

# Resolutions

The final results of discussion, writing and negotiation are resolutions—written suggestions for addressing a specific problem or issue. Resolutions, which are drafted by delegates and voted on by the committee, normally require a simple majority to pass (except in the Security Council). Only Security Council resolutions can compel nations to take action. All other UN bodies use resolutions to make recommendations or suggestions for future action.

## Draft Resolutions

Draft resolutions are all resolutions that have not yet been voted on. Delegates write draft resolutions alone or with other countries. There are three main parts to a draft resolution: the heading, the preamble and the operative section. The heading shows the committee and topic along with the resolution number. It also lists the draft resolution's sponsors and signatories (see below). Each draft resolution is one long sentence with sections separated by commas and semicolons. The subject of the sentence is the body making the statement (e.g., the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, or Security Council). The preamble and operative sections then describe the current situation and actions that the committee will take.

## Sponsors and Signatories

Sponsors of a draft resolution are the principal authors of the document and agree with its substance. Although it is possible to have only one sponsor, this rarely occurs at the UN, since countries must work together to create widely agreeable language in order for the draft resolution to pass. Sponsors control a draft resolution and only the sponsors can approve immediate changes.

Signatories are countries that may or may not agree with the substance of the draft resolution but still wish to see it debated so that they can propose amendments. A certain percentage of the committee must be either sponsors or signatories to a draft resolution in order for it to be accepted. This is usually 20 percent of the body.

## **Preambulatory Clauses**

The preamble of a draft resolution states the reasons why the committee is addressing the topic and highlights past international action on the issue. Each clause begins with a present participle (called a preambulatory phrase) and ends with a comma. Preambulatory clauses can include:

- References to the UN Charter;
- Citations of past UN resolutions or treaties on the topic under discussion;
- Mentions of statements made by the Secretary-General or a relevant UN body or agency;
- Recognition of the efforts of regional or nongovernmental organizations in dealing with the issue; and
- General statements on the topic, its significance and its impact.

## **Operative Clauses**

Operative clauses identify the actions or recommendations made in a resolution. Each operative clause begins with a verb in the present active tense (called an operative phrase) and ends with a semicolon. Operative clauses should be organized in a logical progression, with each containing a single idea or proposal, and are always numbered. If a clause requires further explanation, bulleted lists set off by letters or roman numerals can also be used. After the last operative clause, the resolution ends in a period.

## **Bringing a Resolution to the Floor for Debate**

A draft resolution must always gain the support of a certain number of member states in the committee before the sponsors (the delegates who created the resolution) may submit it to the committee staff. Most conferences require signatures from 20 percent of the countries present in order to submit a draft resolution. A dais member will read the draft resolution to ensure that it is relevant and in proper format.

In some cases a delegate must make a motion to introduce the draft resolution, while in other cases the sponsors are immediately called upon to read the document. Because

these procedures can vary, it is essential to find out about the resolution process for the conference you plan to attend. Copies of the draft resolution are distributed to delegates, and sponsors are given the floor to introduce the draft resolution. After the sponsors read aloud the operative clauses, the Chair will entertain a short moderated caucus to discuss the draft resolution.

## **Amendments**

Approved draft resolutions are modified through amendments. An amendment is a written statement that adds, deletes or revises an operative clause in a draft resolution. The amendment process is used to strengthen consensus on a resolution by allowing delegates to change certain sections. There are two types of amendments:

A friendly amendment is a change to the draft resolution that all sponsors agree with. After the amendment is signed by all of the draft resolution's sponsors and approved by the committee director or president, it will be automatically incorporated into the resolution.

An unfriendly amendment is a change that some or all of the draft resolution's sponsors do not support and must be voted upon by the committee. The author(s) of the amendment will need to obtain a required number of signatories in order to introduce it (usually 20 percent of the committee). Prior to voting on the draft resolution, the committee votes on all unfriendly amendments.

Ultimately, resolutions passed by a committee represent a great deal of debate and compromise. They are the tangible results of hours if not days of Model UN debate. As a result, it is important to become familiar with the resolution process and practice drafting resolutions using the proper structure and wording.

At the close of debate the committee will move into voting procedures and vote first on unfriendly amendments followed by the draft resolutions. More than one resolution may be passed per committee per topic, but if directly contradictory resolutions pass it is the latter that holds.