

How to Write a Position Paper

I. What is a Position Paper?

Prior to the conference, it is mandatory for all delegates to write one position paper per topic and to prepare themselves for the sessions. A Position Paper expounds the policies of the country one is representing with special respect to the issues on the agenda. Furthermore, it should indicate past action the country has taken in connection with the specific problem and comment on previous solution-finding efforts. It also explores solutions that are supported by your country. A position paper allows you to focus on the key points necessary for the committee session while serving as a reference document during the conference.

Please mind correct spelling and grammar and choose a diplomatic tone. Your position paper can serve as the basis to your introductory speech at the beginning of the discussion in your committee. However, please refrain from simply reading it out loud and keep in mind that speeches require a different style of rhetoric. Please also keep in mind that the opening speech will only very rarely exceed 60 seconds.

II. What does a Position Paper consist of?

The first part of the Position Paper is dedicated to an explanation of **your country's policy**. The issue at hand should not be explained in a detailed manner, since your fellow delegates are already aware of the facts. However, you should explain the stance that your country takes and has taken previously and explain the issue from your country's perspective. How does your country understand the situation, and what explanatory factors does it deem vital? What steps has your country taken and how has it helped the international community in that matter? You should portray your country's (government's) efforts in a positive way and use the (official) name of your country frequently.

The second part of your Position Paper focuses on a selection of relevant **previous documents or solution-seeking initiatives**, e.g. UN Resolutions, treaties, or other initiatives. Explain your country's position on these steps that have already been taken. This should come as a logical consequence of the policy outlined in the previous paragraph and helps you to put current proposals into context.

Finally, in the last part, you should come up with suggestions that are in line with your country's policy on how to solve the issue. This **action plan** should be as detailed and concise as possible as it creates the basis for your Working Paper / the Resolution that will be debated in the committee. Take into account which other countries could support your suggestions and which solutions are realistic. You should take into account the positive or negative reflections outlined in the second paragraph.

You can also be creative and propose new solutions, as long as they are in line with your country's general policy line.

III. Which procedure should be followed when composing the document?

Every delegate will represent a member state of the United Nations. In order to do so, it is important to **gather background information about one's country**. How large is the population? What cultural background does it have? What regional aspects are important? What are its traditional allies and strategic long-term interests? You can find more tips on how to gather this information in the advice-for-first-timers rubric on our website. Since the MUN conference is a simulation of the real UN councils, it is crucial that every delegate behaves as if they were actually representing their country, even if they do not agree with the policies.

After conducting more general research about the country, it is helpful to read the **background guide of the respective council**. The chairpersons indicate specific questions which all of the delegates of the councils should base their research on and which are of big importance for the topic. Please explore the topic background and pay attention to past international action.

For the position paper, it is important to inform oneself about the **country's general position concerning the council's topic**. Reading relevant treaties one's country has signed and ratified and listening to speeches of one's country's representatives can be helpful. Answering the following questions may be useful: How has this topic impacted your country? What has your country done or tried to do about it? What have political leaders stated in regards to the topic?

By using the UN Bibliographic Information System, delegates can also identify typical phrases they can use during the sessions. It is the best way to find out how the country frames problems and what matters most to the country.

IV. Formal Requirements

Formal requirements for the position paper are the indication of the council or committee, the delegation's country (always use the official name) and the topic. A position paper should be about 1-2 pages long with a normal font and font size. When referring to the country's position, delegates have to use the third person singular (e.g.: It is of utmost importance to the Republic of Germany...). It will be helpful to note the sources as footnotes, because opposing countries are likely to question your facts. Please be consistent and use only one mode of quotation.

Please send in your position papers directly to your chairpersons by **April 16** so that they can review them before making them available to the other delegations.