



International Press Corps



THS MUN 24

CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

Greetings Delegates,

Welcome the International Press Corps (IPC) at THSMUN'24. It is both an honor and privilege to be writing this address as your chairperson. Together, we hope to embark on a powerful and inquisitive journey of discovery, dialogue and diplomacy, where the power of the written word and responsibility it has comes to the forefront.

The role of press is more crucial than ever with the increasingly interconnected and influenced rapid communication. The media has enormous potential to shape public opinion, expose the truth by educating and enlightening the public, and hold those in positions of authority responsible for their actions. But this enormous power also carries an equally enormous responsibility: **THE DUTY TO UPHOLD THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF INTEGRITY AND ETHICS.**

Our agenda for this year centers on a topic of utmost importance: **PRESS ETHICS**. In the era of misleading /false information, sensationalism, the ethical standards of journalists are being tested like never before. As journalists we must ask ourselves, what does it mean to be ethical in journalism? How do we ensure fair, accurate and impartial news?

Throughout our session we look forward to delve into these pressing issues, exploring the ethical dilemmas faced by journalists around the globe, discuss the role of regulation and self-regulation in maintain the journalistic standards. Our aim must be to foster a robust and thoughtful discussion that will raise awareness as well as provide fruitful solutions.



THS MUN 24

You must not forget that as members of the International Press Corps, you hold the power to uncover the truth of various committees and change their course by questioning the delegates and putting them into spot. Your reports will not only document the proceedings but also how the world perceives the outcomes of our debates. As a result, I implore you to tackle this responsibility with the highest integrity and gravity. **GO FOR THE TRUTH, CONFIRM THE SOURCES, AND PRESENT THE TRUTH FAIRLY AND CLEARLY.**

With that being said, let us use this opportunity to the fullest to learn from each other, to challenge our presumption, to emerge as dedicated and well informed global citizens because this conference is not just an exercise in diplomacy but also a training ground for all journalists and leaders of a better tomorrow. Altogether, let us turn this conference into a shining example of moral journalism and a monument to the ability of the media to bring about constructive change.

Thanking you,

Maanya Bajoria,

Chairperson.



THS MUN 24

SERIAL NO.	TOPIC	PAGE NO
1	IMPORTANCE OF JOURNALISM	1-7
2	RESPONSIBILITIES OF JOURNALISTS	8-11
3	VIOLATION OF PRESS ETHICS	12-16
4	COVERING THE CONFERENCE	17
5	TYPES OF ARTICLES	18-21



THS MUN 24

IMPORTANCE OF JOURNALISM

THE FOURTH PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY

Being remarked as ‘the fourth pillar of democracy’, journalism plays a crucial role in controlling and checking events and different actors’ actions. With roots going all the way back to the Roman Republic, when Julius Caesar created the ‘Acta Diurna’ in 59 BCE, the first known newspaper of western civilization, news has since then kept its integral role in society. The press has followed almost every significant event, human achievement, or decision in world history, and is now facing a rebirth in the globalized age.

The internet, social media, and ‘fake news’ are transforming news and the press as we know it, and more than ever, do they have the potential to influence and shape mentalities. By presenting multiple different well-written pieces and articles, journalists can make entire populations question themselves. Even just a simple attention-grabbing headline could suffice to completely alter the narrative.



THS MUN 24

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

These wild shifts are only made possible by the freedom of press, a gift that should not be taken for granted. The existence of the freedom of press as a universal human right is one of the cornerstones of modern democracies. Citizens are offered a voice and are given the power through the freedom of press to openly state their positions. In 2023, there was a police raid on a newspaper office in Kansas. This incident highlights how freedom of the press can be challenged, even in the United States where it is protected by the First Amendment. The raid on the Kansas newsroom raised questions about press freedom and the ability of journalists to report on issues without fear of government interference or retaliation.

This example shows that freedom of the press is an ongoing battle, with journalists and news organizations frequently facing obstacles to their ability to gather and report information, even in a country that ostensibly protects this fundamental right. It underscores how vigilance is required to safeguard press freedoms, as governments and powerful interests may seek to restrict or undermine the media's watchdog role.

