UN4MUN Initiative and Rules of Procedure

In 2013, the UN Department of Public Information established an initiative called UN4MUN for greater UN involvement in the organization of Model UN Conferences worldwide. The initiative includes the development of a new approach to Model UNs, with a guidebookreleased in August 2013, building upon the learnings from the simulations organized in the past. UNIC developed an adaptation of this guide incorporating and adding information that is uniquely relevant to MUN organizers in an Indian context. This document seeks to outline the major changes that the UN4MUN procedure seeks to bring about in the way MUNs are run.

The UN4MUN procedure is differentiated by three key characteristics, which bring it closer in letter and in spirit, to the true functioning of the UN:

1. The leadership structure and responsibilities introduced in the procedure reflect the relationships in the organization more accurately than the conventional procedure.

2. Rules of Procedure and the flow of debate are simpler and more closely resemble the actual meetings in the UN.

3. The system, including decision-making mechanisms, places a greater focus on cooperation, diplomacy and consensus-building, which encourages the development of a diverse skill-set and global perspective among the participants.

Minor differences in the procedure can be clubbed broadly amongst these.

1. Leadership Structure

The UN4MUN procedure more accurately mirrors the relationship between the individual Member States, the committees (GA or SC) and the Secretariat. While in the conventional procedure, leadership roles are limited to the Secretariat and Executive Board, the UN4MUN procedure encourages separation into different categories of roles like Organizing Committee, the Secretariat,the General Committee and the Bureau.

Organizing

The Organizing Committee handles the organization of the conference from the inception of the idea to the final delivery of the conference. This includesfund-raising, logistics, hospitality, volunteer management etc. These roles have been termed the Secretariat in the past, which is partially inaccurate.

The role of the Secretariat – the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-Generals – is more substantive in nature. The SG and DSG are followed by four Under-Secretary-Generals responsible for specific sets of tasks, namely Political Affairs, Economic and Social Affairs, GA Affairs and Conference Management and Communications. While the former two deal entirely with substantive issues, the latter two – USGs for GA Affairs and Conference Management, and Communication – can overlap with the Organizing Committee, and can be held by the same people.
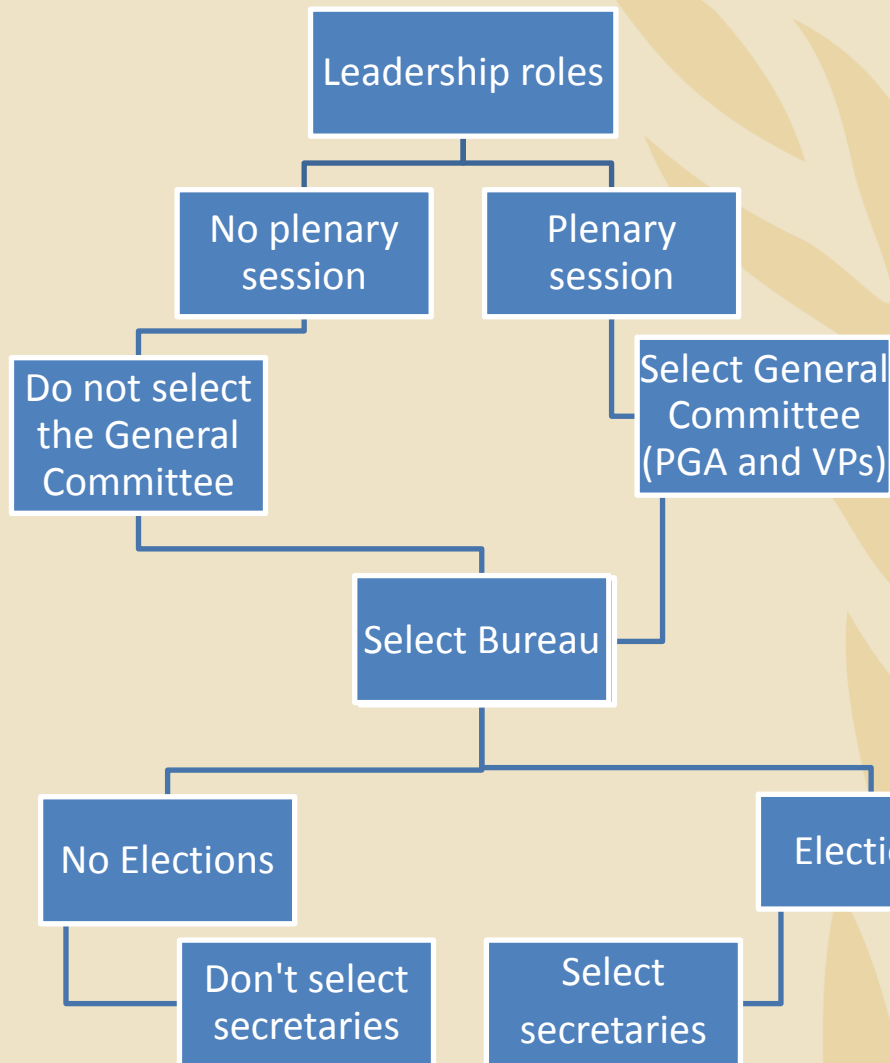
The demarcation of duties leads to minimization of duplication or wastage of effort, as compared to many conferences in the past which would add or substantially reduce the number of positions in the Secretariat leading to uncoordinated response and activity.

