

C.H.O.G.M. EXPLAINED

**A Primer for Delegates
of the
32nd National Student Commonwealth Forum,
May 2-7th, 2004**



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Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to describe CHOGM, and explain the various rules and procedures that delegates will need to know in order to effectively participate in the discussions.

What is CHOGM ?

For decades, Heads of Government (usually Presidents and Prime Ministers) and Government Ministers of Commonwealth countries have met regularly to discuss issues of common concern and coordinate their efforts at cooperation. These official conferences, known as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (or *C.H.O.G.M.* for short), take place about every two years. The last two CHOGMs took place in Coolumberr, Australia, in March 2002, and in Abuja, Nigeria, in December 2003.

Unlike the United Nations or many other international organizations, the Commonwealth makes decisions by consensus. This means all participants at CHOGM must agree before any resolution or course of action can be adopted. Any policies or activities that achieve consensus at CHOGM are then carried out with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House in London.

The NSCF Model CHOGM

Near the end of your week at NSCF, you will be participating in a day-long Model CHOGM. This simulation is modeled as closely as possible to the real thing. Like real Commonwealth Ministers and Heads of Government, you will be gathered around a huge roundtable, discussing issues and proposing resolutions and amendments. Like real leaders, you will also have the opportunity to negotiate behind the scenes to achieve consensus. Pages will help you communicate with other delegations. And a Chair-person and Secretary-General will be there to keep things running as smoothly as possible.



What Role Will I Play in CHOGM ?

With the Model CHOGM separated into two “Plenary” sessions (one in the morning and one in the afternoon), you will have the opportunity to play both of the following roles:

1. Head of Government (i.e. President or Prime Minister)

As Head of Government, you will be representing your country at the formal meeting table. You will have the opportunity to speak to your counterparts, introduce resolutions and amendments, and decide whether your country will support a particular decision or motion. You are seated around the meeting table in alphabetical order (by country), each represented by a flag and a placard with your country’s name on it. Your placard also serves as notification of your desire to speak, as well as your decision whether to support (or not) a particular motion. As principle representative, you should not leave the discussion table (even to use the bathroom!) unless your Minister is willing to temporarily take your place. You must also remember to act formally and appropriately, referring to others by the appropriate name (i.e. “Mr/Madam Chair”; “the Representative from India” etc.), and refraining from insults, heckling, or side-talk. If you must communicate with your Minister or with any other delegation, you should prepare a written message, to be delivered by a page.

2. Government Minister (i.e. Foreign Minister or Minister of Agriculture)

As Government Minister, you are not confined to the formal meeting room. In fact, you are encouraged to use the backrooms (which will be provided) to negotiate and solve outstanding issues. There are only a few rules which apply to these backroom discussions: one being that you must refrain from violence, and the other that you try to keep the noise at a reasonable level, so as not to disturb the formal meeting. You can also develop amendments, but must submit them through your Head of Government. You will be recalled to the formal CHOGM room whenever a decision is made to call for consensus on a resolution or amendment. When you are in the formal meeting room, you must also remember to act formally and appropriately, sitting quietly behind your Head of Government. Communication with your partner and with other delegations within the formal meetings should be done by written message, delivered by a page.



The Other Players at CHOGM

A number of other supporting roles will be played by members of the Planning Team (PT) and by special guests. These are:

1. Guest Speakers

The CHOGM will be opened by a special guest speaker and/or a video-taped message. Another guest speaker will close the day's discussions. As these speakers are likely to be High Commissioners or important government officials, it is important that we are polite and respectful!

2. Chairperson



The role of the Chairperson will be played by a member of the PT well-versed in the rules and procedures of CHOGM. The Chair is responsible for facilitating the formal discussions between Heads of Government. The Chair introduces individual speakers, seeks consensus on specific amendments or resolutions at the request of the assembled leaders, and moderates any disagreements over procedure or etiquette. While you may make requests of the chair, it is inappropriate to "talk back" to them. They are to be respected at all times. Heads of government may submit messages, amendments, or motions for consensus or tabling at any time to the chair. These messages must be in writing and must be delivered by a page. However, it is up to the chair's discretion when/whether he or she acts upon these requests.

2. Secretary-General

The role of the Secretary General (also played by a member of the PT) is to advise the Chair on matters of procedure and to keep an updated list of those Heads of Government who have indicated their desire to speak. The Secretary General also processes all messages sent to the Chair, and keeps track of which amendment/resolution is being discussed, as well as any proposed (or newly accepted) changes to these motions.

