

David L Williams

The Draft Resolution

in Collaboration with THIMUN Qatar

Well before you attend the MUN conference, you should have written a draft resolution. A well-researched and well-written policy statement will serve as the basis for your draft resolution.

You might wonder why this is necessary, since, if every delegate brings a draft resolution on each of the topics on the agenda, there might be more than 100 draft resolutions on the same topic.

Realistically, however, this is unlikely to happen and the real purpose in having your own draft is that you will have something in your hand (as well as digitally) to lobby with. In every MUN conference, there is an element of competition and it is always the best prepared delegates who get the most recognition. Preparing a draft resolution belongs to being well prepared.

The draft resolution specifies the background action to the issue (preambulatory clauses) and the country's position in the form of recommendations (operative clauses). The two sets of clauses should correspond closely to the information contained in your policy statement.

Format

A resolution consists of one, rather long, but nevertheless coherent, sentence divided into clauses and sub-clauses. Since delegates are pressed for time during the conference and need to study documents carefully, your draft resolution should not normally be longer than one side of a page. The version which is finally presented for debate will tend to be much longer, of course, as a result of the lobbying, caucusing and merging process.

Draft resolutions need to be written and typed up according to the official format.

A Sample Resolution showing the correct format and introductory phrases for clauses can be found as a downloadable .pdf file on the THIMUN website:

http://www.thimun.org/images/downloads/sample_resolution.pdf

This can be used as a model for the format and structure of a draft resolution. UN resolutions are published and can be found on the UN website and further examples of MUN resolutions can be found in the reports of previous THIMUN conferences.

Remember, however, that such resolutions are in their final form and the result of months of preparation, intensive lobbying and debate. They are, therefore, not suitable as draft resolutions. Indeed, plagiarizing previous resolutions is to be avoided at all costs.

The Preamble and the Operative Clauses

Resolutions must be separated into a preamble and an operative section. In drafting a resolution it is more sensible to begin with the formulation of the operative clauses.

Once you have decided what action you think the United Nations should take or what attitude it should adopt, you can then turn to the preamble. The preamble contains the background to the problem, as well as the argumentation and the reasoning behind the calls for action contained in the operative clauses.

It is important to ensure that the operative clauses consist only of expressions of will or calls for action and that all background information, argumentation and reasoning is contained in the preamble.

It is important to note that Operative Clauses can only call for things that the body concerned has the power to carry out. For example, only the Security Council can send peacekeeping forces. The way around this would be to formulate a clause which says something like:

Recommends that the Security Council send peacekeeping forces...

If your draft resolution consists of more than one page, you should make sure the headings appear on each page and that each page is numbered.

The heading on the first page will look something like this:

FORUM: (the name of the forum, including the sub-forum where appropriate)
QUESTION OF: (the issue which the resolution deals with)

The resolution then begins with the name of the body or forum responsible for its enactment, e.g.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY or THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL,
(in capital letters followed by a comma).

For the text of the resolution, you should make sure that:

the introductory word or phrase of each clause is underlined,

there is a line-space between each clause,

operative clauses, sub-clauses and sub-sub-clauses are indented;

each operative clause is numbered,

sub-clauses are lettered: a), b), c) etc.

sub-sub-clauses are numbered in Roman numerals: i), ii), iii), iv) etc.

Words and Phrases for introducing Clauses

A list of words and phrases for introducing preambulatory and operative clauses can be found in the .pdf file from the THIMUN website mentioned above.

In general terms, the preambulatory clauses begin with a past or present participle phrase,

e.g. Alarmed... or Calling to mind...

and the operative clauses begin with a verb or verb phrase in the third person present tense,

e.g. Resolves... or Calls for...

Developing a Draft Resolution

Let us suppose that the topic on the agenda is on the elimination of nuclear weapons and that it is your delegation's policy to call for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by the year 2025.

You will need to have a header on the draft resolution. This is easy. You state the forum and the topic e.g.

FORUM:	1st Committee
QUESTION OF:	The Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Then, since your draft resolution is to be debated in the General Assembly, you begin with the subject of the sentence:

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

And your main Operative Clause will be:

Calls for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2025.

