, what you can reasonably "demand," and what issues are beyond the scope of the body you are simulating. Understanding the UN system will help you play your role realistically at a Model UN conference. It is important to understand which bodies and actors make up the UN system, what the UN can and cannot do, and how international issues are addressed by the UN. Here are some questions that will help get you started: What are the important elements of the UN Charter? What are the main bodies of the UN? How are the UN's bodies and agencies organized? Which countries serve on the body or agency you are simulating? How does the body or agency you are simulating operate? What are the most recent UN actions on your issue? Why did past UN actions succeed or fail? What conferences and meetings have been held with regard to your issue? What have UN officials said about your issue?

Visit the UN website at www.un.org. Read about current affairs on the UN News page. In addition, you should look at the UN Cyberschoolbus website, as well as UNA-USA's guide to using it. Read one of the many books published by the UN. The UN publishes books with general UN information as well as specific reports, which can be purchased on their website.

The History and Operation of the Committee

Research on the background and history of your committee. This should include details on any treaties, resolutions, conventions and actions undertaken by that committee. It should also cover the mandate of the Committee, so that you are aware of what aspects of the Agenda your committee can and cannot resolve on.

Background and Demographics of the Country Allotted to You

This is the first key to understanding what actions a nation may prefer on the specific issues. Research should include, but certainly not be limited to, such areas as population, government type, natural resources, and trade data for the nation being represented. Traditional allies and adversaries should also be noted. Gather information regarding the basic Governmental Structure and history of the country; its foreign policy and economic objectives; the organizations and countries with which it works; and the role it plays in the UN System.



Specific Stance of the Nation on the Issues to be Discussed

Delegates should have a profound understanding of what the issue or problem is; the technical details involved that will help you to understand your issue; the history of the issue; the countries that are involved and/or most affected; your country's position on the issue; your country's voting history and past actions in the UN regarding the issue; and the conditions under which your country would change its position.

You should develop an understanding of, and comfort with, the issues that will be debated at your Model UN conference. Many conferences send out background materials or issue briefs, which can help jumpstart your research.

You may want to look at the sources cited in these materials for more in-depth information, but you must understand the content of the source and develop comfort with the subject matter so that you can contribute effectively to the debate and the resolution process. If the conference background materials pose questions, you should answer them with your country information in mind. Here are some additional questions to help guide your research:

- What is the problem?
- How does it affect your country?
- What has your country done to combat the problem?
- What are the various "sides" in the debate?
- Which aspects of the issue are most important to your country?
- If your country is not involved with the issue, how can it become involved?
- How will your country shape the debate at the conference? What arguments will other countries make?
- How do the positions of other countries affect your country's position?
- Is there evidence or statistics that might help to back up your country's position?

Finding specific information to determine a country's position on a particular topic may not always be possible since it may not be available. In such cases you should prepare to make the best possible interpolations of what your country's policy would be, given the facts available.

This might include knowing the country's background, their traditional allies, the stance of a regional group with whom they tend to agree, or a variety of other factors. Your research should lead you to educate yourselves enough to make reasonable policy assumptions on issues which are not totally clear.

Understand the Various "Sides" in the Debate By looking into the formation of blocs within your issue, you will be able to gather information regarding the arguments put forward by opposing parties in a topic. Understand the differences in those views and try to form arguments that bring the various parties together without going against your own country's stance.

Learn about the Country you are representing

You can ascertain your allotted country's general and specific stance on issues not only through opensource online encyclopedia and government documents and policy statements available on foreign office websites, but also by delving into your allotted country's internal political situation and its history and important precedents. First, you will need to learn about your country so you can address the issues raised at the conference as a real UN delegate from that country. To represent your country accurately, start by answering the following questions:

- What sort of government does your country have?
- What types of ideologies (political, religious or other) influence your country's government?
- Which domestic issues might influence your country's foreign policy?



What are some major events in your country's history? Why are they important?
Which ethnicities, religions and languages can be found in your country?
Where is your country located and how does its geography affect its political relationships?
Which countries share a border with your country?
Which countries are considered allies of your country?
Which countries are considered enemies of your country?
What are the characteristics of your country's economy?
What is your country's gross domestic product (GDP)?
How does this compare to other countries in the world?
When did your country become a member of the UN?
Does your country belong to any intergovernmental organizations outside the UN system such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)?
Does your country belong to any regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) or the Organization of American States (OAS)?
Does your country belong to any trade organizations or agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)?

Final Comments

Before delving into the research as per the guidelines above, please understand the following three points:

1. The initial stages of your research must be focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of the UN system as a whole, of your committee and of your country's background as detailed above. Before ensuring a firm understanding of these three points, you should not delve into the study guide and specific topics.
2. The study guide is simply a starting point in your research of the issue at hand. You should only view the study guide as guidance for further research. Your ability to perform will be severely hampered if you assume that studying the study guide is sufficient.
3. The research links below will serve you well, please examine them thoroughly.

Important Research Links

Tips for Researching Your Country

Look up your country's permanent mission to the UN. You can also call the mission directly to ask questions or request a position statement on an issue. Find your country's voting records and read speeches on the United Nations Bibliographic Information System website. Check out news and media sources for recent developments in your country.