3. Clerks/Secretaries

Several members of the PT also act as Clerks and Secretaries. One clerk (or pair of clerks) is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date Power-Point display of the specific resolution/amendment under discussion. Another secretary (or pair of secretaries) keeps an abbreviated, typed transcript of what is said by individual Heads of Government. These transcripts will later be made available to delegates.

4. Pages

Finally, a number of PT members will also be acting as pages for the two CHOGM sessions. Pages are responsible for communicating written messages among partners, delegations, and the Chairperson. These notes may include: proposed amendments, requests for the chair to call for consensus or table a



given motion, requests for Ministers to meet in the backroom, or simply messages of support or negotiation between delegations. The pages are empowered to intercept inappropriate messages. The pages are also responsible for recalling Ministers from the backroom when a call is made for consensus or tabling.

Speaking and Making Decisions at CHOGM as a Head of Government

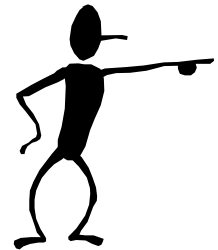
This section details some of the most basic and important procedures of CHOGM that apply specifically to the Heads of Government involved in the formal CHOGM discussions.

Introductions:

After the guest speaker has opened the morning CHOGM session, the chair will begin by asking the Heads of Government to introduce themselves, one at a time. Since we are trying to simulate a real CHOGM, the name you will give will not be your own, but rather the name of your real Head of Government. For example, the Canada's Head of Government will introduce him/herself as "The Rt. Honourable Paul Martin". Obviously, then, it is important that you learn this name beforehand! Introductions will be repeated at the beginning of the second (afternoon session).

Introducing a Resolution:

Next, the Chairperson will invite a specific Head of Government to introduce a resolution for discussion. Speakers will be asked to introduce their own resolutions, so be prepared! If any of the resolutions that you proposed are selected for the short-list of "Proposed Resolutions for Discussion" (which you will receive the day before CHOGM) you should be ready to give a short speech. This speech doesn't need to be too long or complicated, but it should explain the intention of the resolution. It should also explain why you think the other leaders should support it. At the start of your speech, the resolution will be projected on the overhead screen by the clerks, allowing other delegates to read it for themselves.



General Discussions Begin:

Once a specific resolution or amendment has been introduced, general discussions can begin. Any Head of Government is able to speak, should they so choose. The procedure for speaking is detailed below.

When You Want to Speak:



If you wish to speak to the assembled Heads of Government, you should begin by standing your name-placard up on its end, with the country name clearly facing the Chair and Secretary General. They will notice your upraised placard and add your name to the speakers list. When your turn to speak comes around, you will be invited by the Chair to speak with the following words: "The Chair recognizes..." It is important that you pay attention or you won't be ready, which is not very professional for a world leader! Before beginning to speak, you should return your placard to its normal position. If, at any time, you feel you no longer wish to speak, you should immediately put your placard down to notify the Chair and Secretary General. You do not have a set time-limit for your speech. Just remember, too much talk may translate into not much action! Remember also to be speak in a manner befitting a Head of Government. The Chair will not tolerate abusive or insulting language or actions. Finally, remember to

Speak only when it is your turn ! If you need to communicate with others, write a message and ask a page to deliver it.

Communicating & Negotiating with the Chair and Other Delegations:



As a Head of Government, you are able to communicate and negotiate with other delegations and the chair through written messages, to be delivered by the pages. (Remember, you cannot simply leave your chair to chat with another leader.) Your message should indicate the recipient (“to...”) and the author (“From...”). To signal a page, simply hold your message in the air, and they will come and collect it. The pages are empowered to intercept inappropriate messages.

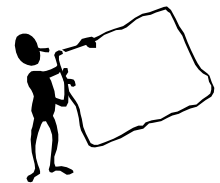
Seeking Consensus on a Resolution (Approving a Resolution) :

As a Head of Government, you are entitled, at any time, to call for consensus on a particular resolution. To do so, you must send a clearly written message to the Chair. The request must be seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. In due time, the Chair will announce the call for consensus, close the speakers list and ask that all placards be returned to their normal position. The Chair will also recall all the Ministers from the backrooms. Once everyone has returned, the Chair will read out the resolution as it stands. The Chair then asks whether “we have consensus on this resolution?”. Any Heads of Government who do not support the resolution must raise their placard on their ends, as if they wanted to speak. If even a single placard is raised, consensus is not achieved. The Chair then announces that “We do not have consensus on this resolution....” and the discussions return to the resolution at issue. If, on the other hand, no placards are raised, consensus is achieved. The Chair then announces that “It appears we have consensus....” The chair will note this and then invite the introduction of the next resolution.