(Refer:<https://www.freedomforum.org/freedom-of-the-press-examples/>)



THS MUN 24

ENSURING IMPARTIALITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

We still find traditional journalism, but journalists' duties have also changed with the advancement of new media. The Internet, being a global network, has transformed how information is produced, accessed, and distributed. Though this has improved the availability of news, it comes with vices such as the rise of fake news, misinformation, and echo chambers, which can undermine the credibility of journalism. In this digital age, the responsibility of journalists is greater than ever. They must work with new technologies, cross-check their information more scrupulously, and communicate online in various ways. Today, with fake news and fake journalists in circulation, true journalists have become the defenders of the truth. They filter through the bubbling faux and rapport, verifying the real facts to present their readers with credible and reliable information. Their dedication to the principles of accuracy, objectivity, and fairness is fundamental to creating an informed society.

The 2017 Reuters Institute report "Delivering Trust: Impartiality and Objectivity in a Digital Age" examines how the concepts of impartiality and objectivity are being challenged in the digital era. It explores potential solutions, such as greater transparency, redefining objectivity, and new codes of practice, to help journalism regain public trust.

An art of ink makes all the difference. The stroke of a pen, the click of a keyboard, and the role of a camera can shape societies, influence opinions, and change the course of history. Journalists, the artists of this profession, have an essential mission to perform in the world as they research, scrutinize, and broadcast information. It is more than simple telling of events; it is a crucial element of democracy and watchdog of power, and a bridge between events and the public.



THS MUN 24

UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY

The most important responsibility journalists have is to uphold democracy. Investigative journalism is paramount in exposing corrupt activities, violations of human rights, and bringing about change. For instance, the Watergate scandal in the United States is an example of the power of journalism. Thanks to investigators, and especially the persistence of journalists, President Nixon was forced to resign, proving that great work can be done by those ready to make bold decisions.

WATCHDOGS OF SOCIETY

Journalists serve as the watchdogs of society, shedding light on issues that might otherwise remain hidden in the shadows. Some have called them the 'eyes and ears' of the community, informing the masses of the truth amongst the myths. It is not just their job to convey the message, but to probe, examine, and explain what is going on to give citizens the tools to make rational decisions. They provide a voice for those who have none: the sidelined, the suppressed, and the abandoned, and speak out for justice for them. By raising awareness of discrimination and prejudice, and fighting for the downtrodden and oppressed, journalists become agents of transformation and seekers of the truth.

For example: In 2014, the city of Flint switched its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River in an effort to save money. However, the Flint River water was highly corrosive and caused lead from aging pipes to leach into the drinking water. This exposed thousands of children to dangerous levels of lead, causing irreversible health problems.



THS MUN 24

For months, state and local officials denied there was a problem, until journalists from the ACLU of Michigan, the Detroit Free Press, and other outlets began investigating and reporting on the crisis. Their dogged reporting uncovered the truth - that Flint's water was contaminated and officials had known about it for a long time but failed to act.

BRIDGING EVENTS AND THE PUBLIC

Journalists also serve as a bridge between events and the public. They turn complicated phenomena into comprehensible stories to help people find their places in the big picture. In times of crisis, such as natural disasters or pandemics, reliable and timely information from journalists can save lives. They raise awareness of issues of discrimination, injustices, and violations of human rights within societies and other oppressive structures that may not otherwise be highlighted. Journalists can raise awareness of these issues, encourage empathy for the victims, and ignite the desire to change the world.

An example of journalists serving as a bridge between events and the public is the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic by various news outlets. During the pandemic, journalists played a crucial role in providing timely and accurate information to the public, helping people understand the complexities of the crisis and find their place in the big picture.

Journalists worked tirelessly to report on the latest developments, including the spread of the virus, government responses, and the impact on different communities. They used various formats, such as live updates, in-depth analysis, and human-interest stories, to make the information accessible and engaging for a wide audience.



THS MUN 24

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Despite these challenges, the core principles of journalism—accuracy, fairness, and integrity—remain unchanged. Journalists are not mere observers; they are catalysts for change. They can generate public furor, trigger uprisings, and bring down governments, after all, it is said, ‘Words are mightier than the sword’. From analyzing the Arab Spring to reporting on #MeToo, journalists have become the pacemakers, and their pens are weapons against corruption and tyranny. Rather than being mere reporters of events, they are expected to be builders of a better society and a better tomorrow. In their hands lies the potential to write with intent and clarity, to sway, educate, unite, and connect different cultures.

