

# POSITION PAPER

Writing a well-researched and substantive position paper is the best way to prepare for any Model United Nations conference. Through the position paper your delegation will express its ideas and policies by defining your nation-state's perspective on the issues at hand. Moreover, it is the means by which you bring all of your research together in a logical and succinct form.

## OVERVIEW

Researching and writing a position paper go hand-in-hand. While researching will give you an overwhelming amount of information, it is through the position paper that you will be able to narrow in on the mission you have set before yourself. In writing the position paper, you will be able to understand the complexity of the situations and issues, as seen from your country's vantage point. To say it simply, you will be condensing the vast amounts of books, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, and websites you've collected down to just a few more comprehensible pages.

After breaking it down, your position paper should flow smoothly. In the end it should come to between 3-5 pages per topic. What you should aim for however is quality not quantity. If you're struggling to reach 3 pages, please don't include your country's national anthem to get that last line stretched onto page 3. (This is a sign that you need to go back to the previous section and do more research.) Overall, your position paper should exhibit the following:

- ☐ comprehensive understanding of the situation
- ☐ an organized and argumentative structure
- ☐ original thinking that follows with the policy of the represented state
- ☐ an attitude of seriousness to the issues in question

The position paper, ultimately, is your opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the issues presented in the committee, and thus will go a long way in preparing you for direct interaction and debate with other delegates.

## REQUIREMENTS

One position paper is due per delegation (country) for each topic on the committee agenda, whether it has been assigned to a single delegate or partnership.

For the most part, Berkeley Model United Nations requires that the format of the position paper meet the following specifications (*there may be committee specific exceptions; please check your committee's blog to see if there is an exception*):

- ☐ 8.5 inch by 11 inch paper
- ☐ no cover page
- ☐ 1 inch margins on all sides (top, left, right, and bottom)
- ☐ typed
- ☐ double spaced
- ☐ 12 point Times New Roman font
- ☐ 3 page minimum, 5 page maximum length per topic
- ☐ proper spelling and grammar
- ☐ include title of paper centered, in bold, on first page
- ☐ right-aligned header stating country, committee, topic (NO NAMES OR SCHOOL NAME)
- ☐ page # of total # of pages indicated in each page's footer
- ☐ all paraphrasing and quotations must be cited

*All position papers will be extensively cross-referenced through various sources, both online and in print. If there is any evidence of using the work of others without citations, the position paper will not be eligible for an award and WILL be brought to the attention of the school's advisor. Furthermore, any school that has more than three cases of plagiarism will not be eligible for a School Delegation Award. It is the responsibility of the delegate and the advisor to ensure this does not happen.*

Delegates must also remember to correctly cite sources, and papers without any cited sources will not be accepted. Please see the example on the following page for further instructions on citing sources in the MLA format.

## SAMPLE PAPER

To assist you further, here are some excerpts from a position paper that you can look at for an idea of what makes good substantive content.

A few things to notice about the following text:

- Each paragraph is only trying to prove one general statement or convey one point.
- Each paragraph that is excerpted begins with a topic sentence that summarizes the overall point of the paragraph.
- A general statement is always supported with evidence, such as a statistic or a specific example.
- Each quote is interpreted right after its use.
- The writing style is simple and to the point.

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

Although the entire committee will be discussing the same topics, the Chair wants to see that you understand the conflict set before the committee to resolve. Without regurgitating the topic synopsis, focus upon defining the topic thoroughly yet succinctly. Provide the historical foundations of the topic. Then, discuss the current problem. Finally, emphasize why this topic is of international import and demands international action.

## FOOTNOTES AND ENDNOTES

After each quoted text, there should be a number superscripted after the statement to denote the citation. At the end of each page (a footnote) each superscripted number should refer to the source referenced.

