RESOLUTION WRITING

CHAPTER A8

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INTRODUCTION

For most councils, the primary 'outcome document' of the many council sessions is the resolution. In this chapter, we will go through the basics of how to write an effective UN General Assembly style resolution, which is the format of resolution used in most councils.

UN RESOLUTIONS

Model UN is a simulation of the real-life United Nations. To understand on a more fundamental level what delegates are doing, we will first discuss the purposes and functions of real-life UN resolutions. For the purposes of this chapter, we will only go through UN General Assembly resolutions.

UN General Assembly Resolutions

> *"The General Assembly may discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and, except as provided in Article 12, may make recommendations to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council or to both on any such questions or matters."*
>
> Article 10 of the UN Charter[1]

> *"Subject to the provisions of Article 12, the General Assembly may recommend measures for the peaceful adjustment of any situation, regardless of origin, which it deems likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations, including situations resulting from a violation of the provisions of the present Charter setting forth the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations."*
>
> Article 14 of the UN Charter[2]

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main policy-making organ of the UN. It gives member states a platform to discuss international issues.

Voting

The UN General Assembly produces resolutions that member states can introduce, debate, and vote on. These are decisions, declarations, and recommendations that usually require a simple majority to pass. Although resolutions may be voted on, most UNGA resolutions are non-binding. Furthermore, on certain issues that are considered

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[1] https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text
[2] Ibid.

'important questions' - issues involving the maintenance of international peace and security, admission of new members to the United Nations, budgetary questions, etc - the UNGA takes a two-thirds vote instead. Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.

UNGA resolutions may be adopted with a vote; without a vote; or by consensus. When a vote is taken, the resolution is said to have passed "with a vote". If a vote is taken and all member states vote the same way, then the decision is unanimous, and is also passed "with a vote". Resolutions passed "without a vote" and "by consensus" differ, although they appear quite similar. To be adopted "without a vote", the President of the UNGA asks the body if it wishes to adopt a draft resolution, and if there are no objections then they declare that "it is so decided". For resolutions to be adopted by consensus, this is understood as the absence of objection rather than unanimity, and are distinct from resolutions adopted "without a vote".[3]

The majority of UNGA resolutions are adopted without a vote.[4] Consider that:

> *"... the adoption of decisions and resolutions by consensus is desirable when it contributes to the effective and lasting settlement of differences, thus strengthening the authority of the United Nations."*
>
> Paragraph 104, A/520/Rev.19[5]

Note that most Model UN UNGA-style councils will have Rules of Procedure that differ from how the UN does things.

Non-binding UNGA resolutions
Articles 10 and 14 of the UN Charter refer to the UNGA's resolutions as 'recommendations', which has been affirmed by the ICJ on multiple occasions. Therefore, what it means to be non-binding is that the motions and provisions of the resolution adopted do not progress into law. There is no legal mechanism in place to force member states to adhere to the provisions that pass in UNGA resolutions.

What then, is the point of these non-binding resolutions? Consider the symbolic and political impact of passing a UN resolution as well as the impact of UN resolutions on customary law. UNGA resolutions carry significant symbolic power. The UNGA is a forum of all member states of the UN, and therefore a resolution passed by the UNGA is an 'official' view or opinion of the international community. This influences the behaviour of

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[3] https://ask.un.org/faq/260981
[4] https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/voting
[5] https://undocs.org/en/A/520/Rev.19

other states, and may isolate practices by states that do not conform to international norms. Politically, provisions passed in a UN resolution can be used by member states to provide legitimacy for their positions. Resolutions passed may also shape customary international law in a more direct way. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was accepted by the UNGA as Resolution 217, and despite not being legally binding nevertheless has had an undeniable impact on international norms and national politics.

STRUCTURE OF A MUN RESOLUTION

This part of the chapter will focus on the format of typical resolutions in MUN councils.

Model UN resolutions are written as one long sentence, with commas and semicolons throughout and only one period at the end of the document. A resolution has three parts: The heading, the preambulatory clauses, and the operative clauses.

The Heading

The heading of a resolution should necessarily contain the following information:
   ● The name of the body issuing the resolution;
   ● The topic or agenda at hand;
   ● The submitters or sponsors;
   ● The signatories.

When listing delegations, it is good practice to indicate the full name of the country or delegate in question. For example, while we might colloquially say 'Russia', 'France', or 'Bolivia'; we would write in a resolution 'Russian Federation'; 'French Republic'; and 'Plurinational State of Bolivia'. It is also good practice to order them in alphabetical order.