The role of journalists is not to demean delegations but to broaden perspectives. They deliver change with harmony, subtle yet immense. A journalist's pen is not a weapon, but a scalpel, wielded with precision to expose the truth and pave the path for a better future.

JOURNALISTS IN CONFLICT ZONE

On a day-to-day basis, journalists and media workers are frequently harassed, threatened, and attacked. Nevertheless, the crucial role played by journalists should by no means be understated. Sadly, due to the immense power that journalists have, considering that the media is the 4th estate or 4th power because of its capacity to frame political issues and expose corruption, they are often censored, imprisoned, or killed. According to Reporters without Borders, over 50 journalists and media workers were killed in 2021, and almost 320 were imprisoned.

These numbers bring dire consequences into play, often stoking fear into would-be journalists and lessening the overall integrity of news all around the world.



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These numbers make us question again the true meaning of journalism, together with its incredible and unmatched ability to destabilize societies and our traditional aspects and values. Journalism and the Media are indispensable and are thereby referred to as the “Fourth Estate” of the Democratic process as it not only informs and educates the public but simultaneously acts as a watchdog, enabling a system of checks and balances, keeping those in authority in line, urging and ensuring accountability. In the United Nations, journalists collaborate with diplomats and report on the resolutions adopted and conference proceedings.

“In the real world, nothing happens at the right place at the right time. It is the job of journalists and historians to correct that.”- Mark Twain.



THS MUN 24

RESPONSIBILITIES OF JOURNALISTS

1. SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Journalists must take responsibility for the accuracy of their reporting, confirm information before publishing, and rely on original sources whenever possible. They have a duty to facilitate transparency and hold those in power accountable. Journalists should provide a platform for diverse perspectives, even if they disagree with them. The Society of Professional Journalists established a Code of Ethics states that journalists should "take responsibility for the accuracy of their work, confirm information before releasing it, and rely on original sources whenever possible." This requires journalists to be persistent and brave in their efforts to hold those in power accountable and provide a platform for diverse perspectives, even if they disagree with them. The Code also emphasizes that journalists have a "special responsibility to be watchdogs over the government and public affairs" and should "Endeavour to ensure the transparency of public records and public business." This demonstrates how journalists can fulfill their duty to the public by facilitating open access to information and holding authorities accountable.

An example that demonstrates how journalists can fulfill their duty to "Seek Truth and Report It" is the reporting on the 2018 Khashoggi Murder. Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist and dissident, was murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. The incident sparked widespread international outrage and scrutiny of the Saudi government's involvement. Journalists from various news organizations, including The Washington Post, The New York Times, and BBC News, played a crucial role in uncovering the truth behind Khashoggi's murder. They relied on original sources, including Turkish officials, intelligence agencies, and eyewitnesses, to piece together the events surrounding the murder.



THS MUN 24

2. MAINTAIN A SENSITIVE APPROACH

Journalists must treat their sources, subjects, and the public with respect and compassion. They must consider individual privacy rights and the potential impact of their reporting on vulnerable individuals. This requires balancing the public's need to know with the individual's right to privacy. In 2017, the BBC faced a dilemma when a young girl who had been trafficked to the UK was found dead. The girl's identity was not publicly known, but publishing details about her could have led to her traffickers being identified. The BBC ultimately decided not to report the story, concluding that the potential harm to other victims of trafficking outweighed the news value. This demonstrates how journalists must sometimes forgo a story in order to protect vulnerable individuals

3. ACT INDEPENDENTLY

Journalists must put the public interest first and resist any undue influence from advertisers, donors, or other special interests. They must avoid conflicts of interest and refuse gifts that could compromise their independence. An example of a failure to act independently is the practice of "brown envelope journalism", where journalists accept cash payments in exchange for publishing certain stories. This type of bribery is fundamentally opposed to the principle of journalistic independence, as it allows the media to present skewed or biased information to the public.

Example: In 2015, Leslie Roberts, a news anchor for Global Toronto in Canada, resigned from his position due to serious allegations of conflict of interest. Roberts publicly admitted that he was secretly a part-owner of a public relations firm whose clients frequently appeared on Global News. However, Roberts never informed Global News management of his connection to the PR firm.



