

Model United Nations Glossary

**Cleveland Council on
WORLD AFFAIRS**





Model United Nations Glossary

Abstention or Abstain from a vote – Declining to vote either affirmatively or negatively on a resolution. It is not possible to abstain if a delegation gives “present and voting” as their status at roll call.

Amendments – Details or conditions added to resolutions. *Friendly amendments* require the support of the sponsors and co-sponsors for their addition to resolutions. *Unfriendly amendments* can be initiated by anyone in the committee, but require a sponsor and co-sponsors and a majority vote to pass.

Bilateral v. Multilateral – Adjectives describing relations between states. Bilateral agreements or treaties involving only two countries were characteristic of the pre-WWI period, while multilateral relationships, involving more than two countries, are much more common today.

Bloc – A group of countries that form a logical combination because of geographical, economic, or cultural considerations (G7, African bloc, Arab League).

Caucus – A forum for informal debate, where the rules of debate are suspended or partially suspended. Caucuses can be *moderated*, in which the Chair calls on individuals to speak before the committee, or *unmoderated*, in which delegates are free to move about the room and talk and work together. Motions of all kinds are out of order during moderated and unmoderated caucuses.

Clauses – The individual sections of a resolution. They are of two types: *preambulatory* (at the beginning of a resolution to introduce the issue, state concerns, and previous United Nations’ actions) and *operative*, which set out solutions and initiatives for the committee to undertake.

Consensus – Obtaining widespread agreement on action. Establishing consensus is the goal of UN resolutions and policy-making.

Dais – The person(s) leading and moderating committee. Including the Head Chair and Co-Chairs.

Dividing the Question – A motion in order during voting procedure. It allows the committee to vote on operative clauses of a resolution separately, as the delegate who makes the motion specifies. This is useful if you agree with one part of a resolution but not the whole thing.

Draft Resolution – The term for a resolution that has been formally introduced to the committee but has not yet been voted on in committee session. See “Resolution.”

Foreign Aid – Money given by one government to another for humanitarian or developmental purposes. It plays a key role in shaping many countries’ foreign policy. Non-governmental organizations are also key donors. Their contributions may be given to governments or to individuals/groups within a country. Today, however, states may be more interested in receiving *foreign direct investment*, through which foreign citizens and companies may locate companies and businesses within the country and employ its citizens.



Foreign Policy – The attitudes and interests of a state towards external issues. Foreign policy can be influenced by a variety of factors such as military strength, trading partners, history, domestic government, and the interests of groups within the country.

Formal Debate – the “default” type of debate, namely, a Speakers List. In formal debate, the committee follows a speakers list, with strict time limits on speaking time. Most points and motions are in order in formal debate.

G7 (Group of Seven) – A body comprised of seven of the world’s most powerful nations: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Yearly meetings enable the leaders of these nations to establish more personal relationships and discuss issues.

Global Financial Institutions – Recognizing the importance of economic factors in ensuring peace and human rights, the UN helped to sponsor these institutions shortly after WWII. Though they operate independently from the UN, they often work in consultation with various UN bodies. *The International Monetary Fund* (IMF) is primarily concerned with the stability of the world’s financial systems and currency controls, while the *World Bank Group* awards loans and grants to countries to alleviate poverty. Though both include members of most of the world’s states, they rely primarily on richer countries for their funding. *The World Trade Organization* (WTO) brings its members together to negotiate reductions in tariffs and other barriers to trade and to enforce the members’ agreements. Supporters praise the enormous growth in the volume of worldwide trade since the establishment of these institutions, while detractors criticize rich country dominance in making policy, and insufficient concern for labor and the environment.

Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) – multilateral organizations, such as the UN, established by treaty or convention and composed primarily of sovereign states (or other intergovernmental organizations). These organizations are created to pursue common goals and interests among their member states, often in areas like peace and security, economic and social issues, and global governance.

Motions – Motions can only be made in formal debate. They allow a delegate to petition the committee to change the status quo (e.g., motion for a moderated caucus . . .), or allow a delegate to ask for or give information (e.g., motion for a Q&A). Consult the CCWA Model UN Comprehensive Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for a reference list and rules governing them.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) – Organizations or associations that are not associated with a specific country or international political organization. Their aims can be broad (World Vision International, Amnesty International, Greenpeace) or quite specific (Doctors Without Borders). The UN has a history of working closely with NGOs, especially on humanitarian projects.

