**Student Officer**

**Handbook**



**Chairing a Model United Nations Conference**

**Content of document:**

1. Characteristics of a good Chair

2. Tasks of a Chair / Student Officer

3. Rules of Procedure

4. Frequently used phrases by the Chair

5. Your decisions are being questioned

6. Practice debate ResolutioncCCCConzent

**1. Characteristics of a good Chair / Student Officer**

**1.1 Seriousness**

Good Student officers listen with awareness and seriousness. They have an influence on the delegates and it is in their interest to make the participants feel like diplomats. You as a student officer are always in the centre and you might be seen as a role model to the delegates. While a speaker has the floor it is your duty to listen to their speeches closely.

**1.2 Unbiased**

You as the student officer are the only neutral party in the debate. Make sure that it remains in such a way. If you lose your neutrality, you lose your authority at the same time. Be friendly to all delegates, even to the ones that behave in an unfriendly manner towards you. Always remain polite and calm. In the UN the chairs of a committee are often delegates of a Member State. They would never offend another delegation or delegate and put themselves in the centre of attention. You may be in the limelight in the procedure of the sessions but please do not forget that in reality you are rather of no interest to the delegates. Ultimately you do not have a voting right. Try your best to provide a pleasant framework in which the delegates can work towards creating their resolutions.

**1.3 Calm**

If you as a student officer show calmness, it gives the house a positive feeling. Of course, if you behave in a nervous and stressed manner it will affect the house as well. Therefore it is important that a chair in any situation stays calm. It is your duty to make sure that a session is spent pleasantly and that no problems occur. So it is far more important that your calmness affects the house than being right all the time and thinking of everything at all times. Watch the speakers in an attentive manner.

**1.4 Friendly**

It is not your task to teach the delegates, you should help the delegates with the right application of the rules. Therefore during a debate you should never correct him in a direct way but use the third person: The Chair would like to remind the House not to use ‘Points of Information’ for speeches. If you would like to make a statement please raise your placard when the Chair asks for States wishing to speak.

**1.5 Decisive**

As a student officer you have to make decisions. First of all you have to decide between important and less important motions. The time is restricted and the impatience of the delegates that want to work on the content is big. The chair has the overview of the debate and as the only neutral Party can decide which motions are not of interest: The Chair does not consider this motion helpful at the time / the chair will not consider any further motions of that sort for the time being.

**1.6 Willing to explain and help**

The rules of procedures of Model United Nations are complicated. Therefore it is important to explain them to the House but do not discuss them. Important decisions, such as voting on a resolution should be addressed to the House in advance. Your authority will be respected more if you have no problem explaining things to the delegates.

**2. Tasks of a chair**

**As a Chair, you have to…**

- Set an example for delegates

=> no eating in the committees

=> appropriate language and clothing

- Use the official language only

- Know and follow the rules of procedures

- Pay close attention to the debate and interfere if necessary (e.g. use of un-parliamentary language)

- Lead the discussion and ensure that it is productive

**Always …**

- Stay calm, even if delegates insult you

- Explain why something is out of order

- Explain exactly in which part of debate you are

- Be fair and neutral

- Repeat questions and amendments if you feel that not every delegate understood them

- Show your appreciation for the Administrative-Staff

**Never…**

- Interrupt the presiding chair => doubts his / her authority

- Discuss rules

=> Chair sets the rules

=> If the chair is wrong “The chair stands corrected”

- Speak in a monotonous voice

- Look bored in a discussion

- Insult delegates, guests, MUN directors etc.

- Take advantage of your position

**Chairs should…**

- Help delegates during the merging process and answer questions

- Introduce guest speakers to the forum and prepare the delegates for the speech

- Enjoy what they do

**3. Rules of Procedure**

**Points and motions**

During the debate, various points and motions can arise. These concern either the flow of the debate, or they can draw attention to a particular problem.

Most points or motions cannot interrupt the speaker.

If a delegate wishes to make a point they should raise their placard and state it. They will then be recognised by the chair.

