

The Basics: Crisis Committee

When real-world developments outpace conventional UN procedure, delegates often have to resort to quick, decisive action to resolve an issue. Instead of debating a forced, unchanging topic, delegates in a crisis committee will be required to respond to events as they are created by the crisis staff, a group of staff members that work closely with the dais to determine the direction of the topic.

Instead of acting as general representatives for one country as a whole, delegates in a crisis committee often take the role of specific characters from a governmental body or organization. For example, if the crisis topic was related to the conflict between North and South Korea, the committee might consist of members of the South Korean presidential cabinet. This is not to say that delegates in a crisis committee will always represent specific characters- delegates may be asked to each represent a single country as in conventional UN committees. If indeed delegates are asked to represent specific people, it is important to research that person's personality and history, as both are necessary for any delegate wishing to stay true to his/her character.

I. Rules and Procedure

All typical MUN rules and procedure apply to crisis committees, though the dais may encourage the delegates to enter caucus types that allow more frequent speaking. It is not uncommon for crisis committees to abandon the ordering of speeches for moderated caucuses. In addition to normal rules and procedure, there are three ways in which delegates can carry out orders and obtain information in a crisis committee. They are as follows:

1. Directive – *an instruction; an order*

Directives are used to direct the actions of one's own country, organization, or affiliated body. If each delegate is taking the role of a specific character as opposed to a general UN representative, it is the delegate's responsibility to know what commands are reasonably within his or her character's capabilities. For example, it would be nonsensical for a finance minister to write a directive mobilizing troops- that would be a directive more appropriate for a president or general. The most common directives are those used to mobilize military forces, as depicted in the example below.

Directive

To: The US government

From: Barack Obama

-Send 2,000 additional troops to Afghanistan.

2. Communiqués

Communiqués are used for making inquiries and for discussions that do not involve giving direct orders. For example, if you want to ask a delegate whether or not his or her country would look favorably upon a given policy or action, you would do so by sending that delegate a communiqué. Communiqués can also be used to determine whether or not a delegate's own country would be supportive of an action or policy. For example, if you are representing the United States and want to form a trade agreement with China, but you're not entirely sure if US policy would permit such an agreement, you can send a communiqué to the dais to eliminate any uncertainty.

Communiqué

To: France

From: The United States

-Would France be willing to support Resolution 1B? If not, what provisions would you like to see in the resolution?

3. Press Release

Press releases are used to make public statements. If you have information that you feel needs to go public, such as the denouncement of an accusation made by the UN or details that may affect popular sentiment, send a press release to the dais. Upon receiving your press release, the dais will announce the content of the press release to the committee. You may find that crisis updates are often announced in the form of press releases from the crisis staff.

Press Release

From: North Korea

- We deny all accusations of human rights violations made by the United Nations. Our great and irresistibly attractive leader, Kim Jong Il, would like to warn everyone that foreign intervention will not be tolerated.

II. The importance of neatness

If you have handwriting that looks a bit messy, or if a piece of paper you give the dais is so crumpled that it looks like it's been target practice for the Tamil Tigers, then we can't bring your ideas to life! It may take a few extra seconds to make sure your note is neat and readable, but clarity is always a worthy investment, and the dais will love you for it.

III. Do Your Research!

Crisis committees are intensely interactive and fast-paced. Those that come poorly researched often find themselves out of step with the rest of committee. The best way to stay conversant amid all the action is by having done an ample amount of research before the conference. Model UN is much more entertaining when you have a lot to say! Here are the four research areas that will put you on the fast-track to becoming a well-prepared delegate:

1. Know the topic

Nothing makes a delegate stand out like well-informed ideas. Having a thorough understanding of the topic allows one to intelligently respond to crisis updates and contribute heavily to discussion.

2. Know your character's role in committee

The more you know about your character, the more tools you have at your disposal. Knowing the friendships, history, personality, and political capabilities of your character allows one to be a more resourceful delegate. Also, committee is much more entertaining when delegates know the eccentricities of their characters!

3. Know the rules & procedure

You may be an incredibly knowledgeable delegate, but without familiarity of MUN rules and procedure, you'll never be fully aware of how you can put that knowledge to good use. Rule-savvy delegates also have more things to talk about, as rules and procedure are brought up frequently in committee.

4. Be up-to-date with current events!

You never know what can come up in a crisis. Knowledge of current events could be what separates you from all of the other delegates in the room.

IV. Interacting with Crisis Staff

1. The Importance of Brevity

Whilst interacting with Crisis Staff, it is important to maintain a good relationship with them. Since you will most likely be one of only 10-15 delegates, and there will most likely be around 2-5 crisis staff per committee, you will be known to the staff. One way by which you can maintain a good relationship with them is to not swamp the staff with notes. Now, that may seem a little counter-intuitive, that you should not be writing as many notes as possible at all times. The reason for this the same reason why teachers hate reading long, rambling

papers; it is tiresome and annoying. Instead, make sure to send a decent number of well thought out, logical notes to crisis. That way, you are sure to be better remembered, and better liked.

2. Stay Realistic

Another way to stay liked by the crisis staff is to stay within the realm of both reality and your character's power. If you are the minister of health and education, and you ask to be given control of decision-making when dealing with foreign countries, the crisis staff will not respond to that well.

Remember, if the crisis staff likes you, they are going to be more likely to let you conduct the actions and operations that will get you ahead in the committee.

3. Build up your Position

When attempting to acquire more power through crisis, start small and work your way up. For example, as the minister of Health and Education, ask for power within that department, and slowly work your way up. Also, as time goes on you can start prefacing your notes with reminders to the staff about power they have given you. E.g. 'In light of the fact that I now am Minister of Health, Education, and appointed emergency Minister of Economics, I institute....'. Essentially, remind them because sometimes they can forget.

V. Conclusion

Crisis committees may have many noteworthy characteristics that make them different from conventional UN committees, but the most important thing is that they are **exciting!** Get pumped! If you come to committee well-researched and with a positive attitude, it may just end up being the best MUN experience you've ever had!