THS MUN 24

This conflict of interest raised serious ethical concerns, as the media has a duty to provide unbiased and independent information to the public. By failing to disclose his financial ties, Roberts violated the principle of acting independently laid out in the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics.

4. BE ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

Journalists should explain their ethical decision-making processes to the public and promptly correct any mistakes. They have a responsibility to expose unethical conduct within their own organizations.

Here is an example that demonstrates how journalists can "Be Accountable and Transparent" by exposing unethical conduct within their own organizations: In 2021, the Washington Post published an investigation into sexual harassment allegations against top editors at National Public Radio (NPR). The Post reporters obtained internal NPR documents and interviewed dozens of current and former NPR employees to uncover a pattern of inappropriate behavior and lack of accountability at the highest levels of the organization. The investigation revealed that NPR's chief news editor, Michael Oreskes, had allegedly made unwanted sexual advances towards multiple women over a period of years.



THS MUN 24

5. OBJECTIVITY VS. TRANSPARENCY

While objectivity has long been considered a journalistic norm, there is ongoing debate about whether transparency is a more achievable and desirable principle. Journalists should strive to disclose their frames of reference rather than claim absolute objectivity.

By upholding these ethical principles, journalists can fulfill their duty to serve the public interest and maintain the credibility of the press. As Kamrin Baker, editor-in-chief of The Gateway, stated: "As long as journalists are transparent about their experience when disseminating information, there should be no shame in being equal parts human and Fourth Estate." The idea is that by disclosing their frames of reference, journalists can provide valuable context to their reporting while still striving for fairness and accuracy.

(Refer: <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>)

As journalists you will have the following rights:

1. The right to information, together with freedom of expression and criticism, is one of the fundamental liberties of every human being.
2. The rights and duties of journalists devolve from the public's right to have access to fact and opinion.
3. A journalists' responsibility to the public must come before any they bear towards a third party, notably employers and public authorities.



THS MUN 24

VIOLATION OF PRESS ETHICS

1. POLITICAL INTERVENTION/BIASED REPORTING

The very purpose of the press is to be the watchdog of democracy, which means bringing unbiased and credible news to the public. However, that watchdog often becomes a lapdog when it succumbs to political power.

The presence of an unbiased news agency is a rare occurrence in today's world. Media houses usually align themselves with a particular political ideology- left wing or right wing. For example, the news agencies who are pro-ruling government would give favorable coverage to that particular political party, publishing mostly positive articles about that party while downplaying their faults.

Information may also be altered or tweaked to suit a news agency's political alignment, or also completely removed to prevent the truth from being exposed. However, when cases of national security come into play, it is necessary to put the country's security before the integrity of the press.

Bias may also arise from the personal stance of the journalists and their leaning towards a particular political party, again leading to biased reporting.

The bias is much more visible in state-funded news agencies, which, due to the pressure of them being funded by the government, usually have a pro-government bias and are often hindered from publishing anti-ruling party information and are forced to spread pro-government propaganda in the fear of being shut down or funding being cut off. This phenomenon is common in countries where press freedom is limited.

Most news agencies in the U.S. or the U.K. tend to be left-leaning while in Asian or African countries they are usually conservative in nature.



THS MUN 24

Bias can also be non-politically driven. Corporate bias to please owners and advertisers with favourable coverage or demographic bias- where gender, race, religion, economic status and particular groups of society are factors for coverage.

Speculative content, when stories focus on what could occur rather than what has occurred, is also a form of bias and is a hindrance to bringing out the absolute truth to the public- which is the very purpose of the media.

2. CENSORSHIP

Suppression of particular news that are considered "politically unacceptable" or a threat to security is known as censorship. Initially censorship was to protect the interests of the nation due to security purposes or to control obscenity and hate speech.

Nowadays censorship is used to blatantly discard news from being published, by repression of the government or higher authoritative powers. Selected facts may be weaved into a coherent narrative which distorts the actual story, or may even be completely fabricated.

Self-censorship of media defeats the entire purpose of democracy and political or corporate influence, allowing the government to mould and influence public opinion which makes it hard to bring injustice to light. Self-censorship is done out of fear of retaliation without overt pressure being imposed from a party or institution of authority.