Proposing Amendments:

As a Head of Government, you are entitled to submit amendments to alter and improve the resolution under discussion. Amendments may involve minor grammatical changes, or may significantly alter the meaning of the resolution. Amendments must be submitted in writing to the Chair. If only minor changes are involved, the note can simply say “replace....with.....” or “insert....between.....”. If, however, major changes are involved, it may be best to re-write the entire resolution with the changes included. All amendments must be seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. In due time, the Chair may invite you to introduce and explain your proposed amendment, much as you would a proposed resolution. General discussions then begin on the amendment itself.



Seeking Consensus on an Amendment (Approving a Amendment):

As a Head of Government, you are entitled, at any time, to call for consensus on an amendment. To do so, you must send a clearly written message to the Chair. The request must be seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. In due time, the Chair will announce the call for consensus, close the speakers list and ask that all placards be returned to their normal position. The Chair will also recall all the Ministers from the backrooms. Once everyone has returned, the Chair will read out the amendment. The Chair then asks whether “we have consensus on this amendment?”. Any Heads of Government

who do not support the amendment must raise their placard on their ends, as if they wanted to speak. If even a single placard is raised, consensus is not achieved. The Chair then announces that “ We do not have consensus on this amendment....” and the discussions return to the amendment at issue. If, on the other hand, no placards are raised, consensus is achieved. The Chair then announces that “It appears we have consensus....” The chair will note this and the necessary changes will be made to the original resolution. Discussion will then continue on the newly altered resolution.

Tabling A Resolution or Amendment:



As a Head of Government, you are entitled, at any time, to call for the “tabling” of the amendment or resolution under discussion. Tabling means that the particular amendment or resolution will be set aside until some later time, when the assembled Heads of Government may decide to return to it. Tabling allows discussions to continue on other on other amendments and resolutions. To call for the tabling of a particular



resolution or amendment, you must send a clearly written message to the Chair. The request must be seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. In due time, the Chair will announce the call for tabling, close the speakers list and ask that all placards be returned to their normal position. The Chair will also recall all the Ministers from the backrooms. Once everyone has returned, the Chair will read out the amendment/resolution in question. The chair will then ask whether “we have consensus to table the amendment/resolution?”. Any Heads of Government who do not support the tabling must raise their placard on their ends, as if they wanted to speak. If even a single placard is raised, consensus is not achieved. The Chair then announces that “ We do not have consensus on tabling this amendment/resolution....” and the discussions continue as before. If, on the other hand, no placards are raised, consensus is achieved. The Chair then announces that “It appears we have consensus on tabling....” The chair will note this. If an amendment was tabled, discussions return to the original resolution (or amendment). If, however, a whole resolution was tabled, the chair will invite the introduction of the next resolution.

Returning to a Tabled Resolution:

As a Head of Government, you are entitled, at any time, to call for the return of a “tabled” amendment or resolution. If you wish to reinstate a tabled resolution, remember, you must also table the resolution currently under discussion. You must send a clearly written request to the chair requesting both actions: first the present resolution be tabled, and second, that the tabled resolution be reinstated. This request must be seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. In due time, the Chair will announce the request and the process will proceed through tabling. If there is consensus for tabling, the chair will then call for a show of consensus on reintroducing the resolution. If consensus is again achieved, general discussions may begin. If, however, there is no consensus on tabling, the process cannot continue, and discussions will continue as before on the original resolution.

Returning to a Tabled Amendment:



Reinstating a tabled amendment is simpler. First, you must send a clearly written request to the chair requesting that the tabled amendment be reinstated. This request must be

seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. In due time, the Chair will announce the request and will call for a show of consensus on reintroducing the resolution. If consensus is again achieved, general discussions may begin. If, however, there is no consensus on reintroducing the amendment, discussions continue as before.

Other Motions and Requests:

Heads of Government are entitled to submit any other type of request to the Chair. All such requests must be seconded (signed) by at least one other delegation. However, it is up to the discretion of the Chair whether these requests will be brought to the attention of the assembled Heads of Government. Inappropriate requests will be discarded.

Working the Backroom As A Government Minister

This section details some of the most basic and important procedures of CHOGM that apply specifically to the Government Ministers involved in the backroom negotiations that support the formal CHOGM discussions.

