

# Crisis Committees in Model UN

Chances are that if you've done Model United Nations before, you've heard of or participated in **crisis committees**. Crisis Committees are usually simulations of small, very specific bodies, such as national cabinets, board of directors, rebel groups, or other *ad hoc* bodies.

More than that, crisis committees operate at a much quicker pace than traditional Model UN committees. This is because crisis committees must rapidly respond to events happening in their universe, usually acted out by a **crisis room**. While each conference organizes their staff differently, crisis committee generally have a **Crisis Director** or **Crisis Manager**. This person designs fake news updates, prepares fake witnesses for the committee, and creates videos of fake occurrences. The goal of a crisis committee is to **advance the story of the crisis situation**. One of the benefits of a crisis simulation is that students get the chance to explore extremely specific instances of tragedy and success. While sometimes a crisis committee simulation may not accurately reflect the happenings of the "real world," the goal is to expose students to a highly elevated, "crisis" scenario.

## Inside a Crisis Committee

One of the first things that you'll noticed when you participate in a crisis committee is that fewer students in the simulation. Traditional Model UN committee can have anywhere from 50-400 students in a room. It would be unusual to find a crisis committee with more than 25.

***Tip: Get to know everyone in your crisis committee and become friends with them! You're going to spend a lot of time with a small group of people; you may as well enjoy it!***

Debate flow differs drastically from traditional Model UN committees. Rather than use Parliamentary Rules or UN rules, crisis committees are much less formal. Most will take place entirely in a **permanent, moderated caucus**. This allows students to rapidly comment on crisis updates, speeches from other delegates, and plans, or **Directives**, being written by the committee. (see below)

## Flow of Debate in a Crisis Committee

The cycle of debate in a crisis committee is much quicker than a traditional committee. A traditional committee is typically tasked with dealing with one, complex issue. Crisis committees, by comparison, must respond to a series of interconnected events.

Here's what the flow of debate looks like in a typical crisis committee:

1. **Opening of Debate/Committee:** the chair will likely propose a broad topic, or ask for a broad topic, that the committee will begin to discuss.
2. **First Crisis Update:** The crisis room will introduce the first "crisis" to the committee. This could come in the form of a news update, intelligence report, cataclysmic event, or something similar.
3. **Debate:** Immediately following a crisis update, it's common for the committee to open moderated debate to discuss the update. The purpose of the debate is to write a Directive or Press Release to

respond to the crisis update. Sometimes committees will go into unmoderated debate to assist in the writing process.

4. **Directive Introductions and Voting:** Within 10-30 minutes, the committee should have at least one directive written. These directives will be introduced at the chair's discretion, debated, and voted upon.
5. **New Crisis Update:** Either before voting on directives or directly afterwards, the crisis room will provide another update, usually in response to the action taken by the committee
6. **Rinse and Repeat.**

***Tip:* Every time that a crisis update is introduced, choose a side quickly and propose taking action! Work with the rest of the committee to refine your idea, but always make sure to propose action to move the committee forward!**

## Committee Directives

Rather than writing Draft Resolutions, crisis committees writes and pass multiple Directives. Directives do not have a formal layout or formatting, and the content of a Directive is normally a set of instructions.

For example, if there is gas shortage crisis, national cabinets could enact rationing and price control measures by passing a Public Directive. Public Directives are instructions for the public or instructions to government institutions or private institutions that affect the public. A committee may also have a Private Directive. For example, a national cabinet may pass a Private Directive instructing its military or clandestine services to execute a set of instructions. While the committee authorizes the action by passing the Private Directive, the public may not necessarily be made aware of the action.

While each chair or director may have his or her preferred procedure for introducing, discussion, and passing directives, a directive will be the main instrument for advancing the crisis arc and responding to crisis updates.

## Press Releases

Sometimes a committee will decide to pass a Press Release as a response to a crisis update. Press Releases may be passed independently or they may be affixed to a directive. The purpose of a Press Release is to inform the public of actions or express condolence, frustration, or condemnation.

The goal of a Press Release, aside from informing the public, is also to influence public sentiment. Because member states of the European Union are democracies, a well informed public is crucial to the political process.

***Note:* These documents are adopted by a committee vote, but sometimes it behooves delegates to take individual actions.**

## **Individual Portfolio Actions**

Private actions are one of the most dynamic aspects of a crisis committee. Most crisis committees will allow individual delegates to take private actions in areas that they directly control or oversee. These are often called **Portfolio Powers**. For example, the Minister of Finance may be able to control the interest rates of the central bank. The Minister of Transportation will have control of the rail lines in a country. And the Minister of Education may be able to have control over national curriculum and the use of school facilities.

**It is extremely important to note, however, that the crisis room will ultimately have final say over an individual's portfolio powers. Just because you write a private note, does not mean the crisis room will automatically accept it.**

If you wish you write a private note to the crisis room, all you have to do is write your instructions on a piece of paper, fold it in half, and write clearly CRISIS ROOM on the front. Then pass it to the dais or a committee page (note runner), and it will be delivered to the crisis room.

***Tip:* Don't simply address the crisis room inside of your private note. Be creative and make up a secretary, colleague, or the like to send your instructions to.**

### **Private Group Actions**

There may come a time in debate when you want to take a private actions outside of your portfolio. In this case, you can co-write a private note with other members of your committee. The more delegates that sign onto an action, the greater the chance the crisis room will respond to it. However, be careful with whom you trust! If you share a secret plan with the wrong delegate, they could always report your plan and get you arrested, put on trial, sanctioned, or worse!

### **Asking Questions and Gathering Information from the Crisis Room**

You'll often be given partial and incomplete information by the crisis room during an update. Writing notes to the crisis room is a great way to acquire new information, which you may choose to share or not to share with the rest of your committee room.

#### **Tips for Writing to the Crisis Room:**

- **Ask specific questions without being overly specific.** "Is it possible to mobilize troops along the southern border?" is much more likely to get a response than "Please send troop numbers for all of the battalions along the southern border." Likewise, crisis rooms hate responding to questions like, "How much money do I have?"

- **Be patient.** A crisis room has to juggle notes from everyone in your committee, plus directives, and may even need to coordinate with other crisis rooms. If you don't get a response, assume your note isn't important enough to the crisis line. Don't send additional notes saying, "Can you please answer my last note??"
- **Include an objective in your notes.** Make your notes creative so that they capture the attention of the crisis room. Make up an assistant and imply you're having an affair with them, but then at the bottom of the note, explain to the crisis room what the heck you're talking about and what you hope to gain from the note.
- **Don't overdo it.** Remember that committee directives and public directives push the crisis storyline forward. Private actions shouldn't be your only strategy to get things done. Work with the committee to respond to the crisis updates.

<https://allamericanmun.com/documents-in-crisis-directives-and-press-releases/>