Spreading false or misleading information is often called "reverse censorship" and may be intentional or unintentional. This is where the importance of fact-checking mechanisms play a role to maintain credibility and prevent spreading of misinformation.



THS MUN 24

Media outlets often indulge in corporate censorship where corporate owned media outlets intervene to disrupt publishing of information that portrays their business or business partners in a negative light, or to portray competitor enterprises in a negative light.

In some countries such as North Korea or Cuba, information spread across the internet can be completely censored as they have control over all the Internet-connected computers. This highlights the importance of press freedom and the need to accelerate progress of the same, especially in third-world countries.

Views perceived as offensive or "socially sensitive" often related to religion, sexuality, illegal activities as well as information related to armed conflicts, border disputes, separatist movements and militant groups are censored in publications for "security purposes". It is important for the press to find the delicate balance between freedom of expression and national security.

3. PAID MEDIA

Any news being printed in exchange for any kind of monetary transaction to ensure positive coverage of that individual or organization is paid news. The Times of India publication was the first to start this practice in 2005, after which it spread to western media as well.

This practice is highly criticized as it diverts the coverage to whoever is willing to pay and presents selective information before the viewer, corrupting the information and deceiving viewers, given that it is not specified that the article is paid for, or the disclaimer is written in extremely small font size.

Often "private treaties" between media companies and corporate entities are formed, which are formal agreements between the media company and another non-media company in which the latter transfers certain shares of the company to the former in exchange for advertisement space and favorable coverage.



THS MUN 24

Political sponsoring before elections is also a big sector of paid news where a candidate/party pays a media house in exchange for glorification and favorable coverage to eliminate competition in the elections.

An example of paid news which should be paid attention to is the Cobrapost sting operation, in which multiple Indian news agencies were involved in spreading falsified propaganda, While there are legal frameworks to protect the press's freedom of expression, there are simultaneously other laws that oppose it: such as the Sedition Law. Delegates are expected to discuss laws that hinder freedom of speech and also discuss laws that support it and how it can be used to the advantage of journalists.

4. SENSATIONALISM

Sensationalism is an editorial tactic where news is presented in such a way that it incites excitement in the masses and provokes viewers at the cost of accuracy.

Sensationalist articles use triggering photos, loaded words, dramatic video editing and intentional omitting of information to elevate the element of suspense in ordinary stories, leading to biased and emotionally manipulative content.

A branch of sensationalism is ventriloquism, when experts or witnesses are quoted in a manner such that it intentionally voices the author's opinions.

Nowadays various news agencies publish sensational articles usually to increase viewership and generate more revenue, in expense of journalistic integrity, prioritizing misleading narratives to receive funding over remaining credible and true to the public.



THS MUN 24

Sensationalism can also be used as a way to portray a particular political party or enterprise in a negative light, spreading propaganda among readers. It is also used to eliminate competition from other news outlets by grabbing the viewers' attention faster. A big impact of yellow journalism is distortion of events including overrepresentation of crime rates and fear mongering. Exaggeration of sensitive topics such as suicide, sexual assault, mass killings and terrorism is offensive to the victims of these tragedies and highly inconsiderate. This goes to show lack of journalistic integrity and highlights the need for accurate reporting.

Attempts have been made to create frameworks to prevent or eliminate these elements in journalism, however these pressing issues still remain. The agenda needs much discussion, given the state of the press in the current times. As media houses, it is your responsibility to bring these issues to light, deliberate upon them and find a common ground to propose pragmatic solutions in committee.

Links for further research:

<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/> (do not rely on this completely, just acquire a brief idea of your media house's stance)

<https://presscouncil.nic.in/Default.aspx> (for Indian news agencies)

Please go through your media house's official websites and type of articles published to acquire knowledge on your overall alignment.



THS MUN 24

COVERING THE CONFERENCE

As members of the International Press Corps, reporters are expected to write various articles to cover the events of the committee(s) that they have been assigned to, while upholding the morals and ethics of a respected member of the press. Reporters will be asked to write different articles on different days, details of which will be given on the day of the conference.

