

# HanseMUN presents: MUN Basics

## Today: Opening Statements

Last week, we introduced you to position papers, the main part of pre-conference preparation. Today, we'll cover another thing you can do before you start debating: Writing an opening statement.

Now, usually, I am not one to write any of my speeches down before I give them, I'm jotting down a few scribbled notes at best, but that's just personal preference. The one exception I make are opening statements. Often, just after the agenda is set and the first topic is about to be discussed, chairs will ask for opening statements. These are 30 to 60-second-long speeches each delegate gives to summarize their country's position. In that aspect, they are pretty similar to position papers, but there are some things to keep in mind when preparing them.

First: why even prepare them? I am the first to admit that sometimes I just give opening statements impromptu because I just couldn't be bothered to write a few lines in advance. That is a bad idea. The course of debate is fluid and changing depending on what your co-delegates say. A speech you are writing now might be complete besides the topic in five minutes, when you get to hold it. Opening statements are the one opportunity to give prepared remarks without the interference of other delegates. Use this opportunity to establish yourself as a key figure in the room from the start.

Next, what belongs in an opening statement and what doesn't? You, as the perfectly prepared delegate that you are have of course read all of your co-delegate's position papers in advance, printed them out, marked them, and sorted them by number of typos before the debate even starts. But others may not have so. For most delegates, your opening speech is the first they will hear about your country. They want to know to what bloc you belong, what experience your country has with the topic at hand and what solutions you offer. These things all belong in your speech.

Start by outlining your country's connection to the topic. Maybe throw in a statistic in there but keep it short, this is the part that is only important in context. Then, isolate a sub-topic or specific problem, if the agenda allows it. No country is equally interested in all aspects of every topic, so focus on one or at most two that are important for you. Next, state why these specific subtopic is important to the problem as a whole. This is your selling pitch for why others should care about the thing you care about. A resolution will never address all possible subtopics; by steering the debate into the subtopics you favour and have prepared for, you are already on route to be an important player in the debate. After selling your issue to the room, sell them your ideas. Give one or two ways to address the issue, but don't get lost in detail; you have few precious seconds and there are many speeches to be held in the next hours, so be concise and memorable.

If you have read last week's feature about position papers, this will seem very familiar to you. It is true that you can copy the gist of your position paper to your speech, but remember that a different medium has different demands. Don't copy full sentences. Say the word you write out loud as you write them, make sure that they *sound* good. Remember, this is a marketing pitch. Your opening speech will very much give a first and lasting impression of your role in the room. Be straightforward and decisive, but not rude or overly commanding. Think of the role your country plays: the United States might need to present themselves a little stronger than other countries, or they risk losing influence to other players. Lastly, try to keep the flowery language to a minimum. Don't go on and on about the spirit of international cooperation and how grateful you are to work together and find

common ground and so on. A surprising number of people do this, and with each it gets more boring. These kinds of phrases do nothing but waste your first chance to influence the room, a chance others will gladly take.

We will go into the details of holding speeches and projecting confidence while doing so another time. For now, to keep you trained and your MUN skills sharp, why not write an opening statement using the guidelines we presented today? The topic and background info will be the same as last week, so if you are one of the people who wrote a position paper and it to us, congrats! Your work is already halfway done. For those who haven't: The Topic is E-mobility. Any info can be found in last weeks edition of MUN Basics. Just write a few lines and send them to us at [delegations@hansemun.de](mailto:delegations@hansemun.de) and we will gladly give you feedback.

Until next week!