Likewise, do not abbreviate the council name or any delegation names. Instead of 'We the UNGA, …' we should write 'We the United Nations General Assembly, …' or 'The General Assembly, …'. Instead of 'The UK' we would write 'The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.

Sponsor system

Some conferences use a 'sponsor' system to indicate ownership of a document. Typically, but not necessarily always, the delegate who raises the motion to introduce will be the person the dais corresponds with if there are any matters that need to be resolved with the resolution. Sponsors are delegations who have made substantial contributions to the document, though it is up to the delegates why they want to include as sponsors. Some

conferences may set a limit on how many delegates can sponsor a resolution, typically three.

Submitter system

Other conferences use a 'submitter' system where there is a main submitter and multiple co-submitters. The main submitter takes ownership of the resolution. Therefore, regardless of who motions to introduce the resolution the main submitter will be the delegate responsible for most correspondence between the submitters and the dais.

Signatories

Signatories need not be delegates who have contributed any material to the resolution, but are nevertheless necessary for the resolution to be introduced. This is because most conferences have a minimum requirement that at least one-third of the delegates present must be involved in a resolution either as a sponsor/submitter or signatory for it to be introduced.

Sample header

> **Council:** [Full name of body; unabbreviated]
> **Agenda:** [Title of the body's agenda that this draft resolution is addressing]
> **Sponsors:** [Full names of delegations in alphabetical order, separated by commas]
> **Signatories:** [Full names of delegations in alphabetical order, separated by commas]
>
> ...

Preambulatory Clauses

Preambulatory clauses are found directly below the header. They do not denote any actions that the body intends to take with the resolution, but they are important for framing the issue at hand. The preambulatory clauses tend to make reference to previous resolutions, international law, and other precedents to set some parameters and give context for the resolution itself.

Format of preambulatory clauses

Preambulatory clauses are not numbered. The first word, which is almost always a verb (sometimes modified with an adverb) is italicised, and not underlined. Preambulatory clauses end with a comma instead of a semicolon or period.

Sample preambular clauses

> The [full name of body, unabbreviated],
>
> *Verb* rest of preambulatory clause,
>
> *Having considered* the reports of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia,
>
> …

Sample verbs for preambulatory clauses

What sorts of verbs can you use for preambulatory clauses? There isn't a set list that you must follow. However, by referring to past UN resolutions you can get an idea of what sorts of verbs and adverbs are commonly used. Since the preambulatory clauses do not indicate actions to be taken, the verbs used tend to differ from those used in operative clauses. A list of some common verbs used in resolutions is as follows:

- Acknowledging
- Affirming
- Alarmed
- Approving
- Aware of
- Adopting
- Bearing in mind
- Believing
- Calling upon
- Concerned
- Considering
- Confident
- Contemplating
- Convinced
- Convinced
- Declaring
- Disturbed
- Desiring
- Deploring

- Devoting Attention
- Emphasising
- Expecting
- Expressing its appreciation
- Expressing its satisfaction
- Examining
- Fulfilling
- Guided by
- Giving due consideration
- Having heard
- Having received
- Having studied
- Keeping in mind
- Mindful
- Noting

- Observing
- Reaffirming
- Realising
- Recognising
- Recalling
- Receiving
- Reiterating
- Referring
- Seeking
- Stressing
- Taking into account
- Taking into consideration
- Taking note
- Underlining
- Viewing
- Welcoming

Some adverbs that can be used to modify the modality or context of a verb are as follows:

- Deeply …
- Having …
- Fully …

- Strongly …
- … also
- … further
- … strongly
- … with regret

- … with deep concern
- … with satisfaction
- … with approval

- … with appreciation
- … with grave concern

Sometimes, when the same verb is used in succession it's possible to append something like 'further' or 'as well', such as *'Acknowledging'*; *'Acknowledging further'*; *'Acknowledging also'*; etc.

Operative Clauses

Operative clauses, the main body of the resolution, indicate the course of action that the body in question intends to take, or recommendations and calls to action for other bodies. The operative clauses are numbered and arranged sequentially in a logical progression to detail the action. Operative clauses may refer to other clauses in the same resolution. They may also be sorted into articles.

Format of operative clauses and articles

Operative clauses are numbered. The first word, which is usually a verb, should be underlined. The operative clause ends with a semicolon. Subclauses and sub-subclauses are permitted within reason, after a colon. The final operative clause in the resolution ends with a period - the only period in the entire document.

