

Writing Your Own CHOGM Resolutions

UBC Commonwealth Conference

Adapted from materials for the National Student Commonwealth Forum

During the model Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs) that are the centerpiece of the Conference, you will be discussing international issues and proposing mutually beneficial solutions. As in real life, your solutions will take the form of resolutions – written agreements that promise specific action.

Here is a very simple (and non-serious) example of a CHOGM resolution:

“We, the people of the Commonwealth, resolve that all secondary students be made to wear silly neckties to school in every nation of the Commonwealth.”

As the CHOGM meetings progress, you will have the opportunity to discuss these resolutions, to change them as you see fit, or even to put them aside altogether. Ultimately, your goal is to create resolutions that will attract the support of every country at the table. Without consensus, there can be no approved resolutions. Lacking approved resolutions, the Commonwealth cannot act!

Often, approved resolutions bear little resemblance to their original form. That’s the joy and challenge of consensus-based decision making. To give you an example, the Silly Tie resolution above might end up like this:

“We, the people of the Commonwealth, resolve that all secondary students have the option of wearing a silly tie to school, should they so wish, and that these silly ties be made available to all students from their educational institutions. However, no student shall be punished for opting not to wear a tie, or for choosing another form of dress, such as a turtleneck...”

Sure, it’s a silly example, but you get the idea!

Writing Your Own Resolutions

You are expected to submit, as a delegation, at least one resolution for each CHOGM topic. These resolutions should be submitted when you arrive at the Conference on Friday afternoon.

Creating your own resolutions isn’t as difficult as it may sound! To get started, try following these five simple steps:

Step 1: Start by identifying an issue or problem related to one of the CHOGM topics that affects your country and/or other Commonwealth nations.

Step 2: Think of some possible solutions to this problem. Be as creative as you want!

Step 3: Pick the best solution (or two) out of all the ones you came up with.

Step 4: Put this solution into the form of a sentence (or two or three) beginning with “We, the people of the Commonwealth, resolve that...”

Step 5: Read over your resolution and edit out any confusing grammar or unnecessary words.

Some Additional Tips for Writing Resolutions

- ✓ CHOGM resolutions describe solutions, not problems. Your resolution doesn't need to contain an explanation of your motives. (For all you formal debaters out there, this means no "whereas" statements!) You can save your explanation for the introductory speech you will be asked to give if your resolution is selected for discussion.
- ✓ Be as creative as you can. Today's tough challenges often require unique and innovative solutions.
- ✓ Make your solutions concrete, interesting and action-oriented. Forming a committee to study the issue isn't always the most effective way of tackling a problem, nor is it particularly interesting or discussion-provoking!
- ✓ Keep it concise. The longer your resolution is, the more likely other leaders are going to have trouble understanding it.
- ✓ Strategize ahead of time. Spend some time thinking about which countries, or regional groups, are most likely to support (or reject) your resolution. Think about how you can get others on board. Think of good arguments, or changes/compromises that you might be willing to make to earn their support.