If other delegates agree with the motion they may shout “*Second*!”. If not they may shout “*Objection*!”.

Here are the main points used during debate.

* Point of order

If a mistake is made during debate by either the chair or a delegate, it is in order for a delegate to use this point.

* Point of information *to the Chair*

If something is unclear during debate, a delegate may direct a question to the chair using this point.

* Point of parliamentary enquiry

If there is some sort of confusion during the debate concerning the rules of procedure, and a delegate is unsure of what to do next, he may use this point to ask the chair a question.

* Point of personal privilege

This is the only point which is allowed to interrupt a speaker or the chair. It is used to draw attention to either the discomfort of a delegate, or when a delegate is not able to hear what is being said. In the latter case, a delegate would say

“Point of personal privilege due to audibility”

* Point of information

A point of information is a question to the delegate who has the floor. Points of information always concern the content of the debate.

**Course of debate**

1. The main submitter reads out the operative clauses of his resolution.
2. The chair then sets debating time and informs the forum whether it is an open or closed debate.
3. The main submitter then has the floor to explain the resolution. He should highlight the most important operative clauses and explain the ideas which the resolution contains.
4. When he has finished, he will be asked by the chair whether he is open to any points of information. He can reply in one of three ways:
   * “The delegate is open to all points of information”  
     (Opens himself to an unlimited number of points of information)
   * “The delegate is open to two points of information”  
     (Opens himself to a limited amount of points of information)
   * Says that he is not open to any points of information
5. Thereafter the delegate can yield the floor back to the chair or to another delegate.
   * If the delegate wishes to yield the floor to another delegate (usually a co-submitter of the resolution), point 4 is repeated. However, the second delegate must yield the floor back to the chair once he has finished.
   * If the delegate yields the floor back to the chair, the chair will then yield the floor to another delegate and points 4 and 5 are repeated.
6. When the debating time for the resolution has elapsed all delegates vote on the resolution. Delegates can vote in favour or against, or they can abstain.

**4. Frequently used phrases by the chair**

“Please come to your closing remarks”, when the delegate has exceeded the allowed speaking time.

“Are there any points of information in the House?”, after a delegate has opened himself to points of information.

“May the Chair remind the House that delegates are not to speak unless they have the floor”, when it is getting too loud in the House.

“Would the House please come to order!”, at the beginning of a session or if it is to loud in the House.

“May the Chair remind the House that fellow delegates are to be addressed with “honourable Delegate”, if a delegate forgot to address a fellow delegate in a polite manner.

“May the Chair remind the House that Points of Information must be phrased as questions.”, if a delegate makes a statement although he is supposed to ask a question.

“Would the delegate care to rephrase the question?”, if the speaker does not understand the question being asked he can ask the chair to please ask the delegate to rephrase the question.

“Everyone in favour please raise your placard high.”, “Everyone against please raise your placard high”, “ and everyone abstaining”, during voting procedures.

**5. Your decisions are being questioned**

What to do when your decisions as a chair are being questioned? Here are a few useful insights:

A point of order is made. If you know you made a mistake you say: “The Chair stands corrected.”

If you are uncertain, you say: “The chair would like to draw your attention to the Rules of Procedure whereby, in the interest of debate, the chair may undertake any action that is not covered in the rules.” Or you give your reasons for that decision.

A point of order is often made to catch you out as a chair, just remember to stay confident and if you do not know what to say use the phrase “The Chair would like to draw your attention…”

**6. Research/ Topic Reports**

Once the Student Officers have been chosen, each Chair/Deputy Chair/President is asked to write a research report on one or two issues in their committee, in order to help the delegates by presenting them with a clear and unbiased introduction to the issue. Please bear in mind that this is a very important task of the Student Officers, to be completed at least a month before the conference. It does take up time, and it is essential for the quality of the debate that the research report is throughout, well-structured and written in good English. Please bear this additional task in mind when applying for a Student Officer.

*By Charlotte Hummel 2008*

*Edited by Olivia Darling 2012*

*Edited by Megan Domas 2013*