## PAST INTERNATIONAL ACTION

After introducing the topic, cover any historical and current United Nations, Intergovernmental Organization (IGO), and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) efforts to confront the issue in question. What specific organs of the UN have done work on your topic, what have they done? This not only proves that you've done your research, but will also help you to see if the international community's efforts align with your own nation-state's policies. Quotes and references look great, however, be sure to provide a comprehensive analysis of them as well. Simply dropping quotes or UN resolutions into your paper will not impress the Chair; you must analyze what is being said and contextualize it in the current situation. If your nation-state has not played a role in addressing the issue, explain why. Once the past is covered, you can begin to formulate your ideas for future UN actions.

Country: South Africa  
Committee: World Health Organization  
Topic: AIDS in Africa

## I. Topic Background

The problem of AIDS has, in recent times, lost its priority on the agenda of the international community. On the continent of Africa especially—where roughly 25 million have contracted HIV—the political will to confront the epidemic has simply diminished in part due to media fatigue and a collective action problem on the part of the international community.

In order to understand why the treatment of AIDS in Africa has shifted into a more passive enterprise we need only look at the present role of pharmaceutical corporations within the region. As illustrated by the 2000 annual report on AIDS in Africa, "the sole intent of pharmaceutical companies in Africa and other developing areas has been to prevent the widespread counterfeiting of patented medication from continuing any further. Indeed, they are concerned with their own profit margins rather than the millions inflicted with the virus who cannot afford brand names."<sup>1</sup> Thus, with the desire to maintain a monopoly on vital medicines, pharmaceutical corporations have deprived millions of underprivileged victims of treatment...

## II. Past United Nations Actions

Although the written response of the United Nations and other key international actors has been that of great resolve and support, there is recognition that the actual implementation of aid has been slow in coming. In a recent UN Chronicle article it states, "Both the United Nations and the World Bank have maintained that the funds supporting efforts of such agencies as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)..."

## DELEGATION POLICY AND SOLUTIONS

This section is the most important part of the position paper. Your goals in this final section should be to:

- *Explain* what past actions your country has taken concerning the topic since the issue began
- *Explain* shifts in your nation's policies and your nation's current stance
- *Propose* a course of action that your country wishes the UN and other international actors to initiate to resolve or alleviate the problem

Through your ideas and analysis of the problem, you will be able to impress upon the Chair your ability not only to be an ordinary thinker, but a critical thinker.

While you may have many great ideas for how to resolve the issues, remember to always stay in policy. Make sure that any ideas you include reflect your country's perspectives and values. By checking your country's past voting records on various UN resolutions, and their past actions you will be able to get an idea of how your country feels on certain issues. Remember that the Chair will have provided you with key questions to focus upon at the end of the topic synopsis; be sure to identify and answer the key questions within this last section. Moreover, be sure to support your claims by referencing official documents and sources.

### ENDNOTES (FOOTNOTES PREFERRED)

Endnotes follow the standard MLA format for citations in a bibliography, except that they are ordered in the order of appearance in the paper. Page number is usually included in the citation as well. In this paper, endnotes are used, but footnotes are equally acceptable.

Footnotes are just like endnotes with the exception that footnotes are cited at the end of each individual page, not at the end of the entire paper.

For more assistance with the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, check out *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed., by Joseph Gibaldi at your local library.

## III. Delegation Policy and Solutions

South Africa calls upon the international community and the UN in particular to reevaluate and reform the weak support infrastructure for the sale and distribution of AIDS and HIV treatment. Indeed, what we are allowing is nothing less than a passive form of ethnic cleansing, which must be met with a response of far greater urgency than has been previously shown...As stated by our UN representative, Dumisani Kumalo, "This strategy must take the form of an international relief fund and increased distribution and monitoring of generic medications."<sup>3</sup> South Africa is therefore not promoting a plan to bypass the patent rights of pharmaceutical companies. Rather, we are attempting to reach a compromise that would respect international law and help the people on our continent who continue to fight the virus...

### Endnotes

1. Durmal, Mark. 2000 Annual Report on Aids in Africa. Berkeley: California Press, 2005. Page 224.
2. Hamill, Julia. "Aids in Africa." UN Chronicle. 12 December 2005: Page 34-9.
3. Kumalo, Dumisani. Interview with Larry King. Larry King Live. CNN. 14 April 2005.