



OPOMUN

Security Council & Historical Security Council Guide

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1. WHAT IS THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL?

According to the United Nations Charter, The Security Council (SC) has primary responsibility for the maintenance of **international peace and security**, and all Member States are **obligated to comply with Council decisions**.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorise the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

1.1. Main Tasks of the Security Council

For it to be able to carry out this task of maintaining peace and international security, the decisions taken by the SC are **legally binding** for the member nations of the United Nations (Art. 25, UN Charter), in contrast to the General Assembly which is an advisory body (Art. 11, UN Charter).

This task can be carried out in many ways such as **non-military sanctions** (may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations), **peacekeeping missions** (non-aggressive use of military force to help nations in conflict settle) and **peace enforcement operations** (seek to repel international aggression, using military force if necessary).

2. WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCIL?

The Historical Security Council (HSC) procedures are identical to the ordinary Security Council, however, it has a focus on specific historical time periods and events, allowing delegates to engage with the international crises, conflicts, and resolutions as they occurred in the past.

This council replicates the dynamics, member composition, and geopolitical realities of the time it is simulating. Therefore, delegates must adopt the perspectives and priorities of the nations they represent during the given historical era, not the present perspective of the same country.

For example, imagine that the council was debating the issue of the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) on the first day of conference and the issue of the Bosnian War (1990s) on the second day. The delegate that has been allocated to the Russian Federation/USSR would have to shift their perspective from Cold War superpower dynamics to navigating post-Soviet geopolitical challenges when moving from one issue to the next.

Note that delegates cannot make any references to events that occurred after the conference date specified on the research reports.



3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1. Permanent Members

The UN Security Council has **5 permanent members**. These are known as the **P5 Countries**:

1. China
2. France
3. Russian Federation
4. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
5. United States of America

3.2. Non-Permanent Members

It then has **10 non-permanent members**. These members are elected by the General Assembly for a term of **two years**, in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Five from African and Asian States;
- One from Eastern European States;
- Two from Latin American States;
- Two from Western European and other States.

3.3. Observer States

In OPOMUN, the Security Council has more than 15 delegates. This is because, based on the issues being debated, certain countries may be needed in order for the debate to be fairer and more fruitful. Therefore, the states that are not non-permanent or permanent but are relevant to the debate are present in the committee as **observer states** (this feature does not exist or is put in practice in the real UNSC). Therefore, in OPOMUN, the Security Council is composed of 18 delegates (3 observer states).

The observer states are chosen based on their historical, regional, or strategic importance to the topics on the agenda, ensuring a more comprehensive and balanced debate.

Observer states do not have full voting rights. They **cannot** vote on clauses and resolutions, only amendments.



4. VETO POWER

The aforementioned Permanent Members (P5) of the Security Council possess the authority to **veto** (reject) any resolution, clause, or amendment, leading to their disbandment. If a delegate disagrees with a proposal, they can issue a **veto threat**.

Delegates can issue veto threats in the following ways:

1. Raising their placard and calling out "veto threat" during debate
2. Writing "veto threat" on a piece of note-passing paper and sending it to the Chair Delegates must think about their country's perspectives when deciding whether to veto or not.

During voting procedures, a P5 country cannot vote against because this would be a veto threat. Therefore, if a delegate is a P5 and does not agree with something being proposed, they should either issue a veto threat or they should abstain. **P5 countries are the only ones that hold the power to abstain at any point.**

4.1. P5 Caucus

When a veto threat is issued, the Chair and the P5 countries will move outside of the committee room for a meeting called "P5 caucus".

In this meeting, the country who issued the veto threat will explain why they decided to do so, and the P5s will discuss whether they want to **strike the proposal**, or **amend it**. A **consensus** must be reached during this meeting (all five delegates must agree on the outcome).

In the meantime, the remaining countries (non-P5 states) will remain in the room and the Co-Chair and Typist will start unmoderated caucus time.

Presenting P5 Caucus Result

Once the P5 nations have reached a decision, the country that initially issued the veto threat will present the decision to the committee and explain the reasoning behind it.

Points of Information will not be entertained at this point. **A veto is final.**

4.2. Abuse of Veto Power

Abusing the veto power is a very serious threat to the realistic experience of the Security Council. Therefore, if the Chair deems that a delegate is doing so, a warning can be issued as a result.

For reference, below are some statistics taken from the UN website reflecting the rarity of veto threats:

- In 2023: 50 resolutions passed, 35 unanimously, 5 vetoes
- In 2022: 54 resolutions passed, 36 unanimously, 4 vetoes
- In 2021: 57 resolutions passed, 48 unanimously, 1 veto