

## How to Research and Write a Position Paper:

When you have received your country and committee assignments, the following guide will help you with your research and the creation of your position paper. The position paper is very important and serves several purposes:

- ❖ To familiarize you with the foreign policy of your nation, or the views of your particular person (for specialized committees)
- ❖ To familiarize you with the topics you will be discussing in committee
- ❖ To help you find appropriate resources for further information
- ❖ To make you eligible for committee awards

To prepare yourself for the conference and the paper it will be helpful to follow the process outlined below.

1. Start by carefully reading the background guide for your committee. Highlight, question, and make note of its key points. Pay attention to the instructions from your committee chairperson. They often include the chair's philosophy and expectations for your paper.
2. Look at the source list for the background guide. What kind of materials did the author use? Read these for further depth and insight.
3. Contact your chair if you have any questions at all about the committee or the topics.
4. Once you are familiar with the topics it is time to find your nation's views on the issues. Start by researching the general policies of your country:
  - a. With whom does your nation usually work? Who are your allies?
  - b. What countries do you not get along with?
  - c. What are your major foreign policy concerns?
  - d. What are your most important domestic issues?
  - e. How does your country view the role of the UN?
5. Follow this with research on the specific topics for your committee:
  - a. Do the issues relate to your nation in any specific way?
  - b. Has your country printed any material on your topic, or does it belong to a group that has?
  - c. What solutions to the problems have been attempted by your country?
  - d. What kinds of solutions is your nation likely to support?

**RESEARCH:** To answer these questions will require substantial research. Fortunately, the Internet has made this process very manageable. The following websites will be especially useful:

1. <http://www.un.org> – Will tell you everything you need to know about the structure of your committee, past actions that have been taken and items on the upcoming UN agenda. You can discover which nations voted in favor of and against UN resolutions. Spend a significant amount of time here!
2. <http://www.un.int/index-en/webs.html> - This will take you directly to the home pages of the UN missions for your nation. Most are in English or have English versions. If you are lucky and good at your research you may find actual speeches and press releases by your country on your topics.

3. <http://ciaonet.org/> - Colombia International Affairs Online. An excellent site that has compiled resolutions, working papers, policy briefs and other relevant information. It does require a subscription, but you can sign up for a free trial- highly recommended!
4. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/> - The CIA World Factbook will give you basic demographic and map information about all UN nations. A good basic resource to help you learn about your nation.
5. <http://www.nationmaster.com/> - All the statistics you could possibly want! Create your own graphs comparing developed and developing nations in terms of rates of female literacy, or rank African countries based on the number of refugees in each. A lot of fun, and it has interesting, unusual statistics that others might not find.
6. <http://www.state.gov/p/io/mdlun/> - The US Department of State received so many questions about Model UN that they created their own Model UN website. Great if you are interested in US policies, and it also links to other student resources.
7. <http://www.library.yale.edu/un/index.html> - Yale University has a UN studies program. The website states “The United Nations Scholars' Workstation, developed by the Yale University Library and the Social Science Statistical Laboratory, is a collection of texts, finding aids, data sets, maps, and pointers to print and electronic information. Subject coverage includes disarmament, economic and social development, environment, human rights, international relations, international trade, peacekeeping, and population and demography.”
8. <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/> - Links to online newspapers from nations around the world.
9. <http://www.inkdrop.net/dave/news.html> - ENGLISH ONLY online newspapers.

Tips for students in specialized agencies (small and crisis committees):

- ❖ Read your background guide carefully- you may or may not be required to write a paper. Email your committee chair if you are unsure.
- ❖ It is important for you to understand the overall role of your country or your specific person within your committee. If you are representing a specific nation, you can conduct research much as you would for any other committee. Try to discover the dynamics of your committee- who are your allies and adversaries?
- ❖ If you are representing a specific person, you must learn their role and responsibilities in addition to your nation’s overall policies. For example, the Prime Minister might come from a different political party than the Minister of Defense, and they might therefore disagree on policy issues. Try to also discern your person’s responsibilities- do you lead or tend to follow another member of the committee?
- ❖ Be ready to think on your feet and to be flexible. These committees are often more informal in terms of procedure, but they will require you to think and act as a group to deal with specific events and to grapple with the consequences of your own actions.
- ❖ HAVE FUN!

**Getting to Know Your Country: Basic Research**

*Complete as necessary – you may not need to put all this information in your position paper!*

***Government***

Official Country Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Governmental System: \_\_\_\_\_

Head of State: \_\_\_\_\_

Official Language(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Major Political Parties: \_\_\_\_\_

Allies/Blocs: \_\_\_\_\_

***People***

Population and growth rate: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Religions or cultures: \_\_\_\_\_

Standard of Living: \_\_\_\_\_

***Development***

Developmental Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental (problems, innovations, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Has the nation met the Millennium Development Goal  
Targets? \_\_\_\_\_

***Economy***

Economic System: \_\_\_\_\_

GDP and Growth Rate: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Cities: \_\_\_\_\_

Infrastructure Status (good, poor, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Trade Blocs/Associations: \_\_\_\_\_

Balance of Payments/Trade: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Imports: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Exports: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Trade Partners: \_\_\_\_\_

International Monetary Fund, World Bank position (debtor nation? donor nation?): \_\_\_\_\_

Natural Resources: \_\_\_\_\_

Energy Sources: \_\_\_\_\_

*Military*

Military Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Percent of GDP Spent on Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Weapons, Nuclear Capability,  
etc.: \_\_\_\_\_

*United Nations Involvement*

Date of admission to the United Nations: \_\_\_\_\_

Has the UN ever had to intervene in any conflict involving this nation?

Has the UN ever cited this country for human rights violations?

*Conflicts and Issues*

Ethnic/Cultural Issues?

Refugee Problems?

Major conflicts, past and present:

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