Leading Committees

The question of committee heads depends on a series of decisions in the hands of the conference organizers. The first is whether to hold combined plenary sessions for the GA, its committees and subsidiary bodies, and similarly for the SC and ECOSOC. Realistically, resolutions by subsidiary bodies must be voted on by the plenary, and where possible, MUNs should seek to replicate this. The second major decision is whether to elect or select the Bureau, or Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteurs. At the UN, the Chair is not an authority figure far-removed from the delegates, but elected from among them, to serve the committee by helping to build consensus. The procedural aid required by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs is provided by the Secretaries, who fall under the Secretariat in the Secretary-General's chain of command, and can be from the hosting organization.

UNIC will be accepting collaborations with conferences that choose not to hold elections as well, but we encourage the experimentation with new forms for the purposes of accuracy.

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      ┌───────────────┐              ┌──────────────┐
      │  No plenary   │              │   Plenary    │
      │    session    │              │   session    │
      └───────────────┘              └──────────────┘
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   ┌──────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
   │  Do not select   │          │  Select General      │
   │  the General     │          │  Committee           │
   │  Committee       │          │  (PGA and VPs)        │
   └──────────────────┘          └──────────────────────┘
              │                              │
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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  Select Bureau  │
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   │ No Elections │                        │  Elections   │
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   │ secretaries  │                        │ secretaries  │
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2. Rules of Procedure and Flow of Debate

Many of the styles of procedure used today are based on parliamentary procedure, which bears very little resemblance to the true functioning of the UN. In some instances, parliamentary procedures violate the sovereign rights of Member States to equality and are therefore not appropriate to be used in simulations of UN. Even the terminology that has evolved over time is different than what is used at the UN. For example, the distinction between friendly and unfriendly amendments does not exist and the terms moderated and unmoderated caucuses are not used either.

The most important differences are as follows:

- The Flow of Debate just has three phases: Formal Meeting (Speakers' List), Informal Meeting (unmod or lobbying), and Action Phase (voting or adoption by consensus).

- UN4MUN procedure recognizes a small number of *motions* to be proposed by delegates. Motions can be made for suspension and adjournment of meeting, and adjournment and closure of debate. On the other hand, the conventional procedure prescribes more complex motions for tabling of debate, reordering of time, opening the speaker's list, introducing draft resolution etc. The UN4MUN procedure makes it simpler for the delegates by developing a simpler flow of debate – rather than switching in and out between formal and informal debate, there is a clear progression for the committee to follow.

- *The Speaker's List* is the main component of the flow of formal debate in the UN4MUN format that recognizes that at the UN dignitaries' utterances in formal debate are not to be taken lightly, as they are watched by the world, from potential trade partners, neighbouring countries and the countries' own people. It reminds delegates that diplomats must carefully weigh every word they say in public, as the smallest of slights can become international incidents.

