

The Delegate's Role in the Lobbying Process

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THIMUN: Preparation
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Booklet 8

Delegation Identity

As a delegate, you will have developed several levels of awareness during your preparation which you will put into practice at the conference.

- Knowledge of the country or organisation you are representing;
- A sense of identity with the people of the country or the members of the organisation and an awareness of their most pressing concerns;
- Familiarity with the specific issues;
- Group identity with the other members of your delegation: a good delegation is one in which all the delegates work together as a team and display a consistent and coherent policy;
- A willingness and ability to negotiate, to compromise, to argue and to debate.

Non-Member Delegations

Non-Member Delegations fall into three general categories:

- Non-member nations or states;
- UN Agencies and International Organisations;
- Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs).

At THIMUN, Non-Member Delegations (NMDs) are usually accorded speaking rights, particularly on issues which directly affect them, and may even co-submit draft resolutions. As a Non-Member delegate, you should participate fully in the lobbying process. All NMDs also have voting rights at THIMUN conferences.

You can provide information, give advice and make recommendations to Member States in the formulation of specific clauses.

It is in the lobby that UN Agencies can provide the facts of a case and pressure groups, such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, or non-member nations such as the Holy See and Palestine, can be most active and effective in bringing other delegates' attention to their particular points of view.

Lobbying

Even before the conference starts, you may have had the opportunity to begin the lobbying process. You should take every opportunity to contact other delegations and/or the Student Officers, e.g. on social media. So start lobbying as soon as you know your delegation assignment and the issues on the agenda.

This will give you the chance to discuss the issues, refine your thinking and propose solutions.

You might also be lucky enough to have other participating schools in your neighbourhood and you should make every effort to establish contact with delegates from these other schools for the purposes of lobbying and perhaps drafting resolutions together.

If you have already met other delegates either personally or on-line beforehand, you will find it easier to establish contacts with your potential allies when you get to the conference.

When you arrive at the conference, the informal, chaotic-looking and chaotic-sounding lobbying process on the first day or two may appear daunting and you may not see the importance of it in achieving your objectives. But this is where the negotiation and compromising occurs, which is essential for a resolution to move from a draft to being formally adopted at the conference.

This negotiation and consensus-building does not happen during formal debate. If you wait until the formal debate sessions before attempting to make your voice heard, you will probably find yourself ignored and your views discounted.

If you do not share in the lobby experience, you cannot expect to achieve your objectives. You need to establish good relations with like-minded delegations. Economic or regional interest groups need to come together to develop and agree on draft resolutions. So seek out these like-minded delegations. Members of such groups can share their knowledge of the issue and the reasons for the operative clauses. The agreed draft resolutions should present solutions which are beneficial to all members of the group.

Compromise and Consensus-building

Remember that the draft resolution you brought with you is only a basis for negotiation in the lobby, where you will compare your draft with others and exchange views on issues.

Draft resolutions are not documents written in isolation, nor are they the personal property of the original author. They are simply a basis for discussion. They will have been drafted and “tested” through discussion with fellow delegates and teachers prior to the conference, and with allies during the lobbying process.

As a delegate, your main aim, therefore, should be to work with others to formulate a resolution which both sustains your delegation’s position and attracts the support of others. You should not disregard your country’s position in the process of negotiation, but neither should you be uncompromising if the end-result is mutually beneficial to the negotiating parties.

Merging

You should expect your draft resolutions to be merged with others as long as your national interests and security are not undermined. For example, a debt-burdened country is unlikely to support a solution to the debt problem which obliges it to limit its gross domestic product (GDP). Such a solution might work counter to its long-term potential for debt repayment and growth.

There are, however, some possible dangers in the merging process.

Seeking to merge a very large number of draft resolutions, in order to create the largest possible voting bloc or in order to achieve consensus at any price, may in fact create an illogical, unrealistic or inherently contradictory resolution for debate.

Seek rather to create resolutions which are representative of the policies of your specific interest group and which make realistic recommendations for dealing with the issues.

The President or Chair, in coordinating the work of the delegates in the lobby, will, of course, try to facilitate this and prevent the emergence of illogical resolutions.

Forms of Diplomacy

Lobbying brings into play several major forms of diplomacy for the purpose of communicating and coordinating policies on a particular issue or set of issues.

- Negotiation: direct talks on a specific issue between the parties involved;
- Mediation: talks involving a third party who makes recommendations to the parties more directly concerned;
- Arbitration: the parties in contention agree beforehand to accept the recommendations of the third party.

These forms will vary according to the relationships and interrelationships of the parties involved.

Here we can also see the opportunities available to delegations not directly concerned. For example, a small neutral nation might be able to offer recommendations to larger states which are at odds over economic or environmental policies, or the representative of a UN Agency might be able to offer specific recommendations to nations involved in a dispute.

Ethics of Diplomacy

How open and honest should you be when negotiating with partners or adversaries? How can you trust your partner or adversary to stand by what he says? To what extent should you negotiate in good faith and to what extent can you be confident that your partner or adversary is also negotiating in good faith?

You will, of course, have to make an individual decision about the degree of trustworthiness you are prepared to display yourself and the degree of trust you can place in your negotiating partner.

There are two ways of looking at this. On the one hand you might think that it is perfectly all right to say or do anything that benefits your own nation. The more ethical approach, however, is one in which people stand by what they say and act accordingly.

As recent world events have shown, the interests of individual nations as well as of the international community as a whole, both in the short term and in the long term, are better served by the more open and honest approach.

This is because of the growing interdependence of nations in the sharing of the world's scarce resources. In the MUN, the more open and honest approach is also more likely to lead to success in having a resolution adopted.

A nation standing alone against the world cannot expect the world to support it.

Processing the Draft Resolution

The draft resolution is the main basis for less formal discussions in the lobby as well as for formal debate. The document will go through various stages of writing and revision before it reaches its final form.

The process begins in the lobby with informal discussions among delegates from different nations. These may include ad hoc committee and organisational meetings.

During this period draft resolutions are changed, merged with others, or perhaps even discarded because the delegate has accepted another resolution, which more adequately represents his nation's interests.

When merging resolutions, try to maintain some consistency in spelling, so that the final draft resolution is written using either American or British English.

The Student Officer responsible for your particular forum will normally advise on the content and make sure that the final merged draft conforms to the UN Charter before it is registered and approved.

Registering the Resolution

Most conferences will have a procedure by which the draft resolutions are registered and approved for debate.

You must not expect to register your draft resolution without having participated in the lobbying process. In any case, most conferences require a minimum number of co-submitters and the signature of a Student Officer before the draft resolution can be registered.

Approval Panels

THIMUN conferences have Approval Panels. The Approval Panels are panels of teachers whose job is to assist students in the formulation of their draft resolutions and to give advice on merging as well as finally approving the draft resolution for debate.

If the draft resolution is not approved first time, do not despair; make the necessary corrections or improvements immediately and resubmit it.