

HanseMUN presents: MUN Basics

Today: Debate Basics I: Motions, points, and caucuses

Over the last two weeks, we introduced you to position papers and opening statements. To continue the course of our fictional debate, and to maybe refresh your memory, we will discuss the beginning and middle stages of a debate as you would find them at a conference. This will be interesting to you not only if you are new to the world of model UN, but also if you have visited some of our Monday sessions before, as conferences do differ from one-off sessions quite a bit.

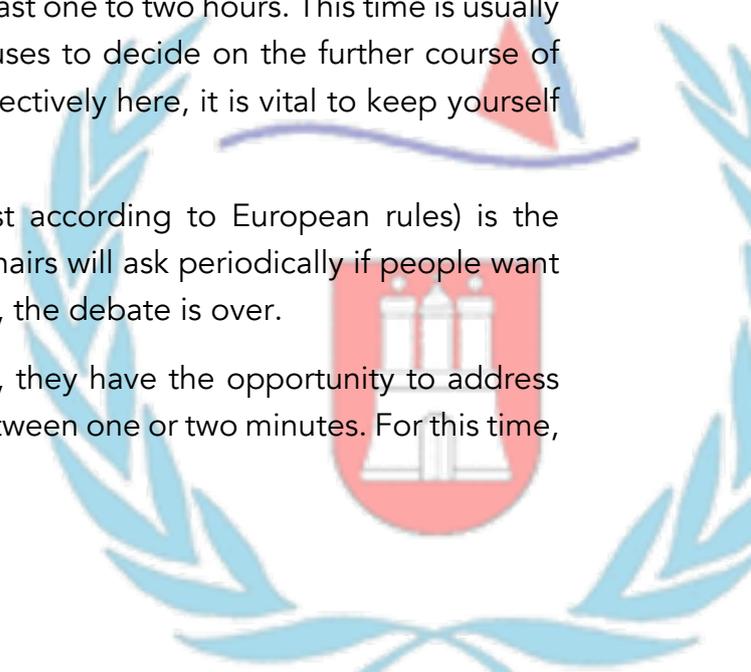
The first major difference between sessions and conferences becomes apparent right after the roll call. The first motion to kick off debate will be the setting of the agenda. Usually, a conference will give you two or three topics to prepare before the conference. Naturally, you'll have to decide on what topic to cover first. This is done by simple majority voting, usually accompanied by a few delegates speaking in favour or against any on topic.

Be aware that the first topic you will discuss will likely take up the lion's share of your time. It is not unusual for the second topic to be introduced only on the last day with just a few hours left or for it to be skipped entirely. This is normal. This makes it even more important to prepare thoroughly for one topic.

After the setting of the agenda, opening statements will be held. If you want to know more about those, we covered them last week, just check the post and you'll find everything you need. After everybody has given their two cents, debate starts properly. The first day of debate usually starts rather late after the opening ceremony, the check in and general arrival, and will only last one to two hours. This time is usually filled with general speeches and a few caucuses to decide on the further course of the debate and to find alliances. To work effectively here, it is vital to keep yourself oriented within the debate.

The foundation level of any debate (at least according to European rules) is the General speakers list, or GSL for short. The chairs will ask periodically if people want to be added to the list; when the list runs out, the debate is over.

When a delegate gets their turn on the GSL, they have the opportunity to address the house for a set amount of time, usually between one or two minutes. For this time,



the speaker has the floor; when his time elapses, they have to yield the floor for the debate to progress. They can yield the remainder of their time to another delegate, open up the floor for questions or yield to the chair, in which case the GSL continues further down. The GSL is great for giving general statements, assessments, impulses and opinion. Try however to not go into too much detail; there are other ways to discuss the nooks and crannies of a topic. Remember; you do not have to fill your time. Sometimes less is more.

After a few speeches, the chairs will start to ask for points or motions. These are the tools a delegate has at their disposal to change the flow and direction of debate.

