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Rules of Procedure at THIMUN Conferences

in Collaboration with THIMUN Qatar

RULES OF PROCEDURE AT THIMUN CONFERENCES

Every organization has to have rules about how it conducts its meetings. These can be very formal or very informal but they must be agreed to and abided by all participants. Having clearly defined written rules enables the participants to make reference to them whenever there is a disagreement about how to proceed. Rules may be adapted or changed to suit the needs of the organization.

So it is with Model United Nations conferences. Many international MUN conferences use the THIMUN Rules of Procedure or adaptations of the THIMUN Rules. This is because the THIMUN Rules have developed over a continuous period of more than 40 years and have been very useful in facilitating good debate and in enabling the delegates to produce resolutions worthy of publication and distribution to the United Nations and other international organizations.

MUN Participants should be aware that the THIMUN Rules of Procedure are constantly being updated to take account of changing circumstances. THIMUN affiliated conferences should be following updated Rules of Procedure, although small variations are found.

The following, therefore, are general outlines. Be familiar with the current rules and bye-laws of each conference you attend.

PROGRAMME AND AGENDA

The program of events and the issues on the agenda of an MUN Conference are usually determined beforehand by the conference organizers and published well in advance. The issues may be subject to amendment by the participants under certain circumstances.

STUDENT OFFICERS

Student Officers, i.e. the Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly, the Presidents of the Councils and the Committee Chairs, as well as their Deputies are normally appointed in advance by the conference organizers.

Secretary General and Deputy Secretaries General

The Secretary General has authority over all student participants at the conference and has the right to make decisions on all issues or questions vital to the harmonious operation of the conference. In particular, the Secretary General has the right to rule on all questions concerning the competence of a particular forum to adopt a proposal submitted to it. Such decisions are final.

Presidents of the General Assembly, Special Conference, Councils, Commissions, Chairs of Committees and their Assistants and Deputies

The Presidents/Chairs set the agenda for their respective assemblies, declare the opening and closing of each meeting, decide on the order in which resolutions are debated and direct discussions. They ensure observance of the rules, accord the right to speak, put questions to the vote and announce decisions. They rule on points of order and, subject to the rules, have control over the proceedings of the assembly and over the maintenance of order at formal meetings. They may propose limitations of debate time, a limitation on the number of times each delegate may speak on any question and on the closure of debate. They may also propose the adjournment of the meeting or the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion.

GENERAL RULES

All delegates should be aware that the rules are intended to facilitate debate and to accord to all members their democratic right to voice an opinion. The Student Officers will apply the rules to this end and will not tolerate the abuse or misuse of the rules for obstructive or restrictive purposes.

United Nations Charter

Delegations should, at all times, act in accordance with the articles and principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Diplomacy

Each delegate must act according to diplomatic norms, including the duty to:

- respect the decisions of the Chair at all times;
- obtain the floor before speaking;
- stand when speaking;
- yield the floor when required to do so by the Chair;
- be courteous at all times;
- avoid the use of insulting or abusive language.

Opening Speeches in General Assembly

Opening policy statements given at the first session of the General Assembly are usually restricted to one minute.

Right of Reply to Opening Speeches

The right of reply to an opening speech will usually be accorded to a limited number of delegations after a specified number of opening speeches. Such replies must refer to one of the preceding opening speeches. Rights of Reply to opening speeches are granted at the discretion of the Chair.

Procedure for Submitting Draft Resolutions

At most conferences, before being accepted for debate, draft resolutions have to be approved by the Student Officer concerned and by an Approval Panel. Draft resolutions need to be co-submitted by a pre-determined number of delegations.

The Student Officer will usually check the content to see that it is pertinent to an issue on the agenda, within the competence of the forum to debate it and is in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The Approval Panel will check the format, language and logical consistency.

RULES OF PROCEDURE IN FORMAL DEBATE

Parliamentary Procedure

Except where otherwise adapted or limited by conference bye-laws, Robert's Rules of parliamentary procedure are used.

In general, the Student Officers know the proper procedure and how to apply the rules. They are available to give help and information and delegates may ask for clarification or explanation of the rules. This is most easily done by rising to a point of order, a point of information to the Chair or a point of parliamentary enquiry. Such points are not allowed to interrupt a speech.