There is no definitive format for indicating articles, but a good practice is to number them with roman numerals, centre align them, and make them look aesthetic.

Sample operative clauses

> …
>
> **Article I: The Title Of The First Article**
>
> 1. <u>Verb</u> to details of operative clause number 1;
>
> 2. <u>Verb</u> to details of operative clause number 2, such as but not limited to:
>   a. Subclause 2.1;
>   b. Subclause 2.2;
>   c. Subclause 2.3, such as:
>   i. Sub-subclause 2.3.1;
>   ii. Other subclauses (the numbering is not necessary, by the way);
>
> **Article II: The Title Of The Second Article**

3. <u>Verb</u> to final clause of the resolution, such as:
    a. Text of a subclause;
    b. The text of this subclause, which is the final line of text in the document and as such is followed by a full stop.

Sample verbs for operative clauses

What sorts of verbs can you use for operative clauses? Any appropriate ones will do, but since operative clauses detail the course of action for a body, the verbs that you will use tend to differ slightly. Here are some examples:

- Accepts
- Acknowledges
- Affirms
- Approves
- Authorises
- Calls upon
- Condemns
- Confirms
- Congratulates
- Considers
- Declares
- Decides

- Determines
- Deplores
- Designates
- Draws the attention
- Emphasises
- Encourages
- Endorses
- Expresses its …
- Invites
- Notes
- Proclaims

- Recommends
- Reminds
- Requests
- Resolves
- Reaffirms
- Recommends
- Regrets
- Reminds
- Requests
- Supports
- Takes note of
- Welcomes

Likewise, you can use adverbs to modify the modality or context of a verb such as but not limited to the following:

- Strongly …
- Further …
- Solemnly …
- Also …

- Firmly …
- Immediately …
- Deeply …
- Fully …

- … with appreciation

CLAUSE WRITING

Pro Preambles

Preambulatory clauses are good to have and good to spend effort working on, but not at the expense of operative clauses! Usually, if you do a lot of research before the conference, writing preambulatory clauses will be a lot easier. Preambulatory clauses state the reasons why the resolution exists in the first place. You can do this by highlighting past action on the issue, evidence of the situation in status quo, and previous resolutions and precedent on the issue.

What to put in a preamble?

It is important to insert important precedents in your preambles because they help you to justify why you're taking certain actions later on in your resolution. You may want to refer to the UN Charter; cite past UN resolutions; international treaties & international law; Statements from the UN on the issue at hand; and other evidence from reports or fact-finding missions, for example.

Why focus on preambles?

They help set the ground for the rest of your resolution, and help make a good resolution even better. You can also insert bits and pieces of your stance into your preamble. For example, if you were in a committee discussing the issue of the South China Sea, the pro-China bloc would refrain from making reference to the arbitration case 'Philippines v. China' in 2013, whereas the pro-Philippines bloc would refer to it as a source of legitimacy for the actions they are taking below.

Your preambles can also focus on establishing the mandate of the council. This allows you to make arguments on the operative clauses based on whether or not these actions are acceptable within your council's mandate. Ultimately, even though they 'don't do anything' they still serve important signalling and information-carrying roles.

Finally, by referencing past action you prevent your council from reinventing the wheel. Model UN is about figuring out why current solutions aren't working, and trying to find out what solutions are better. If you don't know what has already been enacted, then you might just propose ineffective solutions again.

Operative Clauses

Operative clauses are the meat of a resolution. You want to make sure your resolution has a nice long chunk of operative clauses that detail the actions your council intends to take. As a result you want to make sure your clauses are sufficiently detailed and are not vague.

Structure of a good clause

Do try your best to take into account the four questions below when you are writing a clause.

- What action do you want to take
- Why are you taking this action
- How do you want to execute this action
- What resources will you tap into?

You don't need all of the four questions in every single clause, but most clauses should have elements from all four. The most important thing is to not be vague, and to be very clear on what

action you want to take. For example, to 'maintain security in conflict zones' is vague and unclear, whereas 'to deploy peacekeepers to high-risk conflict zones etc …' will be clearer.

You also want to include the 'why' in your clause, to define the goals of such an action. Why are you trying to deploy peacekeepers? Is it to prevent genocide, by any means necessary? Or is it to help prop up the government in power? The same action may have different outcomes depending on the goals you set.

Detailing how you want to execute an action is likewise very important. 'Deploying peacekeepers' is not detailed enough, and elaborating on the specifics of how you want to execute this decision will allow you to address questions of feasibility and effectiveness. You want to prioritise the most effective solutions, after all.

