

MINI-MODEL UN TOOLKIT

# UNEA SIMULATION

*A SHORT GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS*

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS  
WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS



**United Nations**  
Department of Global  
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MINI-MODEL UN TOOLKIT OVERVIEW - UNEA SIMULATION

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# UNEA SIMULATION

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# 1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS MODEL UN?

Model United Nations (Model UN) is an educational simulation where students act as diplomats representing UN Member States. Participants research a global issue, adopt their assigned country's perspective, engage in debate and negotiate with other delegates to create an outcome document that outlines the actions that Member States will take to address that particular global issue, mirroring the work of real UN diplomats.

In 2023, the UN General Assembly officially recognised the educational value of Model UN in teaching young people about diplomacy, international cooperation and global citizenship.

This toolkit has been developed “to educate Model United Nations organisers and participants about the practices, procedures and norms of the Organization, thereby ensuring the accuracy of simulations and promoting adherence to United Nations values” as requested in Operative Paragraph 7 of resolution A/RES/77/336. This mini Model UN simulation provides a structured, hands-on experience for students to explore firsthand how international decisions are made, while fostering critical thinking and negotiation skills as well as global awareness and is designed to be completed in four one-hour sessions.

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## 2. WHAT STUDENTS WILL LEARN

Through this mini Model UN simulation, students will build both global awareness and practical skills:

- **Global Awareness:** Understand key international challenges and UN responses.
- **Decision-Making:** Explore how countries negotiate, compromise and build consensus.
- **Skills for Life:** Develop public speaking, teamwork, research and critical thinking skills.
- **Empathy and Perspective:** Learn to argue from diverse national viewpoints.

By the end of this simulation, students will understand how global decisions are made and gain tools to engage in these processes.

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### 3. YOUR MINI-MODEL UN: THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSEMBLY

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the world's highest-level decision-making body on environmental issues. It brings together all 193 UN Member States to discuss urgent global environmental challenges and set the international agenda for sustainable development and environmental governance. This body will be the basis for the mini simulation, showcasing how countries build consensus to solve complex global problems.

- **Membership:** UNEA is a universal body, giving equal voice to all 193 UN Member States — large and small alike. For this mini simulation, around 30 countries are selected to reflect balance across the five UN regional groups (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and Others).
- **Powers:** The UNEA adopts resolutions and decisions that guide global environmental policies and shape the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Though not legally binding, UNEA resolutions carry significant political weight, influencing national policies, international cooperation, and international environmental law. UNEA also approves UNEP's budget and work programme, making sure that resources align with global priorities.
- **Decision-Making:** UNEA works mainly by consensus, meaning that Member States seek to reach agreement on resolutions by consensus. This may take longer than voting, but ensures that decisions are broadly supported and inclusive. While voting is possible, it is extremely rare.

In this mini simulation, students experience how multilateral diplomacy functions when every country's voice matters and how cooperation and shared responsibility are vital to solving global environmental issues.

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## 4. SIMULATION TOPIC

In this mini simulation, students will debate whether the United Nations Environment Assembly should adopt a resolution to address marine plastic litter and microplastics. Marine litter includes discarded plastics and other debris that pollute waterways and oceans, while microplastics are tiny plastic particles that originate from synthetic fibers from clothing and microbeads from cosmetics, or secondary sources, like larger plastic debris degrading into smaller particles.

Both threaten marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and human health. A key reference for UN work on this issue is the ongoing negotiation of a [legally binding global treaty on plastic pollution](#).

Why this topic?

- **Current and relevant:** Marine litter and microplastics are urgent global issues under active international debate.
- **Engaging for students:** The topic connects to daily life, from plastic packaging to personal care products, while encouraging critical thinking about international cooperation.
- **Big questions:** The topic involves sustainability, fisheries, economic development, waste management, human health, and environmental justice.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Countries and industries have very different positions — some push for strict global action, others prefer gradual change, recycling, or innovation.

This topic offers a dynamic platform for students to explore global cooperation, negotiation, and the challenges of environmental policymaking.

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## 5. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

### Preparation for Educators Before Introducing the Simulation

This section provides everything you need to prepare for and run the mini-simulation of the United Nations Environment Assembly. It includes ready-to-use materials for both educators and students. By following the steps outlined here, you will be able to introduce students to the structure, process, and spirit of Model UN in a clear and engaging way.

- Print out the prepared materials for students:
    - Worksheets for students
      - [Worksheet #1 \(Topic and Country Research\)](#)
      - [Worksheet #2 \(Opening Statement\)](#)
      - [Worksheet #3 \(Zero Draft and Amending a Resolution\)](#)
      - [Worksheet #4 \(Reflection on the Simulation\)](#)
      - [Worksheet #5 \(Instruction Sheet for President/Facilitator\)](#)
    - Annex
  - Educator / Organiser Guide: [Session Plan](#)
  - Additional materials:
    - If needed, provide background information about the [United Nations](#) and the [United Nations Environmental Programme](#). You can also consult UNEA's website, which includes a [glossary](#) of key words related to UNEA.
    - [Guidance on Diplomatic Discourse](#)
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## 5. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS (CONT.)