Non-Members or Observer States – Countries which either do not belong to the UN or which have not been admitted to the UN. Current Observer States include Kosovo and the Vatican.

Placard – Sign stating the name of a delegate’s country, which is used to gain recognition from the Chair and to cast votes.



Points – Points can be raised in formal or informal debate. They allow a delegate to ask for information or accommodation from the Chair (but not from fellow committee members). There are only two points that can interrupt a speech: *Point of Personal Privilege* (if there is too much noise, the speaker cannot be heard) and *Point of Order* (if a member believes a rule has been violated). Consult the CCWA Model UN Comprehensive Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for a complete list and rules governing them.

Position Paper – A written statement by a delegate on a particular agenda topic, outlining one's foreign policy, proposed solutions, and alternatives. One position paper (covering both topics) are required from each delegation prior to a conference. Please see the CCWA Model UN Position Paper Guidelines for further information and requirements.

P5 – The five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States).

Regional Organizations (ROs) – International organizations focused on cooperation within a specific geographic or geopolitical area, fostering integration, dialogue, and addressing transnational issues. These are typically not run by the UN but frequently work in combination with the UN. Some of the better-known regional organizations are the European Union (EU), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Arab League, and the African Union (AU).

Resolution – A statement of policy considered before committees of the United Nations. Debate throughout committee sessions seeks to culminate in the formation of one or more resolutions. Please see the CCWA Model UN Resolution Writing document for further information and formatting requirements.

Right of Reply – Used only in debate when a delegate feels another debater has insulted and/or slandered their country or them personally. Rights of reply must be motioned for immediately following the speech in question.

Roll Call – A call to Quorum at the beginning of committee each conference day. It is also a motion made in voting procedure to individually call out each country's name for their vote.

Round-Robin – A motion which requires each delegation to answer a question set forth by those who motioned for the round-robin. Each delegation is required to respond, but may respond with "pass" or "undecided", and is given no more than 10 seconds to state their response. It is often utilized prior to motioning to move into voting procedure on a resolution, to get an idea of how each delegation intends to vote, although their response during the round-robin is non-binding.

Sovereignty – The right of a state to control its own territory and its own citizens without interference from other bodies. Security Council members are often particularly protective of their sovereignty and may use the threat or fear of loss of sovereignty to vote against or veto (if applicable) a draft resolution.

Speakers List - In formal debate, the Chair follows the Speakers List to recognize delegates. A country's name can't be listed on it more than once.



Sponsor/Co-sponsor/Signatory – Titles delegations supporting a resolution may have on the document. All three must represent 25% of the committee. *Sponsor(s)*: These are the primary authors of the resolution. No more than two delegations may be the Sponsors on a resolution. *Co-Sponsors*: Co-Sponsors are any delegation who has contributed language to a resolution in some capacity. There is not a limit to the number of Co-Sponsors a resolution may have. *Signatories*: These are delegations who have not contributed language to a resolution, but are in favor of discussing it further. There is not a limit to the number of Signatories a resolution may have.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These guide all UN action and goals. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Veto – The five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States) are able to exercise their veto when they vote “no” on a draft resolution. If any of the five permanent members cast their veto (i.e., vote “no” or “no with rights”), then the resolution automatically fails to pass, no matter how many other supporters it has.

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) – Refers to weapons of mass destruction whether they are nuclear, chemical, or biological. Eliminating and controlling these weapons has been and continues to be a primary concern of the United Nations.

Working Paper – Is drawn up in the form of a resolution but has not yet been formally introduced to the committee. Its status as a “working paper” allows for sponsors and co-sponsors to continue making changes without having to go through the amendment process. Their overall purpose is to set out specific solutions or policy stances on an issue that can be debated within the committee. Please see the CCWA Model UN Resolution Writing document for further information and formatting requirements.

Yield – During moderated caucuses, delegates must yield their time at the end of a speech in one of three ways: to the chair (once the speech is over the chair takes the floor and moves on with the caucus); to questions (delegates can ask the speaker questions for the speakers’ remaining time), or to another delegate (another speaker uses up the remaining time to give a speech).