However, the issue of nuclear weapons is not a new topic. The devastating effects of the use of nuclear weapons were seen in Japan in 1945 at the end of World War II. The topic has been discussed many times at the United Nations during the 60 years of its existence.

There have been a number of significant UN resolutions passed and treaties signed already.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice, an organ of the United Nations, ruled on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and while the judges' opinions were divided, on one aspect, in particular, they were unanimous: "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control".

Therefore, with this knowledge, you can start to build a preamble:

FORUM: 1st Committee
QUESTION OF: The Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
Calling to mind the devastating effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945,
Referring to previous resolutions and treaties on nuclear disarmament, especially those relating to the establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,
Deploring the fact that many previous decisions and agreements have not been implemented,

Recalling the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the request made by the General Assembly on the question concerning the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons,

Reiterating the unanimous opinion of all the judges of the International Court of Justice that there is an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control,

And, in the light of this Preamble, you might want to add a further Operative Clause:

Calls upon those Member States in possession of nuclear weapons to vigorously pursue “negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects” as required by the International Court of Justice;

Calls for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2025.

Thus your draft resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons will look like this:

FORUM: 1st Committee
QUESTION OF: The Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

Calling to mind the devastating effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945,

Referring to previous resolutions and treaties on nuclear disarmament, especially those relating to the establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,

Deploring the fact that many previous decisions and agreements have not been implemented,

Recalling the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the request made by the General Assembly on the question concerning the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons,

Reiterating the unanimous opinion of all the judges of the International Court of Justice that there is an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control,

1. Calls upon those Member States in possession of nuclear weapons to vigorously pursue “negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects” as required by the International Court of Justice;
2. Calls for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2025.

This then needs to be typed up in the approved format.

Formulation and the Use of Appropriate Terminology

Remember that your draft resolution not only has to follow the recommended format guidelines but also has to be written in the style and language appropriate to a United Nations resolution.

Since the issues are taken from the real UN Agenda and since many topics have been debated over many years, not only at the UN but at many, many MUN sessions, you may want to use UN resolutions or resolutions from previous conferences, not just as resource material, but you may also be inclined to “borrow” clauses or phrases because they precisely and accurately formulate your own policy.

If you are not a native speaker of English, you might have a particular problem in finding your own words and phrases to substitute for those you have read in documents written by native speakers.

While there is nothing wrong, in principle, with using the same formulation as used in an earlier document, you should beware of blindly copying out whole sections of previous resolutions where you have not completely understood what is written nor checked the contents for accuracy.

There are distinct advantages in writing your own draft resolution from scratch. You will be in a much better position to defend and discuss ideas, which are expressed in your own terms and in a language, which is clearly understandable to other delegates. Any lack of clarity or imprecision in terminology will probably be eliminated during the lobbying and merging process.

Drafting a resolution should not be viewed as an opportunity to make an ideological or rhetorical statement. This is much better done in your Policy Statement or Opening Speech.

Resolutions should draw parties together into dialogue and stimulate mutual interest in negotiation and compromise for the greater good. The condemnation of any party often leads to alienation and decreases the chance of success in achieving peaceful solutions to world problems.

Resolutions should, therefore, be conciliatory and only rarely condemnatory in nature. The discussions on the draft resolution which will take place at the conference should focus on the meaning of the resolution's key terms and on its usefulness in solving the problem.

This needs to be done in a way that is most acceptable, both to the parties involved and to the international community as a whole, which is being asked to support the solution.

All draft resolutions which finally come before the various Councils and Committees for debate will, therefore, have first been brought to the attention of many delegates during the lobbying process.

After you have completed the necessary research, developed your policy statement and written your draft resolution, you should discuss it with the other members of your delegation.

Get your teacher or MUN-Director to read it carefully and revise it where necessary or make recommendations for improvement.

The final draft should be typed, saved and, with a number of printed copies, taken in digital format to the conference. You need to have enough printed copies to distribute to other members of your Council or Committee during the lobbying process.

Be prepared for your draft resolution to be drastically revised and rewritten during the lobbying process. A draft resolution is simply a discussion document to facilitate the reaching of consensus. The objective is not to get "MY" resolution adopted, the objective is to come up with a final resolution which "WE", the global community, can agree on.