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## Model UN Vocabulary

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**Abstain:** During a vote on a substantive matter, delegates may abstain rather than vote yes or no. This generally signals that a state does not support the resolution being voted on, but does not oppose it enough to vote no.

**Adjourn:** All UN or Model UN sessions end with a vote to adjourn. This means that the debate is suspended until the next meeting.

**Agenda:** The order in which the issues before a committee will be discussed. The first duty of a committee following the roll call is usually to set the agenda.

**Amendment:** A change to a draft resolution that will be voted. It must be submitted to the president in writing.

**Background guide:** A guide to a topic being discussed in a Model UN committee usually written by conference organizers and distributed to delegates before the conference. The starting point for any research before a Model UN conference.

**Binding:** Having legal force in UN member states. Security Council resolutions are binding, as are decisions of the International Court of Justice; resolutions of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council are not.

**Bloc:** A group of countries in a similar geographical region or with a similar position on a particular topic.



**Caucus:** A break in formal debate in which countries can more easily discuss a topic. There are two types: moderated caucus and regular caucus.

**Dais:** The group of people - usually Montessori educators, high school or college students, in charge of a Model UN committee. It generally consists of a president, vice president, and rapporteur.

**Decorum:** The order and respect for others that all delegates at a Model UN conference must exhibit. The president will call for decorum when he/she feels that the committee is not being respectful of a speaker, of the dais, or of their roles as ambassadors.

**Delegate:** A student acting as a representative of a member state or observer in a Model UN conference.

**Delegation:** The entire group of people representing a member state or observer in all committees at the Model UN conference.

**Draft resolution:** A document that seeks to fix the problems addressed by a Model UN committee. If passed by the committee, the draft resolution will become a resolution.

**Faculty Advisor:** The faculty member in charge of a Model UN team, class, or club.

**Flow of debate:** The order in which events proceed during a Model UN conference.

**Foreign Policy:** The vision and proposals of a country towards all the topics in the international community. It's the way in which a country responds to different international topics.



**Gavel:** A tool, shaped like a small wooden hammer, that the president uses to keep order within a Model UN committee.

**Head Delegate:** The student leader of a Model UN club or team.

**Member State:** A country that has ratified the Charter of the United Nations and whose application to join has been accepted by the General Assembly and Security Council. Currently there are 192 member states.

**Moderated Caucus:** A type of caucus in which delegates remain seated, and the President calls on them one at a time to speak for a short period, enabling an exchange of positions from countries.

**Motion:** A request made by a delegate that the committee as a whole should do something.

**Observer:** A state, national organization, regional organization, or non-governmental organization that is not a member of the UN General Assembly but participates in its debates.

**Operative clause:** The part of a resolution that describes how the UN will address a problem. It begins with an action verb (decides, establishes, recommends, etc.).

**Page:** A student or teacher in a Model UN committee that has volunteered to pass notes from one delegate to another or from a delegate to the dais, for a short period.

**Placard:** A piece of cardstock with a country's name on it that a delegate raises in the air to signal to the president that he or she wishes to speak.

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**Point:** A request raised by a delegate for information or for an action relating to that delegate. Examples include a point of order and a point of personal privilege.

**Position paper:** A summary of a country's position on a topic, written by a delegate before a Model UN conference.

**Pre-ambulatory Clause:** The part of a resolution that describes previous actions taken on the topic and reasons why the resolution is necessary. It begins with a participle or adjective (noting, concerned, regretting, aware of, recalling, etc.).

**President:** A member of the dais that moderates debate, keeps time, rules on points and motions, and enforces the rules of procedure. He/she is the highest authority in the committee.

**Procedural:** Having to do with the way a committee is run, as opposed to the topic being discussed. All delegates present must vote on procedural matters and may not abstain.

**Quorum:** The minimum number of delegates needed to be present for a committee to meet. In the General Assembly, a quorum consists of a majority of members to pass a resolution. In the Security Council, nine members must be present to pass a resolution.

**Rapporteur:** A member of the dais whose duties include keeping the speakers' list and taking the roll call. He/she is also responsible for writing a summary of the debate each day to be submitted to the conference press team.

**Regular Caucus:** A type of caucus in which delegates leave their seats to mingle and speak freely, enabling the free sharing of ideas to an extent not possible in a moderated

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caucus. A regular caucus is frequently used to sort countries into blocs and to write working papers and draft resolutions.

**Resolution:** A document that has been passed by an organ of the UN that aims to address a particular problem or issue.

**Right of Reply:** A right to speak in reply to a previous speaker's comment, invoked when a delegate feels personally insulted by another's speech. It requires a written note to the president.

**Roll Call:** The first order of business in a Model UN committee, during which the rapporteur reads aloud the names of each member state in the committee. When the name of a delegate's country is called, he or she may respond "the delegation of (name of country) present and voting."

**Rules of Procedure:** The rules by which a Model UN committee is run.

**Second:** To agree with a motion being proposed. Some motions must be seconded before they can be brought to a vote.

**Secretariat:** The most senior staff of a Model UN conference.

**Secretary General:** The leader of a Model UN conference.

**Signatory:** A country that wishes a draft resolution to be put on the floor and signs the draft resolution to accomplish this. Usually, Model UN conferences require some minimum number of sponsors and signatories for a draft resolution to be approved.



**Simple majority:** Half plus one of the numbers of delegates in a committee. The amount of votes needed to pass most motions.

**Speakers' List:** A list that determines the order in which delegates will speak. Whenever a new topic is opened for discussion, the president will create a speakers' list by asking all delegates wishing to speak to raise their placards and calling on them one at a time. During debate, a delegate may indicate that he or she wishes to be added to the speakers' list by sending a note to the dais.

**Sponsor:** One of the writers of a draft resolution.

**Substantive:** Having to do with the topic being discussed. A substantive vote is a vote on a draft resolution. Only member states may vote on substantive issues.

**Veto:** The ability, held by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, to prevent any draft resolution in the Security Council from passing by voting no.

**Vote:** A time at which delegates indicate whether they do or do not support a proposed action.

**Working Paper:** It is a document delegates write that contains ideas on how to resolve an issue, and it is frequently the precursor to a draft resolution.