Finally, asking 'What resources' is important, because it forces you to ask whether the action is in the council's mandate in the first place, and whether it's even feasible for your council to carry out. For example, the UNHRC will be unable to deploy peacekeepers. They may, however, refer the issue to the UNSC to take further action.

Desiderata Of A Good Clause
Adapting these criteria from crisis, you want to further think of solutions that are (i) specific, (ii) realistic, (iii) creative, and (iv) relevant.

Specificity is important, to avoid being vague in your clause-writing. Clauses that are too short usually can be vague, so do add ample detail into your clause to specify the details. Specificity includes the purposes of why you're taking an action as well as how you intend to carry out your solution.

Realism is important when thinking about the limitations of your council's mandate, resource constraints, and how agents will respond to your proposed solution. You want to make sure that you understand what your council can or cannot do, and not propose solutions your council cannot do anyways. You also want to make sure you know how resource intensive certain solutions are - they may become unfeasible under certain conditions. Finally, you also want to make sure your solution doesn't incentivise agents to act in counterintuitive ways. For example, if you provide dictatorships a lot of foreign aid, they might reduce the amount of money they spend on healthcare and education (since the foreign aid covers it) and use it on building a larger military or police force to suppress dissent.

Creative solutions are novel solutions that attempt to tackle the problem with a new strategy. This doesn't mean you have to try wacky ideas to write a good clause, it just means that you need to ask why current solutions are not sufficient to solve the problem. Sometimes, applying ideas that

worked somewhere else to a new situation is a better choice than inventing a totally new strategy. Other times, you want to analyse why current solutions have failed and attempt something new. The point is, solutions that are not creative may not be as effective.

Finally, you want to propose solutions that are relevant to the topic at hand as well as your stance. You want to make sure that you prioritise the best and most effective clauses before focusing on the nitty-gritty details.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD RESOLUTION?

How to write good clauses aside, how do you then write a good resolution?

Length & Articles

This varies from council to council, a decent and comprehensive resolution likely exceeds 10 pages and covers all of the things that are debated in council. A better resolution is clearly sorted into articles so the reader knows which sub-issues are being addressed in the resolution.

Some good resolutions can be short and sweet, such as those in the UNSC or for countries that have particular unique stances. There's no need to force yourself to push out filler content just to make your resolution look longer (unless your stance requires you to!).

In councils where you can only pass one resolution, you want to have as comprehensive a resolution as possible. In councils where you can pass multiple, it might be advantageous for you to push our multiple smaller resolutions on different topics.

QARMA

Some topic guides will have a section titled 'Questions A Resolution Must Answer'. Naturally, you would want to answer those questions in your resolution. If this section doesn't exist, when reading about the issue at hand you should ask yourself: "what would a good resolution on this topic contain?". Usually, it would seek to address the key issues that have been brought up in the research report as well as other pressing issues that arise in debate, and address practical concerns on how to progress on the issue.

Strategy

> **Content**
> Your resolution's content should aggregate the interests of the council. Council likes to see the ideas discussed included in the resolution, which is important to gain votes and build consensus. Remember that in Model UN diplomacy is the name of the game and forcing people to adopt your ideas is less convincing than persuasion and compromise.

Submitters and Sponsors

It is less important to fight over who is the submitter or sponsor on paper (de jure), than it is to be the de facto owner of 'solutions' in a resolution. For example, if you are the individual who proposed solution A, defends it convincingly against criticism, and convinces the council to put it in your resolution, a good chair should credit you on that front. Likewise, if you own a resolution the credit, at least according to some chairing philosophies, should go to the person who best defends the resolution in frontroom and best pushes the interests of the bloc.

When to write?

It is ideal if you spend your spare time in council writing your resolution. The resolutions are written after the first council session begins, so don't waste your time only writing a resolution later. You can lead a bloc more convincingly if you have some substance in your resolution that your blocmates can defend, and if you have a nice chunk of clauses then you might be in a better position to negotiate to merge resolution and the like. This doesn't mean you should pre-write, because this is often frowned upon and in some conferences may get you disqualified.

Timing of a resolution

You want to make sure your resolution is ready to submit at a convenient time, which usually involves being earlier than your competitors. It is common in many councils for the debate for the first resolution to take so long that it crowds out the other resolution as you run out of time. You want to complete your resolution early, btu not too early that you miss a big chunk of council debate.