Important Resources for Research

Economist - <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&jid=ECO>

BBC - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

CIA World Fact Book - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

Portals on the world - <http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/portals.html>



NetLibrary - <http://www.netlibrary.com>

Country Studies - <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

United Nations homepage - <http://www.un.org>

United Nations NewsCentre - <http://www.un.org/News/>

United Nations Documentation research guide - <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/index.html>

How to Find UN Documents in Five Steps or Less

The UN has made it easier than ever to find resolutions, treaties, speeches, decisions, voting records and more on its website. Below is a list of where to locate commonly used documents, followed by specific instructions. The UN Bibliographic Information System (UNBISnet), available at unbisnet.un.org, can be used to find:

- I. Resolutions passed by the Security Council, ECOSOC, and General Assembly (1946 onward);
- II. Voting records for all resolutions which were adopted by the
 - a. Security Council,
 - b. Speeches made in the General Assembly (1983 onward),
 - c. the Security Council (1983 onward),
 - d. the Economic and Social Council (1983 onward),
 - e. the Trusteeship Council (1982 onward).

The UN News Centre, available at www.un.org/news, can be used to find press releases from UN bodies and the Secretary-General.

The International Court of Justice's website, available at www.icj-cij.org, can be used to locate ICJ decisions.

For research, news and resources on specific topics, the UN's website has a section on "Issues on the UN Agenda," available at www.un.org/issues.

How to Find Resolutions Passed on Any Topic

1. Go to UNBISnet at unbisnet.un.org
2. Under the heading "Bibliographic Records," click on "New Keyword Search."
3. You are presented with four optional search fields.
 - I. Enter a topic or keyword next to "Subject (All)."
 - II. If you want to refine your search to one specific body, such as the Security Council, select "UN Doc. Symbol / Sales No." in the second drop-down menu, and enter the appropriate resolution code. For instance, all Security Council resolutions begin with S/RES; all General Assembly resolutions begin with A/RES; all ECOSOC resolutions begin with E/Year where year is the year in which the resolution passed. Enter any of these codes in the second search field, or leave it blank to search all committees on the topic.
 - III. To limit the search results by date, scroll down to the "User Defined Limits" and select "Year of Publication," the appropriate delimiter, and enter the year of the resolution.
4. Click on the "Go" button.



5. All the resolutions passed by the UN on that subject will appear in a list. If available, a link to the actual resolution will be provided in each of the official UN languages.

6. Alternatively, go to

- I. UN Documentation Centre - <http://www.un.org/documents/>
- II. Official Documents of the UN - <http://documents.un.org/welcome.asp?language=E>

How to Find Voting Records for a General Assembly or Security Council Resolution

1. Go to UNBISnet at unbisnet.un.org
2. Under the heading "Voting Records," click on "New Keyword Search."
3. You are presented with four optional search fields. Enter the appropriate resolution number next to the drop-down reading "UN Resolution Symbol."
4. Click on the "Go" button.
5. The resolution you want will come up. Under the resolution number is a link to the full text of the resolution. Below that is the full voting history, with Y and N standing for yes and no votes.

How to Find Speeches on an Issue Delivered by Your Country's Representatives

NOTE: Speeches are only available if they were made in the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, or Security Council since 1983; not all speeches made in this time are yet online. Most speeches made in subsidiary bodies of these organs will not be available.

1. Go to UNBISnet at unbisnet.un.org.
2. Under the heading "Index to Speeches," click on "New Keyword Search."
3. You are presented with four optional search fields. o Enter the country's name next to the drop-down reading "Country/Organization."
 - I. If you would like to limit the topic, enter a keyword next to the drop-down reading "Topic."
 - II. To limit the UN body in which the speech was given, enter the appropriate code next to the dropdown reading "Meeting Record Symbol." Enter A for the General Assembly, S for the Security Council, E for ECOSOC or T for the Trusteeship Council.
4. Click on the "Go" button.
5. All speeches given by your country on this topic will be listed. Click on the link to display the full text of the speech if it is available.

How to Find All Press Releases on a Topic

1. Go to the Press Release Series Symbols Index at www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/press1.htm. Scroll down until you see your committee. Record the symbol listed to the right of it.
2. Go to the UN News Centre at www.un.org/news.



3. Under "Press Releases" on the sidebar on the left, click on "Search."
4. The Full Text search page will appear. In the box next to the word "Keywords," type your topic or a one-word description of it, a space and the symbol you found in Step 2.
5. Click on the "Search" button.

How to Find an ICJ Decision on a Specific Topic

1. Go to the ICJ website at www.icj-cij.org.
2. Click on "Decisions" in the header.
 - I. If you know the year of your case, scroll down until you find it.
 - II. If you know just the topic of the case, or one of the parties, use the "find" function (Ctrl-F on a PC) and enter the country name or keyword.
3. When you find the case, click on the appropriate link.
4. To see the full text of the decision, click on the "Judgment" link on the left of the page, if it is available. If it is not available, the case has not yet been decided.