The articles/reports to be submitted each day are:

1st Day: Beat and Feature Articles

2nd Day: Press Conference and Op-ed Editorial

3rd Day: Overview



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TYPES OF ARTICLES

THE BEAT ARTICLES

In journalism, a "beat" is often a certain topic or region that a writer covers on a regular basis. Beat articles accomplish a number of goals:

Reportage on Deliberations: They offer in-depth reporting on the conversations, arguments, and judgements reached by certain committees.

Analysis and Insight: These pieces frequently provide an in-depth overview of the topics being discussed by providing analysis and insights into the proceedings.

Accountability: Beat articles assist in holding participants responsible for their viewpoints and commitments by covering the delegate's remarks and actions.

Information Dissemination: They make other attendees and onlookers aware of the developments and important topics in each committee, encouraging a more knowledgeable and active conference atmosphere.

Word Limit: 300-400 words

OPIONATED EDITORIALS

Opinionated editorials are articles that express the writer's personal views and analysis on specific topics or events related to the conference. These editorials are an essential part as they offer a platform to voice perspectives and contribute to the ongoing debates and discussions.

Opinionated editorials have several important features, such as:

Personal Viewpoint: Rather than offering an unbiased account, the editorial represents the author's personal opinions, interpretations, and positions on many topics.



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Analysis and Argumentation: The editorial presents a thorough analysis, logic, and arguments in favour of the author's position, going beyond merely restating the facts.

Relevance to MUN Topics: The editorial's topic is connected to the resolutions, agenda items, or noteworthy MUN conference occurrences.

Influence and Engagement: The goals of these editorials are to sway the perspectives of other delegates, start discussions, and draw readers' attention to the important topics being covered during the conference.

Word Limit: 500-600 words

FEATURE ARTICLE

Feature articles are lengthy, meticulously researched written works that offer a deeper study of conference subjects than just the standard reporting of activities. These articles try to provide readers with a greater knowledge of the topics at hand and frequently include background information, context, and expert viewpoints. Important traits consist of:

Comprehensive Analysis: They delve into the nuances of a certain subject, offering in-depth knowledge and perspectives that aid readers in comprehending the wider ramifications.

Context & Background: To provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the subject, feature pieces frequently incorporate historical context, background information, and pertinent statistics.



THS MUN 24

Engaging Narrative: Compared to standard news stories, they are typically written in a more narrative and engaging form, which makes them more intriguing and approachable for readers.

Expert Opinions and Interviews: To give the analysis more weight and substance, these pieces may include quotations and viewpoints from delegates, experts, and other stakeholders.

Emphasis on Human Interest: To show how the topics being discussed affect specific people or groups, they may use case studies, anecdotes, or personal narratives.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORT

It provides a synopsis of the main ideas and conclusions discussed at the news conference.

Delegates from different committees are usually asked to address the press corps at a press conference. They answer inquiries on their countries' stance, ongoing talks, and noteworthy committee sessions developments.

The press conference report fulfils several functions.

Documentation: It documents the topics covered at the news conference as well as any significant remarks or announcements made.

Information Dissemination: It provides participants, advisors, and other delegates with information about the opinions and activities of other delegations.

Public Accountability: By making the remarks and viewpoints of the delegates publicly available, it holds them responsible.

Historical Record: It serves as a point of reference for upcoming conversations and for assessing the conference's progress and results.

Word Limit: 400-500 words



THS MUN 24

OVERVIEW

A brief synopsis is usually referred to as a "overview report". An overview of the debates, decisions, and main issues of contention within the several committees are given in this report.

An overview report's objectives are to:

- Provide delegates, attendees, and observers with a precise and concise summary of the main points raised throughout the discussion.
- Highlight the key points, suggested solutions, and any agreement or disagreement that was reached in your summary.
- Document: Keep a record of the choices and actions made during the conference for future use.

Typically, an overview report contains:

Overview: A succinct overview of the committees' subjects and goals.

Highlights of the Debate: Important issues brought forward by the delegates, along with noteworthy statements and heated disagreements.

Resolutions and Results: A synopsis of any resolutions adopted or noteworthy choices made.

Analysis: Perceptions of the debate's dynamics, encompassing any trends, coalitions, or disputes noted.

Conclusion: Concluding remarks or observations about the session's overall accomplishments and development.

To ensure that all delegates and outside readers can comprehend the key developments and consequences, the overview report aims to give a clear, thorough, and objective summary of the MUN events.

Word Limit: 150-250 words