POSITION PAPERS

WHAT ARE POSITION PAPERS?

The purpose of position papers is to ensure that debate in committee is highly substantive and to assist delegates in assembling their research into an organized policy statement. Individual position papers are a crucial part of the preparation process, and further information about their format and content is provided in this section.

In each committee Background Guide, the director has provided questions on each topic generally and as it pertains to individual delegations specifically. Delegates’ position papers should be concise, accurate, and well written. The Research and Preparation Questions found succeeding the topic papers have been specially formulated to lead the delegates in a logical progression through the topic and position paper. It is important that delegates directly answer these research questions. A good position paper will:

- Clearly outline the country’s policies on the topics and what factors contribute to these policies
- Integrate indigenous national factors into the responses
- Refer to domestic and international documents and correctly site the sources
- Deal with the in-depth issues of the topic areas as well as the overt topic issues
- Provide suggestions of solutions that address the problem areas
- Answer all Research and Preparation Questions posed in the Background Guides

The staff looks for the demonstration of the following skills in evaluating the papers:

- original and critical thinking
- true understanding of the dynamics of your nation
- functional and applied knowledge of the topics

Please note that under no circumstances will plagiarism of any portion of position papers be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as the usage of material from another source without appropriate citation. Plagiarism includes both word-for-word borrowing of text and material and paraphrasing of material without citation. All material acquired from existing sources, including text quotations, charts, graphs, diagrams, and data must be cited. Please note that plagiarism of the Background Guide provided by your Director is equally unacceptable. Plagiarism violates your agreement as a NHSMUN delegate to present an original document that represents your own work. It is equivalent to stealing, and will thus be treated very seriously. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact your Director or the Director-General, Bonnie Pham (dg.nhsmun@imuna.org).

HOW TO WRITE A POSITION PAPER

It is important to recognize that the amount of information available for use in your position paper will vary according to the size, level of development, and age of your country. Your director’s topic choices will also affect the amount and type of research you will be able to find. Do not be discouraged by the limitations of your resources. If you are representing a newly formed country or looking for information on a topic that has only recently been in the public eye, you will experience many of the same problems that confront actual UN delegations. Remember that diplomats must
look to their governments at home for direction and information. Where you have trouble developing a coherent policy, they probably do, too. See the next section on Research for helpful tips on where to find information.

A successful position paper will provide the following information:

1) **Introduction:** Discussion of the importance of the topic and the problems that will be encountered in finding a solution.

2) **Country policy:**
   a. A general, relevant history of your state. Include major events that shape its current policy about the topic under consideration,
   b. Your state's general position on the topic, including resolutions that it has or has not signed and reasons for previous votes on these measures.

3) **Proposed actions and solutions:** Suggestions for reaching a compromise (where applicable: sometimes a state's position is that the UN should not be discussing the topic because it is not of international concern. If this is the case, it is an extremely valid position to take, and this position should be stated and explained). This is the best chance for a delegate's creativity to flourish regarding policies to push forth in the resolutions.

Throughout these three sections, the delegate should address the Research and Preparation Questions in their committee's Background Guide.

Certain specialized agencies have alternative position paper formats or guidelines (the World Bank, the NGO Forum, UNPFII, the ICJ, and MONUSCO). In such situations, more specific guidelines are provided in the committee Background Guide.

**Document Specifications**

Position papers should be (at minimum) 4 double-spaced, 12-point type pages with 1” margins per topic. Any academic citation style is acceptable (NHSMUN Background Guides use a modified version of Chicago style). Papers should be at maximum 15 double-spaced pages.

You can find a Sample Position Paper in the Appendix of this document.

**POSITION PAPER SUBMISSION**

Individual position papers must be submitted online on our website on or before 24 January 2013. Only faculty with registered accounts to the website will be able to submit papers — only faculty users will be able to upload position papers. Please upload each delegate’s paper separately. A single upload should consist of the Topic A and Topic B papers of a single delegate. Do not put multiple delegates’ papers in the same document, even if they are representing the same country or are in the same committee. Further instructions on how to name the file and how to upload will be distributed prior to the position paper deadline.

All extension requests must be made to the Director-General by 17 January 2013. Delegations that do not submit position papers will not be eligible for awards. Papers without an official extension, post-marked after the 24th will be considered late and penalized accordingly. Only Faculty Advisors can request group or individual extensions. Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE POSITION PAPER

Note: For demonstration purposes, this paper is much shorter than an actual NHSMUN position paper should be. This paper exemplifies the appropriate tone, research skills, and citation style necessary for a successful position paper.

