



NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Committee Guide

By John Wilson

Introduction

Welcome to the Non-Governmental Organizations program at HMCE 2009! The NGOs represented at HMCE 2009 include Amnesty International (Amnesty), Greenpeace International (Greenpeace), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Red Cross), and Oxfam International (Oxfam). NGOs are private organizations that are run independently of government management. Further, they are designed to address various types of social problems or injustices through **civic action**. NGOs include environmental groups, women's rights advocates, aid organizations, as well as many other types of civic-minded organizations. Many NGOs are very small and only function on the local level, whereas others, such as the four represented at HMCE, are extremely large international organizations that employ thousands of individuals and work closely with national and international governing bodies to help address their respective areas of concern.

Civic action—*working through the political process and grassroots actions.*

Each of the four NGOs at HMCE has its own particular set of international issues that it deals with, though there is some limited overlap. As members of one of the four NGOs, delegates will be expected to represent their NGO in other committees, both international and domestic. NGO representatives will lobby other committee's delegates, trying to get them to support their favored legislation, and will also give testimony to other committees to help keep those delegates informed on all aspects of their debate. Delegates will even occasionally be called upon to help craft legislation and resolutions by members of other committees. Each NGO will be represented by three to five delegates that will work as a team of organization representatives to ensure that their viewpoint is reflected on the legislation and resolutions produced at HMCE 2009.

History and Background

NGOs have a rich history that stretches as far back as the anti-slavery movement in America and beyond. The Red Cross was established in 1863, with the other three having been established between the 1940s and the 1970s. However, the term "NGO" and their place in the international political framework were not really set until 1945, when the United Nations Charter provided for a **consultative** role for NGOs. Since the end of World War II, the rise of the United Nations and the

Consultative—*intended for consultation; of an advisory role.*

rapid pace of **globalization** have brought NGOs to the fore on many international issues. More than ever, crises and international interactions have global **ramifications** that require global solutions, and NGOs have stepped up to the plate to help facilitate those solutions. NGOs have been especially important to **developing countries** that often feel excluded from international political processes, which are often perceived to be biased towards developed, capitalist nations, especially those in the West.

Each of these NGOs has played significant or leading roles in prominent issues in recent history. Greenpeace played a large role in the dramatic reduction in nuclear arms testing by helping turn the tide of public opinion. Amnesty has brought the Tibetan issue to the front pages of major news outlets, especially during the Beijing Olympics, and has been a very vocal critic of the US policy on Guantanamo Bay. Oxfam has been heavily involved in helping slow the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa and figures prominently into many UN anti-poverty efforts. Finally, the Red Cross almost always leads the relief efforts in the wake of the world's most devastating natural disasters.

At the Conference

Unlike most committees at HMCE, the NGOs will work very closely with virtually every other committee at the conference to further their goals and initiatives. In the real world, NGOs function by lobbying and convincing governmental bodies to consider their policy stances, and this will be the case at HMCE. In other words, delegates will work with other committees to make sure their perspective is represented in their final product. Delegates will do this in three different ways.

The first method that NGOs use to influence policy is to simply keep the public and policymakers informed about the issues on which they work. The evidence presented by NGO delegates should ideally be able to sway policymakers on its own merit. By appearing in other committees to give short presentations and answer policymakers' questions, NGO delegates will hopefully be able to accomplish their goals.

If this **tactic** is insufficient, then NGO representatives can work with delegates in other committees on a more personal level, talking with them individually or in small groups either during committee time or outside of it. In these discussions, lobbying tactics will be useful, as each NGO can use the power of information—or the withholding of information—as a powerful bargaining tool with which to sway policymakers. NGOs should work closely with the Press Corps to ensure that they are producing a steady flow of information through the media.

Lastly, NGOs will sometimes be called upon to **collaborate** with

Globalization—*the development of an increasingly integrated and interconnected global system.*

Ramification—*a consequence.*

Developing country—*a country that has not reached certain standards, in terms of industrialization, democratization, human rights recognition, and economic development.*

Tactic—*strategy; approach.*

Collaborate—*to work jointly with others toward a shared goal.*

policymakers on legislation or resolutions that pertain to that NGO's focus. For example, if the G15 wants to pass a resolution on climate change, it may want to call upon the expertise of Greenpeace to help them craft such a resolution. The approval of prominent international NGOs is also highly sought after by policymakers, who want their policies to carry as much **clout** as possible. NGO representatives should seek out policymakers and try to inject themselves into the decision-making process.

Clout—*influence; authority.*

These are the three main ways that NGO delegates will function at the conference; however, they are certainly not limited by them. In committee, NGOs can have press releases to draw attention to their issues. They can write and publish reports for policymakers as a means of keeping government leaders informed with the most accurate and updated information possible. Furthermore, NGOs can even draft policies for governmental bodies to consider during their debates. There are several techniques that can be employed by this committee in order to advance solutions to these very serious problems.

Preparing for the Conference

Upon receiving your role assignment, you will first want to familiarize yourself with your particular NGO. This will primarily involve reading your briefing closely and spending a significant amount of time looking at your NGO's website. These four NGOs all have excellent resources available online that will be **invaluable** to your preparation for the conference.

Invaluable—*very useful; valuable beyond estimation.*

Once you are comfortable with your NGO and what their policy stances, you should familiarize yourself with the various topics that other committees will be discussing at the conference. Some you will be able to mostly ignore; for example, Greenpeace will have little to say about the American housing crisis or United States–European Union relations. On the other hand, it will have a great deal to say about agricultural sustainability, genetically modified organisms, and global warming. Invest significant preparation time into the topics that pertain to your NGO, and you will **reap** the benefits at the conference. It will be helpful for you to be able to answer relevant questions on the topics that concern you, as well as being able to make short statements—usually about two or three minutes—about them. You will often be working with your fellow representatives, but this will not always be the case.

Reap—*to gather or obtain.*

Should you have any questions about how to prepare for the conference and what will be expected of you there, please contact your two chairs, Alison Schumer (schumer@fas.harvard.edu) and Brenda Maldonado (bmaldon@fas.harvard.edu).

Conclusion

As a representative of a prominent international NGO, you are tasked with an important job: standing up for those that are not adequately represented by the current international structure. Many important reforms and solutions in recent years have been initiated by NGOs, and their work as independent organizations is critical to the integrity of international policymaking. The public scrutiny that NGOs can bring to bear on politicians, organizations, and nations is extremely powerful in this day of **media saturation**, and it is important that NGOs not only remain vigilant, but responsible. It will be your task as representatives of your NGO to ensure that your issues are dealt with adequately and responsibly at HMCE 2009.

Media saturation—*the pervasive nature of modern day media; can facilitate communication.*