



Position Paper Guide

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What is a Position Paper

A position paper is a document that outlines a country's stance on a topic. While there may be some variation in position paper policies between different Model UN conferences, the papers always follow a similar format. The purpose of a position paper is to outline a delegation's past action and current stance on its committee's topics. At RiceMUN, position papers are only mandatory in select committees, but are required in order to be eligible for an award. A well-written position paper will positively impact your experience as a delegate. The process of writing a position paper will assist you in the research of your topics and allow you to more effectively engage in debate with your peers.

Guiding Question

Research is easily the most important step in writing a position paper. Without research, your paper will hold nothing of value. Hence, the first step in your research procedure is to read your committee's background guide. The background guide will give you a general scope of your topic and will allow you to narrow the field of your own personal research.

With respect to writing a position paper, the "Discussion Questions" section is one of the most important sections to consider in the guide, as these questions are explicitly designed to help guide your research for the topic. Furthermore, this section gives a general idea of the direction of discussion and debate your committee is likely to take throughout the conference. These questions can be found in the final section of your committee's background guide.

When you have completed reading the background guide, you should begin researching your own country's stance on the given topic. In order to ensure an adequate research process, take note of the resources you use for future reference. If you ever get lost or overwhelmed during your research, you can refer back to the "Discussion Questions" section to set yourself back on track. Once you feel comfortable with your research, you can begin writing.

Content Expectations

As a representative of a country, the position paper must be written in the third person. For example: instead of writing “I believe...” you must write “the country of (country name) believes...”

Follow these six steps to effectively write a strong position paper:

1. The name of the committee, the name of your country, the name of the topic, and your own name should always be at the top of your position paper document.
2. The first paragraph should broadly introduce the topic and *state areas of concern that your country believes to be of significance.*
3. The second paragraph is where you will expand on the concerns you have stated in the first paragraph. *You will give details on the concerns and explain why your country believes that the concern is significant. This paragraph should detail your country's position on the topic.*
4. The third paragraph should state *previous actions your country has taken.* Additionally, the third paragraph should discuss *other possible solutions* and analyze the pros and cons. Depending on the amount of research you did, you may want to create two different paragraphs: one for discussing your country's actions and the other discussing the possible solutions.
5. The fourth (or fifth) paragraph is the conclusion. Sum up everything you have written in your position paper.

The steps have been color-coded to match the example position paper below. Please note that the topic and data are fictional.

When you finish writing a position paper on both topics, email your position paper to your committee dais. As your subject header, indicate that the email contains a position paper and indicate the country that you represent, for example: “China's Position Paper”.

Sample Position Paper

International Criminal Police Organization

Country: United States of America

Delegate: John Smith

Topic A: Maritime Trafficking in the Horn of Africa

Serving as a vital linkage between the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean, the Horn of Africa represents one of the world's most crucial economic corridors. Maritime trafficking in the Horn of Africa poses a significant threat to the safety of this crucial corridor. Specifically, the United States is concerned about the effective suppression of criminal activities within the Horn of Africa.

The United States believes that the free and safe transportation of goods across the world is vital to international security and stability. The abundance of illegal activities surrounding the Horn of Africa significantly impedes ships freedom of navigation and jeopardizes the safety and security of law-abiding sailors, which cannot be tolerated.

In the past, the U.S. has led tremendous efforts into addressing the illegal activities of the Horn of Africa. A notable example is Operation Sea Shield, which commenced in August 2009 and significantly decreased pirate attacks.^{1,2} The United States's actions have sent clear messages that the nation will not tolerate trafficking in the Horn of Africa.

The United States proposes two possible solutions that INTERPOL can execute. The first possible solution is to send another international naval task force to combat the prevalence of piracy and trafficking in the Horn of Africa. Mimicking the logistics of Operation Sea Shield, the naval task force will protect cargo ships and repel pirate attacks. The second possible solution is to provide humanitarian assistance to Somalia. Foreign aid will address the fundamental motivations for piracy and trafficking by decreasing poverty and improving the livelihood of Somalians.

In conclusion, the U.S. has a firm stance against maritime trafficking in the Horn of Africa. The U.S. has previously led international coalitions to militarily suppress illegal trafficking. The U.S. believes that the deployment of an international naval escort taskforce in conjunction with an increase in humanitarian aid to Somalia would help resolve the issue of Maritime Trafficking in the Horn of Africa and benefit the global community.

¹ <https://mc.nato.int/missions/operation-ocean-shield>

²

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/250867/number-of-actual-and-attempted-piracy-attacks-in-somalia/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20attacks%20off,period%20between%202010%20and%202015.>



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