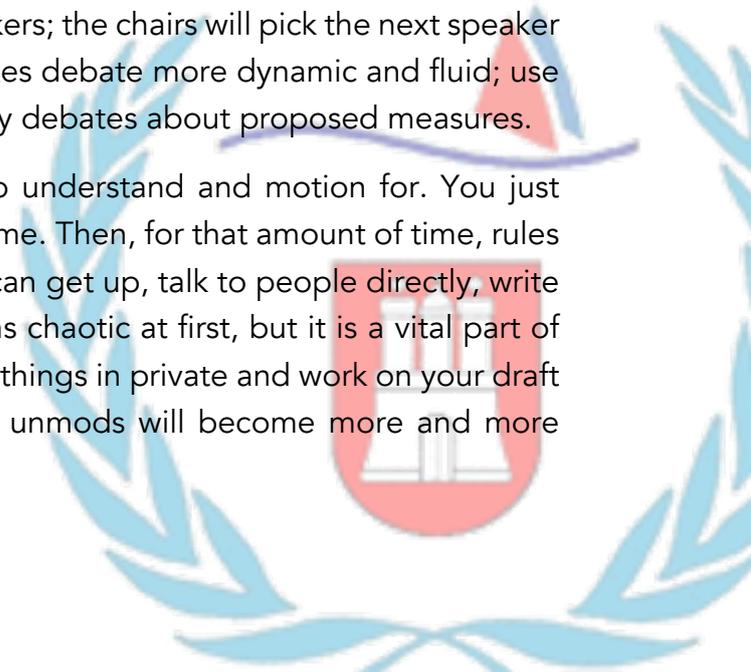
Points are ways for a delegate to clarify, ask questions or rectify the debate. You can make a Point of parliamentary inquiry if you have a question about what is happening on a technical level (who gets to speak, why can't I ask the delegate speaking a question, etc.), a Point of personal privilege if you can't hear the speaker or are inconvenienced in another way and so on. Points usually don't change anything about the debate and thus (usually) don't require voting.

Motions are what moves the debate. Genius, I know. The most important motions for the start of the debate I will explain right now are just two: The motions for the two caucuses.

A caucus is a sort of sub-debate. For a set time, debate will be confined on a specific topic and the rules of procedure will allow for more direct communication between delegates. There are two kinds: the moderated and the unmoderated.

To motion for a moderated caucus, you will have to specify a total time, for example fifteen minutes, a speaker's time, for example one minute, and a topic. This can be any topic you want, but it is usually smart to confine it to what you really want to talk about, so be precise. For the duration of the caucus (here: fifteen minutes), delegates have the chance to hold short (here: one minute) speeches in quick succession. There is no yielding; once you are finished speaking or your time has elapsed, the next speaker is picked. There is also no list of speakers; the chairs will pick the next speaker each time after the last has finished. This makes debate more dynamic and fluid; use this to work on technical issues or to hold fiery debates about proposed measures.

The unmoderated caucus is much simpler to understand and motion for. You just propose an unmoderated caucus for a total time. Then, for that amount of time, rules of procedure are basically non-existent. You can get up, talk to people directly, write resolutions, build alliances or chat. This seems chaotic at first, but it is a vital part of debate. Only here you can effectively discuss things in private and work on your draft resolution in groups. As debate progresses, unmods will become more and more



frequent, as different groups will work against each other to procure votes and write clauses and amendments (more on that on a later date.)

Motions change the flow of debate and thus (usually) require voting. Normally, after a motion is proposed to the room, the chairs will ask for seconds. Raise your placard now if you want this motion to pass. If no seconds are raised, the motion fails without vote. If seconds are raised, the chairs will ask for objections. Raise your placard here if you do not want this motion to pass. If no objections are raised, the motion passes without vote. If objections are raised, the motion will be formally voted upon. Pay attention here: raise your placard only when you are asked and lower it only when you are asked. After a quick count, the chairs will announce the results and debate will continue accordingly. If all this seems confusing, that's because it is. But don't worry; after a few votes this will feel like second nature to you!

The first day of debate will usually be filled with just plain debate. No resolution writing, no binding decisions. This may seem boring at first, but I recommend you use this time wisely to get to know your co-delegates, their positions and allies. Things will get into motion (no pun intended) soon enough.

Join us next week to see how exactly things will progress: with resolutions, amendments, and consultations!