- *Caucusing* is a parliamentary term which is has been used in the past as a substitute for informal debate. Although such procedures exist at the UN and as a part of the UN4MUN procedure, the term caucus refers to a group of countries usually allying together. Instead of 'moderated caucus', the correct term is a 'formal-informal session' while an unmoderated caucus is called an 'informal-informal session' or informal meetings. Proposals for these sessions can be made by raising a motion to suspend the meeting. The majority of the committee's time should be spent in informal meetings, to better reflect the realities of backroom and corridor negotiations at the UN.

- Countries first meet in regional blocs to develop a common position on the agenda item, and then move on to meeting with other regional groups to merge resolutions and develop a final text that is adopted by consensus.

- *Points* like points of information, personal privilege and inquiry used in the conventional procedure are not recognized or used in the UN. Therefore, UN4MUN only recognizes a Point of Order against the Chairperson if a delegate believes that the Chairperson has been at fault regarding procedure. This can

be done by signaling a 'T' with the hand and placard to ask for the floor to explain the order. All other requests are entertained either by chits, such as for 'Points of Personal Privilege', or specially prescribed discussions at the Chair's discretion for 'Points of Parliamentary Inquiry.'

- The key to understanding the difference between UN4MUN and former procedures is to shift the focus from competition to cooperation, and thus from formal to informal debate – it is not points of rhetoric made during formal speeches but the hard groundwork of background negotiations that must be prioritized. Producing a text that is acceptable to the entire committee and can be adopted unanimously is the ultimate goal. Thus, each rule must be interpreted with this intention.

Other differences include the following:

- *Roll-call vote* in the UN4MUN procedure is easier since the delegate only needs to respond as 'present' without considering whether he will vote at the end or not, like in the case of the conventional procedure.

- At the end of the speaker's list, conventional procedure dictates that the committee must directly go into voting. In the case of UN4MUN procedure, delegates who have been granted the *right to reply* by the Chair during debate, take their speaking time after the speaker's list is closed. In the conventional procedure, the right is granted, mostly in writing, during the course of the debate.

3. Documentation and Decision-Making

The most striking feature of the UN4MUN procedure is that, in line with the realities of the UN, most decisions adopted by the General Assembly and even by the Security Council are made by consensus. The leadership structure and rules of procedure should support a working environment that encourages delegates to build consensus, rather than promoting one-up-manship.

Some major points of distinction in the resolution process are as follows:

- As stated before, the discussion phase is where the resolution process begins, and countries first meet in regional blocs to develop a common position on the agenda item. They prepare a single draft resolution that has the whole region's

support, and then move on to meeting with other regional groups to merge resolutions. Thus, the entire committee must together develop a final text that is adopted by consensus. According to UN4MUN trainers, 80% of the GA's resolutions are passed by consensus.

- In the conventional procedure, a draft resolution may only be submitted after it gathers a specified majority of *signatories*. In UN4MUN procedure, any member may submit a draft without minimum support, as it is their sovereign right as an equal member of the GA. However, the most effective drafts are ones that have as much support as possible prior to tabling.

- The *amendment* procedure is initiated in the UN4MUN procedure either by orally proposing it from the floor, if no member objects, or by the means of 'L' documents, although the procedure almost remains the same as in the conventional procedure. It is possible to divide the proposal, i.e. the draft resolution with amendments, to be voted upon separately directly before the final voting. This feature slightly resembles the process of '*division of question*' which is found in a few procedures followed by conferences.

- Resolutions and amendments can be discussed in formal-informal sessions, which are not Speakers' List speeches but moderated by the Chair.

- In the UN4MUN procedure, it is assumed that the draft resolution will be adopted by *consensus* and it is only when consensus does not emerge that the committee moves tovoting.This counteracts the tendency in conventional procedure of relying on either simple or special majority, instead encouraging the inclusion of all member of the committee. At the end of the discussions, the committee moves in the Action Phase, where the Chair says "If there are no objections, this resolution will now be adopted by consensus." If there are objections, only then must voting be conducted.