

MINI-MODEL UN TOOLKIT

UNEA

SIMULATION

*ANNEX: 10) ICE-BREAKER ACTIVITY: MAKING
CONSENSUS CONCRETE AND REAL*

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



United Nations
Department of Global
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World Federation of United Nations Associations

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PIZZA CONSENSUS TOPPING SIMULATION

Before the mini-simulation, teachers should consider the following activity that contrasts decision-making by voting versus consensus. This helps students better understand what consensus is—and isn't—and prepares them to participate effectively. The following activity, which compares the outcome of making a decision by voting with the outcome of making a decision by consensus, has been found to be helpful in making consensus understood in a concrete and easy to understand manner.

Objective: To help students experience the difference between voting and consensus-based decision-making and reflect on how these processes relate to international negotiations.

PART 1 – VOTING-BASED DECISION-MAKING

Set-up:

1. Divide the class randomly into two groups:
 - **Group 1:** Students with no dietary restrictions (approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the class)
 - **Group 2:** Vegetarian students (approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the class)
2. Each group must internally agree on **5 pizza toppings** they would like to have.
3. Before voting, each group presents a **1-minute persuasive statement** to the full class about why their selected toppings should be chosen.
4. Combine all 10 toppings into a single list. Then, the entire class votes for their **top 5 toppings**. The toppings with the most votes are the ones placed on every slice of pizza.

Debrief:

- Who can eat this pizza and who cannot?
- How do those who cannot eat the pizza feel about the decision?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of voting?

1 Feel free to choose two different groups, as long as they differ enough so that what the majority chooses to eat will conflict with what the minority can eat.

2 When decisions are made by a simple majority vote, a larger group can impose its position on a smaller group. What we want students to see is that using a simple majority rule to make decisions is not inclusive.

PART 2 – CONSENSUS-BASED DECISION-MAKING

After doing this activity by voting, it is repeated but this time a decision must be made by consensus.

Students in the two groups must negotiate until they agree on 5 toppings that everyone can eat. Students should be left to discuss and work toward consensus by themselves, however, if needed, the teacher can intervene as a facilitator.

Set-up:

1. Both groups now work together to come up with **5 toppings that everyone agrees on**.
2. Give students a time limit that fits into your classroom time frame to reach a decision.
3. Students must reach consensus on the 5 toppings through negotiation without voting.

Debrief and Comparison:

- Which method of making a decision was quicker?
- Was it harder to reach consensus? Why or why not?
- Did the final pizza work for everyone?
- What does consensus mean?
- Consensus does not mean you love every topping or that the final outcome was your top choice. It means that you have **no strong objections** to any of the toppings and are **willing to go along with the decision**.

Connecting to Global Negotiations:

- This activity mirrors how UN resolutions are often adopted by consensus.
- Governments may not fully agree with every idea in a resolution, but they are willing to adopt it as long as they have no major objections.
- Reflection Question: Why do governments at the UN today often prefer making decisions by consensus rather than voting?
- What insights from the pizza activity help explain this preference?

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will understand the practical implications of different decision-making methods.
2. Students can recognise the value of making decisions that consider the view point of everyone that is impacted, and that reaching consensus often requires making compromises.
3. Students will be able to connect classroom experiences to international policy-making practices.

PART 3 – REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Voting-Based Decision-Making

1. Which five toppings were selected after the vote?
2. Were you able to eat the pizza made with those toppings? Why or why not?
3. How did it feel to have your preferences included or excluded in the vote?
4. What do you think are the advantages of making decisions by voting?
5. What do you think are the disadvantages of voting?

Consensus-Based Decision-Making

1. Which five toppings were selected by consensus?
2. Did everyone agree with all five toppings? If not, how did the group resolve differences?
3. Was it harder or easier to reach consensus than to vote? Why?
4. Do you think the consensus solution was more fair or more inclusive than the vote? Explain.
5. How would you define "consensus" in your own words?

Connecting to the Real World

1. At the United Nations, countries often adopt resolutions by consensus. Based on your experience today, why do you think they might prefer this method over voting?
2. What do you think are the challenges of using consensus in international negotiations?
3. What are the benefits of consensus decision-making in diplomacy?

Final Reflection

1. Which decision-making process (voting or consensus) do you think leads to more sustainable or peaceful agreements in a diverse group? Why?