Powers of the President/Chair during Formal Debate

The President/Chair proposes the limitation of debate time for each motion. When debate time has been exhausted, the President/Chair proposes either the extension of debate time or the closure of debate and subsequent vote on the question being considered (the Previous Question).

Since a high degree of consensus is aimed at, open debate is the norm, except on really contentious issues, where the President/Chair may propose closed debate.

The President/Chair may, in the interest of debate, or in order to work towards consensus, call upon a particular delegation to speak, even if they have not requested the floor. The President/Chair may also, for the same purposes, restrict the speaking time of an individual delegate. The limitations of debate time include the time taken for replies to points of information but do not include the time taken for questions to the speaker or for other interruptions.

The President/Chair will announce the guillotine time (the absolute maximum debate time for one resolution) to the assembly.

The President/Chair may call recesses or adjournments.

Decisions of the Chair may be appealed but are not debatable. A two-thirds vote against the Chair's decision is normally required for such an appeal to be upheld.

Quorum

A majority of the total membership of each forum constitutes a quorum.

Amendments to the Agenda and to Resolutions

Amendments can only be submitted by a speaker who has the floor.

Proposed amendments to the agenda may be submitted in each forum at the start of business.

The purpose of proposed amendments to resolutions is to improve the resolution with the object of achieving wider consensus.

When an amendment is moved to a proposal, the amendment is voted on before a vote is taken on the main motion. If a second amendment (amendment to the amendment) is moved, it will be voted on before the vote is taken on the first amendment. If the adoption of the second amendment necessarily implies the acceptance or rejection of the first amendment, the first amendment is not put to the vote.

Debate on amendments usually occurs in closed debate, with a set time for and against the proposed amendments. Delegates may abstain during voting.

All delegates, including those representing non-member delegations, may vote on amendments.

Referring a Resolution or Question

A resolution or question may be referred to another Council, Commission or Committee, e.g. to the Security Council. The desirability of referral is debatable. It requires a majority vote, and is not normal procedure in most conferences.

Reconsideration and Tabling

Once a resolution has been formally adopted or rejected by a vote of the assembly concerned, it can usually only be reconsidered after all business on the agenda has been completed and normally requires a two-thirds majority in favor of reconsideration.

Tabling, or laying a resolution on the table, temporarily disposes of it. A motion to table a resolution is not debatable and requires only a simple majority in favor. A two-thirds majority is needed to take matters from the table, however.

Yielding the Floor to other delegations

The floor may be yielded by one delegation to another only once consecutively.

Rising to Points and Interruption of Speeches

A Point of Personal Privilege must refer to the comfort and well-being of the delegate. It may not refer to the content of any speech and may only interrupt a speaker if the speech is inaudible.

A Point of Order may relate to procedural matters only.

A Point of Information may be directed to the Chair or to the speaker who has the floor if he has indicated that he is willing to yield to points of information. A point of information must be formulated as a question, although a short introductory statement or reference may precede the question. A follow-up question or series of questions from the same questioner are usually not in order.

A Point of Parliamentary Enquiry is a point of information directed to the Chair concerning the rules of procedure.

A speech may not be interrupted by any point except a point of personal privilege referring to audibility.

All other points are dealt with only when the speaker has yielded the floor either to points of information, to another delegate, or to the President/Chair.

The Previous Question

Moving the Previous Question calls for the closure of debate and for a vote to be taken on the motion pending. It may be moved by the President/Chair or a speaker who has the floor.

Voting

All delegations at THIMUN and THIMUN-affiliated conferences may vote both on amendments and on the resolution as a whole. In the event of a close result, the President/Chair may institute a roll-call vote in which each member's name is called in turn and its vote recorded.

After the President/Chair has announced the start of voting procedures, no interruptions are allowed except for points of order connected with the actual conduct of the voting.

Abstentions - Abstentions do not count either for or against the adoption of a motion, i.e. a resolution passes if the number in favor exceeds the number against regardless of the number of abstentions.

Veto Rights - The Security Council will apply the special provisions concerning voting as stated in the UN Charter. Veto rights are not allowed in non-Security Council committees or commissions.