

A GUIDE TO

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMITTEE

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## INTRODUCTION

Many Model United Nations conferences, including Midwest Model United Nations, are going to include in your introductory research materials a "Committee Mandate" or "Committee Overview" written by their staff to give a brief overview of each committee. Within these briefs, you will often find information that may indicate themes committees are taking, history, who the committee reports to, and the basic structure and functions of the committee. Starting with the committee mandate or overview is a great introduction to understanding your committee; it is often going to be more concise and deliberately written to explain to delegates how the committee functions to help them at their Model UN conference. Take note of any recommendations for further research in these as well.

# 02

## RESEARCH

Often overlooked in Model United Nations preparation is researching the committee you are assigned to. Delegates want to think 'big picture' of what their Member State wants to do with a topic, but this can be troublesome when they get to conference and find none of their ideas work for the committee they are in. The easiest place to start is to look for the UN website for your committee: begin there and make a reference sheet that fills in all of these categories regarding your committee. You may have to search on other websites or the UN Encyclopedia for all of the answers, but try to identify each of the following before moving on:

**Mandate : Matters of Discussion : Functions & Powers :  
Reporting : Current Items of Importance**

# 03 PAST ACTIONS

The best way to see how your committee will act on a topic is to review their past actions on the same or similar topics. Many topics at Model United Nations conferences will be pulled directly from recent committee agendas, so you will frequently be able to find relevant reports or resolutions for any topic from the real committee itself. Understanding the past actions will begin to show you how to frame the ideas you have into actions your committee can take, as well as give you a more thorough understanding of what has already been done. Most items can be found readily online in the six official languages of the United Nations in the UN Archives, UN Document Library, or other UN sites.

# 04 CONSIDER THE HOW'S

While one can technically make almost any idea work in almost any committee, making an idea fit the right way requires a good understanding of how each committee functions. At a fundamental level, this is due to the specific, limited scope of each committee. You should strive to consider how your committee achieves different objectives before settling on a specific goal because each committee approaches its topics through different interpretations and contexts. While there is a lot of overlap between the goals of each committee, their individual mandates necessitate different methods of action. By spending time understanding what the scope of your committee is, you will set yourself up for success to act on your country's objectives through the lens of your committee.

# 05 FRAME YOUR OBJECTIVES

Consider the following example for how our understanding of our committee's scope informs our actions:

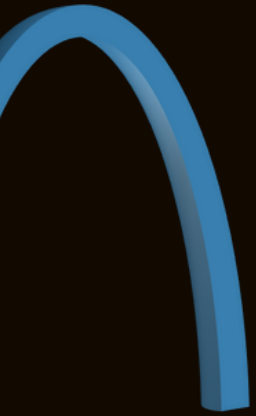
- Your Member State is a Western Nation with strong inclination for women's rights and empowerment.
- You are a delegate in the First Committee and the topic is Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).
- You **wouldn't** include in your resolution:
  - RECOMMENDS Member States empower women to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5;
- You **would** include in your resolution:
  - RECOMMENDS Member States expand the role of women in all local, regional, and international discussions for combating the proliferation of SALW;

# 06 PRACTICE

The next thing you should do is practice taking different objectives you have for your Member State and identifying how you will apply them to your committee. The more you do this, the easier writing with other delegates at conference will be and the more informed your speeches on your topics will be.

Keep in mind that sometimes you are going to find that your Member State has a really interesting program or initiative that just doesn't apply to your committee. Try to be cognizant of when an idea is beyond the scope of your committee and consider passing your research to a member of your delegation that may better be able to use it!

Lastly, at conference, your dais staff are there to help facilitate the will of the body. If you turn in a working paper that does not fit the mandate, they will often give you suggestions to help you find ways to achieve your goals.



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