Historical Security Council

China's Position on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1991)

Introduction

Mr. Tsiang, China’s representative on the Security Council, asked, “The Council at this juncture must answer two questions: What can the United Nations do for the Republic of Congo, and how do we do it?” (“Report” 17). Invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter, Hammarskjold articulated three goals for the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC): “First, the Force had to help expel the foreign military and paramilitary personnel not connected with the UN cooperation; second, it had to prevent civil war, using force if necessary; and third, it had to protect the territorial dignity of the Congo” (Lefever 72). China agrees with the Secretary-General in these requirements, and pledges to abide by them.

China's History

Due to China’s history, we realize the importance of acting cautiously but firmly when dealing with the Congo situation. The self-established dynasties before 1644 became absorbed into what is presently known as Chinese culture. Such reigns include the Ch’in (when the Great Wall was built), Han, Sui, T’ang, and then the Sung dynasty. Succeeding this, the Manchu from Manchuria asserted themselves. Although this was not a colonial power, they joined the Manchu-Chinese civilization in a manner similar to a colonial power taking control of another nation.

Current Situation in Congo

Presently, 300 Swedish troops are stationed in Elisabethville in Katanga, functionally replacing the Belgian troops that once held order before Congo’s independence (Lefever 40). Patrice Lumumba, party president of the national, non-ethnic Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), felt that this action was inadequate and deployed troops of his own, aided by the Soviets (McDonald 50). Struggle for control of the Congolese government began between Lumumba, the first president of Congo, Joseph Kasavubu, and the Army Chief of Staff, Joseph Mobutu. (McDonald 56). Internally, the level of conflict in Katanga has risen, as Tshombé, the leader of the main Katangan party, fought with Katanga’s largest tribe, the Baluba. Both the UN and the Congolese Congress have been attempting to ease tensions since then, such as ONUC’s efforts in launching Operation Rumpunch. The UN also called for the arrest of Tshombé, which resulted in battle (Lefever 65). The fact remains that Belgium and Tshombé have prevented the UN from accomplishing the ideals that have previously been set forth (“Letters” 2). China vehemently opposes “any perpetuation or revival of any form of colonialism whatsoever in the Congo” (Report, Mr. Tsiang 18).
Proposed Actions and Solutions

One of the most important tasks pointed out by Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula is working out a draft constitution. The founding principles of Loi fondamentale will have to be slightly revised, as the present principles are now grounded on a nationalistic feeling, not, as before, where the health of the nation depends on foreign forces. Mr. Adoula is pushing for “a Congolese constitution which will harmonize with the Congolese spirit, one which will adopt political structures suited to the aspirations of the Congolese people and which will be established by the Congolese themselves” (“Speech” 77).

China firmly believes that peacekeeping forces, (namely ONUC) should be employed in Congo. As long as the requirements of impartiality, acceptance of the host country, and opening fire only in defense are held accountable, the UN has grounds to confidently assert itself to diffuse the tension building in the Katanga region. China empathizes with Congo’s need to ensure their sovereignty and hopes to uphold this to the utmost. ONUC should only enter as a peacekeeping force, which by definition must have the consent of both parties involved.

It is imperative that in the quest to maintain humanitarian dignity, the logistics of financing the entire operation be kept at the forefront. As representative Mr. Carduso from Congo (Leopoldville) has pinpointed, “The truth must be told: ONUC is beginning to run out of money” (“Congo’s” 18). China and Ceylon have both supported an influx of financial assistance to Congo; however, as Mr. Tsiang noted, China “favours channeling such aid through the United Nations . . . [and] opposes any direct aid from individual Governments to the Congo” (“Report” 18). In including such a clause, international rivalry and conflict arising from unilateral aid will be bypassed.

Conclusion

China firmly believes that “There is no reason to quit; there is all the more reason for persisting in our course of actions defined in the resolutions which we have already adopted” (“Report” 17). The progress that has to this point been made in Congo is commendable, and China sees that with the aid of the Republic of Congo as well as the United Nations, that more can be done to alleviate the problems that have been attacking especially Katanga in the past three years. China looks forward to the day when Congo is firmly established with a working constitution, when the children are being schooled and the army fights as it would in any other country. As Mr. Tsiang stated, “I am instructed by my government to uphold here [in Congo] the political independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Congo”; Congo should now walk towards these new worlds.

Works Cited


Letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council; Letters from
the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics addressed to the


December 1961.

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General Relating to the Implementation of Security Council Resolutions S/4741 of 21

Report to the Secretary-General from his Action Special Representative in the Congo Concerning
the Situation in Katanga and United Nation Action in Implementation of Security Council
Sixteenth Year. 15 April 1961.

Second Report of the Secretary-General On Certain Steps Taken in Regard to the Implementation

Speech Made on 2 August 1961 to the Two Houses of the Congolese Parliament by the Prime
1961.

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