

HMDC Presents... Writing a Resolution

HMDC Presents... Writing a Resolution at Harvard MUN Online

This guide shows how we turn our bloc's ideas into a working paper and then into a draft resolution that the whole committee can vote on. We use it to practise the shape of a resolution before the conference, so that in committee we spend our time on ideas instead of on formatting.

WHAT A RESOLUTION IS

A resolution is the committee's written decision. It names the problem, reminds everyone of what the United Nations has already done, and then lists the actions the committee wants to take. At Harvard, every resolution starts as a working paper written by a bloc during committee, and it becomes a draft resolution only after the chair approves it and it has the required sponsors and signatories (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026).

1. **Writing only in the room:** Harvard expects all writing to happen during committee sessions, and pre-written work can cost a delegate awards (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We bring research and ideas from home, but we write every clause live with our bloc.
2. **Knowing who signs:** Sponsors wrote a large part of the paper, while signatories only agree that it deserves debate and do not have to vote for it (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 24, Last Accessed: October 2026). We ask many countries to sign, even countries outside our bloc.
3. **Passing a resolution:** A resolution passes with a simple majority, and if two passed resolutions disagree, the one passed most recently decides the matter (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 26, Last Accessed: October 2026).

THE THREE PARTS OF EVERY RESOLUTION

Every resolution has the same three parts, in the same order. When we keep this order, the chair can read our paper quickly, and other delegates can find the ideas they care about.

1. **Writing the heading:** At the top, we write the committee name, the topic, and the lists of sponsors and signatories. We use the full names of countries, such as "the Republic of Korea," because the chair reads them aloud.
2. **Writing the preambulatory clauses:** These clauses explain why the committee is acting. Each one begins with an italicised phrase, ends with a comma, and recalls a fact, a past United Nations resolution or a shared value. Preambulatory clauses cannot be removed by dividing the question (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Rule 33, Last Accessed: October 2026), so we keep them accurate and short.

3. **Writing the operative clauses:** These clauses are the actions. Each one is numbered, begins with an underlined verb, and ends with a semicolon, and the last one ends with a period. Each operative clause can be voted on separately if the committee divides the question, so every clause should make sense by itself.

PHRASES WE USE TO START CLAUSES

We keep this list beside us in committee. Choosing the right opening phrase makes our clause sound like real United Nations writing.

1. **Starting preambulatory clauses:** Recalling, Reaffirming, Noting with concern, Deeply concerned, Recognizing, Acknowledging, Bearing in mind, Emphasizing, Having considered, Welcoming, Alarmed by, Guided by.
2. **Starting operative clauses:** Calls upon, Encourages, Recommends, Requests, Urges, Supports, Invites, Establishes, Designates, Affirms, Endorses, Further requests.
3. **Matching the verb to our committee:** Only the Security Council can make decisions that every member state must follow, so only the Security Council "decides" or "demands." In the General Assembly committees, such as WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, SOCHUM, Legal, DISEC and SPECPOL, we "recommend," "encourage" and "call upon," because General Assembly resolutions are recommendations.

WRITING A STRONG OPERATIVE CLAUSE

A strong operative clause tells the reader who acts, what they do, how it is paid for and how we will know it worked. A weak clause only says that something is important.

1. **Naming who acts:** We name the body that does the work, such as member states, a United Nations agency or a regional organization. "Encourages member states" is clearer than "Encourages action."
2. **Saying exactly what happens:** We describe one specific action in plain words. If an idea has several steps, we use lettered sub-clauses (a, b, c) under one numbered clause.
3. **Explaining the money:** We say who pays, such as voluntary contributions, an existing fund or a partnership with a non-governmental organization. A plan without funding is easy for other delegates to attack.
4. **Showing how we measure success:** We add a report date or a simple measure, such as "requests a report to the General Assembly at its next session."
5. **Respecting our country's red lines:** Before we add a clause, we check that our own government would accept it. A clause that goes against our country's position can cost us the chair's trust.

A SHORT MODEL, IN OUR OWN WORDS

This short model shows the shape on one of our December topics. It is practice only, and we never copy it into committee, because Harvard requires every clause to be written in the room.

Committee: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Topic: Childhood Hunger: Food Waste, Recovery and Farmland Restoration

Deeply concerned that many children still go to bed hungry while large amounts of food are wasted every day,

Recognizing the work of member states and non-governmental organizations that already collect unused food and deliver it to schools,

1. Encourages member states to create food recovery programmes that move safe, unsold food from markets to school meal programmes;
2. Recommends that UNICEF help interested countries train farmers in ways to restore damaged farmland, funded through voluntary contributions and partnerships;
3. Requests that UNICEF report on the number of children reached by these programmes at its next annual session.

CHECKING OUR PAPER BEFORE WE SUBMIT

Before we send our paper to the chair, we read it aloud once as a bloc. These checks catch most of the problems chairs return papers for.

1. **Checking the order:** Heading first, then preambulatory clauses, then numbered operative clauses.
2. **Checking the punctuation:** Commas after preambulatory clauses, semicolons after operative clauses, and a period after the last clause.
3. **Checking for repeats:** A draft should be different from the drafts already approved (Harvard Model United Nations, Guide to Delegate Preparation, Last Accessed: October 2026). We remove any clause that only repeats another paper.
4. **Checking for new ideas:** We make sure at least one clause is a fresh idea that our bloc can be proud of, because the chair rewards original solutions.