### Preparation With Students Before the Simulation

- *Assign countries:* Give each student — or pair of students — a UNEA member country. To ensure regional diversity, we have prepared a list of countries for you to consider. This list is only a suggestion. If you replace or add countries, keep a balance between the different UN regions to maintain a diversity of perspectives.
  - *Distribute materials:* Provide briefing sheets and introductory UN information to students at times indicated in the “Educator / Organiser Guide: Session Plan”.
  - *Select leaders:* Choose one student as UNEA President who will manage the formal meetings of the Assembly as detailed in the “President and Facilitator script”. During the first formal meeting the President manages the speakers’ list during the General Debate. During the final formal meeting, the President presides over the adoption of the resolution and calls on any delegates wishing to make a statement called an Explanation of Position in order to indicate which paragraphs their country is not in agreement with and therefore want to disassociate from it. In between the formal meetings, delegates will spend most of their time in informal consultations where they will focus on proposing changes to the text and then debating those changes until everyone agrees on how the text should be written. This part of the simulation is presided over by a Facilitator. The Facilitator leads the review of the draft resolution and the debate of changes or amendments that delegates wish to make.
  - In informal consultations, you may have the same student or a second student act as the Facilitator, who guides consensus and timekeeping.
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## 5. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS (CONT.)

**Simulation (4 Class Periods, see [Educator / Organiser Guide: Session Plan](#)).**

### Part A: Opening Statements during General Debate (Formal Session)

Each delegate gives a 1-minute speech outlining their country's stance on marine plastic litter, single-use plastics, and waste management. Remind students that the statements during the General Debate should accurately represent their assigned country's views—not personal opinions. The President presides over the General Debate.

### Part B: Informal Negotiation

Delegates begin with a “Zero Draft” resolution—an early version open to revision. They review it line by line to create a “compilation text” listing all proposed amendments. After the line-by-line review is complete, each amendment is debated, with three possible outcomes:

1. Accepted as-is
2. Accepted in modified form
3. Withdrawn to maintain consensus

The goal of the informal negotiation is to finalise the resolution by consensus, avoiding a vote. This inclusive process ensures that the decision-making process is fair by giving all Member States an equal opportunity to propose changes to the text that reflect their government's position on Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics. Member States generally understand that some of their proposals may not be adopted and if they are not in complete agreement with particular paragraphs when the negotiations have been completed, they can disassociate from one or more paragraphs they disagree with by making a statement called an Explanation of Position after the resolution is adopted. The consensus process values collaboration over competition and mirrors how negotiations are conducted in the UN today. This toolkit supports educators in guiding students through this collaborative negotiation process.

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## 5. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS (CONT.)

Simulation (4 Class Periods, see [Educator / Organiser Guide: Session Plan](#))(cont.)

### Part C: Adoption

Once consensus is reached (and this toolkit also addresses how to recognize when consensus is reached), delegates reconvene for a formal session to adopt the resolution without voting. Delegates may deliver an Explanation of Position—a statement which points out specific parts of the text their government will “disassociate” while still supporting the overall document. This allows delegates to achieve consensus while preserving their country’s national interests.

### Part D: Debrief & Reflection

After the simulation, ask students to reflect: What was easy or difficult? What was surprising about international negotiations? Why is consensus so important in global environmental issues? Discuss the value of compromise, diplomacy, and considering different perspectives.



## 6. OTHER MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED

To run the mini simulation smoothly and realistically, you will need:

- **Country placards:** Create a placard with each country’s name to place in front of delegates during debate. You can use the provided template or simply a folded sheet of paper.
- **Negotiation cards:** These summarise positions of major regional and political groups that countries belong to. Students may expand on these or create new cards if additional countries are included. Tips on how students can create their own negotiation cards are provided in 5. Sample Regional/Political Group Negotiation Cards.
- **Optional materials:** Pens or markers, a speech timer, and a whiteboard or projector to track proposed amendments and debate outcomes.



## 7. TIPS FOR SUCCESS AND CLOSING REFLECTION

During the General Debate, students should keep speeches brief (about one minute) to ensure all delegates can participate. They must stay in character, representing their assigned country's views rather than personal opinions. This fosters understanding of diverse perspectives in diplomacy. Prior research on their country's environmental policies and stance on marine plastic litter is essential.

Encourage compromise when negotiating amendments to the Zero Draft. In the UN Environment Assembly, decisions are ideally reached by consensus, requiring collaboration and creative solutions that balance environmental and economic priorities. Educators should guide students in practicing negotiation and teamwork. When one or more countries object to an amendment that is being proposed, the most common way to reach consensus is to find an alternate wording that everyone can agree to. End the simulation with a reflection exercise to reinforce learning and connect diplomatic skills to broader lessons in global cooperation and understanding.

### Next Steps

After using this Toolkit, if you are interested in organizing your own Model UN you may explore the [Getting Started Guide which provides](#) online resources and advice for both organisers and delegates who are just starting out on their Model UN journey. Additional materials can also be found on the [Official Model UN website](#). If you are interested in learning more about the UN, you can consult the following resources:

- [Teach the UN](#): UN website with numerous teaching resources on a range of UN topics specifically tailored for educators and students.
- [Research Resources](#): A list of UN websites with research aides that could help students prepare for a future Model UN, help with research on a topic or country as well as general information about the UN and the pillars it was founded on and information on Member States.

