

Glossary of MUN Terms & Phrases

BASIC TERMS

General Assembly (GA) – in the real UN, it is the body in which every country of the world is represented. Even though we won't have all the countries present at our Conference, the GA is still our biggest committee that every delegation will attend. Sometimes (in the MUN world) the General Assembly may be also called the *Plenary Session*.

Specialized Committee (or Regional Body/Bloc) – A committee that is smaller than the GA, typically it contains 20-30 delegations. The specialized committees are usually focused on particular geographic area (such as the African Union, or League of Arab States), or on a particular problem

Debate – is what goes on in the committee. Formal debate is governed by the *Speakers' List* and moderated by the *Chairperson*. Debate is regulated by official Rules of Procedure.

Chairperson (Chair, Chairman, Chairwoman) – the person who is responsible for the smooth running of the Committee. He/she writes the study guides, moderates the entire proceedings of the Committee, decides on some matters that are at his/her discretion and generally does everything to keep the debate smooth and productive.

Speakers' List – is the order in which delegations will address the Committee. It is the backbone of the proceedings; it gives the Committee a basic structure.

Caucus – is an opportunity for a less formal debate for a duration of the caucus delegates are not according to the speakers list. There are two kinds:

- **Unmoderated Caucus** – delegates are free to discuss without the guidance of the Chairperson or the formal rules.
- **Moderated Caucus** – Speakers' List is abandoned; delegates raise their *placards* to speak and the Chairperson chooses the next speaker.

Floor – essentially means the opportunity to speak, or it can denote the subject matter that is currently debated. If someone "has the floor", it means they are allowed to speak. If a resolution is "on the floor", it has been formally introduced, it is being debated and it will be voted on.

Placard – the sign that has the name of the country you are representing on it. You *raise* your placard to vote or to propose a point or motion – it is a way for the Chairperson to see you have something to say.

Gavel – the little wooden hammer the Chairperson uses to keep the Committee in order. Make sure they don't have to use it too much, *banging* the gavel does not make a very pleasant sound.

Dais – officially, the table upfront behind which the Chairperson is sitting. Practically, the Dais denotes also the Chair and the staff of the Committee. Any concerns related to the proceedings of the Committee you may have you should address to the Dais. Same goes for notes to the Chairperson, or resolutions/amendments you want approved.

Procedural – all points/motions that have something to do with the official procedure of the debate – e.g. motions for caucuses, motion for a roll call, etc...

Substantive – all matter that has to do with the *content* of the Committee session – generally related to draft resolutions or amendments.

Point – if you want to ask a question, or point the attention of the Chairperson to something, you use a Point. For example, when you cannot hear the speaker, when you think the Chair has made a procedural mistake, or when you do not understand the decision of the Chair and want to clarify the procedure. There are three types of Points (*Point of Personal Privilege*, *Point of Parliamentary Inquiry* and *Point of Order*); for further explanations please see the Rules.

Motion – motion is essentially a suggestion for action to the Committee. If you want to change the way of debating, introduce a resolution or generally move the proceedings forward, raise your placard and make a motion. There are several types of motions allowed in a Committee – for their list and further explanations, see the Rules.

Second – whenever a motion is made, it requires a Second – that is, there needs to be another delegation that wants to see the motion implemented. To Second is easy – when you hear a motion you agree with, just raise your placard and say “Second”.

Yield – is what you do with the remainder of your speaking time. Yielding essentially means giving the rest of your time to someone. You may yield to other delegation, to questions (if you are willing to answer them), or to the Chairperson (if you have finished speaking or you have no more time anyway). For further info see the Rules.

Roll Call – when the Chairperson reads the names of all delegations in alphabetical order, to see if they are present (or to hear their vote, in a Roll Call voting).

Working Paper – a document that is authored by one or more delegates,

presented to all delegations, and which helps the work of the Committee in some way. It does not have to be in a resolution format, it can be a list of ideas; nevertheless, a good working paper provides a backbone for a resolution.

Resolution – is the final product of the Committee. It is a document that says how you want to change the world; what actions you want to take; how you are using your authority as a body. A resolution is created during the Committee sessions and in the end you vote on whether to implement it or not. Resolution has to be in a specific format, it is made of clauses and it has two main parts:

- **Preamble / Preambulatory clauses** – the introduction, in which you state upon what principles you are acting (or what values you are upholding with the resolution), what events you are condemning or congratulating, and/or what other documents were used as a basis for this resolution. Preambulatory clauses cannot be amended or divided out of a resolution.
- **Operative clauses** – these are the sentences that describe the actions you want to take (or want other organizations to take). You may directly order something to the bodies you have authority over, or urge independent organizations to take some action that is in their power. You may create new bodies, or terminate old ones. In operative clauses, you should also explain the financing mechanisms of your plan, as well as the enforcement mechanism it will use.

For more about resolutions, see the How to Write a Resolution article, sample resolution and, the Rules.

Clause – a paragraph in a resolution describing one specific guiding principle (preambulatory) or action to be taken (operative).

Sponsors – are the delegations that author a resolution, and are committed to supporting it.

Signatories – are the delegations that wish to see the draft resolution formally debated during the Committee session. They do not have to agree with the resolution; they just want to see it on the floor.

Amendment – is a change to the operative clauses of a draft resolution (after it is introduced but before it gets voted on. Just a reminder, preamble cannot be amended. There are two types of amendments:

- **Friendly** – all the sponsors agree to it and it becomes incorporated into the draft resolution automatically
- **Unfriendly** – not all the sponsors agree with it; therefore it will get debated and voted upon, before it can be incorporated into the resolution.

Straw Poll – a non-binding vote for the purpose of gauging the opinion of the Committee. If you want to see what everyone thinks about your proposal, you may make a motion for a Straw Poll – the Chair will then have the delegates simulate voting on the proposal, but the vote is only for information purposes – it

is not binding and the count may, of course, change later.

to be in order – if a type of a point or motion is said to be “in order” it means that the rules allow you to make such a point or motion. E.g. “a motion for a roll call is in order only when voting on draft resolutions” means you may only move for a roll call during the final voting procedure, but not when voting on amendments or other motions.

to rule st. out of order - when a chairperson rules something out of order, (s)he is basically saying either that the rules do not allow it, or that he believes it would hurt the committee and therefore he will not allow it (the second is sometimes also called “ruling something dilatory”). If a delegate is out of order, it means that the action s(he) has made (offensive speech, incorrect motion) is inappropriate at that time and will not be considered.

dilatory – see ruling something out of order