Observing the Formal Discussions & Communicating with your Head of Government:



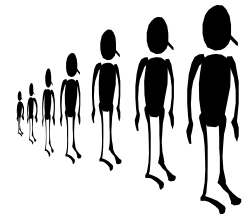
As a Government Minister, you are entitled to sit in on the formal CHOGM discussions. You must make sure, however, not to disturb the assembled Heads of Government with side-talk or heckling. If you wish to communicate with your Head of Government, you may prepare written messages, to be delivered by the pages. If you are sitting behind your partner in the meeting chambers, you may also whisper discretely. Still, you must make absolutely sure that you are not disturbing the formal discussions.

Standing-in for your Head of Government

As a Government Minister, you are allowed to temporarily fill in for your Head of Government in emergency situations (i.e. should they need to leave the formal discussion table to use the washroom). It is not, however, appropriate for you to replace them simply because they do not wish to speak or because you want to. This would be unprofessional, and might hurt the reputation of the country you are representing.

Recalled for Consensus:

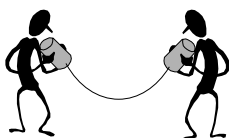
As a Government Minister, you will be recalled to the formal CHOGM meeting room whenever the chair announces a call for a show of consensus on tabling, amending, or approving a resolution or amendment. Such decision may not occur until all Ministers are seated behind their Heads of Government. This ensures that both you and your Head of Government have the same understanding of what is going on. It also allows Ministers to report back to their partners (before a vote) in case they have reached a deal in the backrooms.



Creating and Submitting Requests/Amendments Through Your Head of Government:

As a Government Minister, you are entitled to create amendments and requests for tabling etc., collect signatures and make informal deals with other delegations on your own. However, all such formal motions must be submitted through your Head of Government. This means that your Head of Government must approve all deals etc. before they can be submitted to the Chair. This ensures that your delegation remains united and working towards the same goals. You must respect their authority.

Communicating & Negotiating with other Delegations:

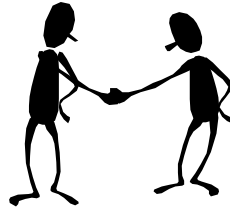


As a Government Minister, you are able to communicate and negotiate with other delegations without the prior approval of your Head of Government. Your message

should indicate the recipient (“To...”) and the author (“From...”). To signal a page, simply hold your message in the air, and they will come and collect it. Just remember: the pages are empowered to intercept inappropriate messages.

Working the Backroom:

As a Government Minister, you are not confined to the formal meeting room. In fact, you are encouraged to use the backrooms (which will be provided) to negotiate and solve outstanding issues. There are only a few rules which apply to these backroom discussions: one being that you must refrain from violence, and the other that you try to keep the noise at a reasonable level, so as not to disturb the formal meeting. As for what you can accomplish, well, that’s really up to you ! In the past, some Government Ministers have been very effective in leading impromptu group discussions to identify problems that some delegations have with the resolutions/amendments then under discussions. Others have created draft amendments and have used the backroom to sell other delegations on their ideas. Some have even managed to gather signatures of support, allowing an amendment to arrive at the discussion table with consensus already “in the bag”. These are only a few ideas....so use your creativity and leadership skills! While some feel the role of Minister is “less fun” than that of Head of Government, others feel that the backroom is the place to be – that the real progress occurs there, rather than at the formal discussion table.



Preparing For CHOGM

To get the most out of your CHOGM experience, it is important that you be as prepared as possible.

Doing the Research:

While we certainly don't expect you to arrive at CHOGM knowing everything there is to know about Food issues, your country, or the Commonwealth, it certainly wouldn't hurt for you to spend some time getting to understand the basics. With a few interesting facts in your mind, your speeches will be all the more interesting and persuasive. Likewise, a little bit of knowledge about other Commonwealth countries will allow you to understand where the other leaders are coming from. It will also help you to find areas of compromise and common ground. You can begin your research by read over the briefing materials that we have provided you in our second package. (You can also access these on our website)



Preparing Your Resolutions:

For information on how to prepare your own resolutions see the guide provided with our second information package, which is also posted on our website.

Post-CHOGM

The process of CHOGM does not end with closing of the final plenary session, however. As you return to your homes, the Planning Team assembles all approved resolutions into a NSCF CHOGM Communiqué, which is then sent off to the real Commonwealth Secretariat in London, where they will hopefully be read by the Secretary General himself, and perhaps forwarded to some real Heads of Government. This Communiqué will also mailed to you, the delegates. Abbreviated minutes of the CHOGM discussions will also posted on the NSCF website.

CHOGM NO-NOs

Although this briefing has already touched on a number of things that are not appropriate at CHOGM, you will have to wait till the week of the Forum to find out more about other important "CHOGM NO-NOs". Believe us, the wait will be worth it 😊



THE END – (Thanks for Reading This!)