



I. Interpret the Resolution

Before you can debate the resolution, “When it cannot do both, the United Nations should prioritize poverty reduction over combating climate change,” you’ll need to decide how your team will interpret the resolution. Debate resolutions are generally statements that can be interpreted – legitimately – in many different ways. (That’s part of what makes debates so interesting to watch!)

Consider the wording of the resolution. Which phrases could be defined in different ways? In order to set the boundaries for your debate, you must define any ambiguous terms or phrases.

The first word you could interpret in multiple ways is probably “prioritize.” Does “prioritize” mean that the UN must favor actions that reduce poverty, with some specific exceptions? For example, you could argue that the UN must favor actions that reduce poverty except when those actions call for building new coal-fired power plants, encouraging the widespread use of inefficient vehicles, or building roads in virgin rainforest.

Alternatively, you could define “prioritize” as putting poverty reduction first in every case, and base your arguments on moral or ethical principles. That will make your team’s job more difficult, since it’s difficult to defend something in all cases. (For more about this, see **Section III, Creating a Case for the Proposition.**)

You probably determined right away that two key

phrases in the resolution are “poverty reduction” and “combating climate change.”

The word “poverty” might seem like one you don’t need to define, but consider how many different ways people think about the problem of global poverty. You could choose to define “poverty” as the condition of people who earn less than \$1 a day, or who are food insecure, or who lack land rights. How does your team want to set the boundaries for the debate?

In many debates, the affirmative team will choose to focus on a specific part of the world. For example, you could argue:

“When it cannot do both, the UN should prioritize poverty reduction over climate change in countries where more than half of the population is below the poverty line.

“When it cannot do both, the United Nations should prioritize poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa over combating climate change.”

What about “combating climate change?” You could choose to focus your debate on specific actions to combat climate change, such as reducing emissions, curbing deforestation, or carbon sequestration in soils. Here’s an example:

“When it cannot do both, the United Nations should prioritize poverty reduction over reducing emissions from gas-powered vehicles.”

If you choose to focus on a specific action to combat climate change, you’ll need to think of



cases where reducing poverty could require setting aside that action. Using the example above, you could argue that the UN should help build roads in rural areas to help poor farmers sell their crops, even if doing so would increase emissions from gas-powered vehicles.

You can choose to define things broadly or narrowly, as long as you leave the opposing team reasonable grounds for debate.

Tip: When you've decided how to interpret the resolution, write it down.

Next Step: Research ▶



II. Research

Interpreting the resolution and researching the topic go hand in hand. Once you've decided how your team will interpret the resolution, you'll need to identify the best arguments and evidence in support of your position through research. While conducting research, you might change your mind about how you want to interpret the resolution.

Step 1: Brainstorm

Start with a brainstorming session with your team. What do you know about actions the UN has taken to reduce poverty? What have different groups suggested as actions the UN should take? If you've participated in the Global Debates before, you've probably learned a lot about combating climate change. Can you think of examples of actions to combat climate change that could increase poverty?

The key part of brainstorming is identifying the gaps in your team's collective knowledge. What information would you need for a good debate about the sometimes conflicting aims of reducing poverty and combating climate change?

Tip: Make a list of questions you'll need to answer through research.

Step 2: Explore the Topic

Start filling the gaps in your knowledge by exploring the debates and references on IDEA's Debatepedia website: [The Global Debates Climate Change and Poverty Portal](#).

Through this portal, you'll gain access to more than 40 debates on poverty reduction and climate

change, each in a pro-con format. What are the arguments in favor of capping carbon emissions in China? What are the arguments against? How do bans on forest resource harvesting affect poor communities? Each article lists references for further research.

Step 3: Choose a Focus

As you explore the Climate Change and Poverty Portal, think about how the causes and effects of poverty and climate change relate to each other. These are difficult, complicated challenges. Consider what obligation individuals and nations have to fight poverty and climate change, and when one might take precedence over the other. What do you want to focus on in your debate and service project?

Tip: Choose one or two key issues. Don't try to tackle everything!

You can use the Climate Change and Poverty Portal to identify compelling arguments on both sides of the issue you choose to focus on. (Remember, two of your teammates will argue against the resolution in the public debate!) A good debater learns to identify and use evidence against claims, not just for them.



Step 4: Research Your Chosen Topic(s)

Once you've chosen the topic or topics your debate and service project will address, you'll need to start gathering evidence. At this stage, you don't need to decide exactly what your arguments will be. Your opinions might change as you gather information. As you conduct your research, take advantage of as many different sources of information as you can. Here are some suggestions for online, library and community research:

Internet research

- Google (or your favorite search engine)
- Major newspapers & news magazines (many have online archives of articles)
- Google Scholar (a free collection of academic articles)
- Websites of different groups with a stake in climate change:
 - o Governments
 - o International organizations (i.e. UN, World Bank)
 - o Environmental groups
 - o Business organizations
 - o Lobbyists

Library research

Librarians are excellent sources of research expertise. Explain this competition to your librarian and ask him or her for advice. Libraries in your school, community, or local university may have subscriptions to online resources & databases you can't access as an individual. It's tempting to focus on online resources, but print materials (books, periodicals, newspapers, and academic journals) are also excellent sources of information.

Community research

Don't overlook rich sources of expertise, opinions, and information in your own community. Seek out members of your community who might have useful input:

- Government officials
- Farmers, foresters, ranchers & others whose livelihoods depend on resources affected by climate change
- Elders
- Representatives of local environmental organizations
- Business owners
- Workers in industries that emit greenhouse gases

Tip: You can interview individuals you identify in your research & earn points by submitting your videos online!

Research tip: Record your findings

As you gather all this great material for your debate, remember to keep good notes. One effective way to track your research is to label individual index cards or sheets of paper with specific topics or questions and list the arguments & evidence you find as you research each area. As you gather more useful information, your arguments will start to take shape.

**Next Step: Develop a Case
for the Proposition** ►



III. Develop a Case for the Proposition

Once you've decided how to interpret the resolution, you'll need to create a debate case: a set of convincing arguments and evidence that supports a proposed position.

Keep in mind that, for the Fall 2009 Global Debates, you'll need to design a service project that builds on the issues you address in your debate case. Most likely, your service project will either take action, raise awareness, or do both. As you plan for your debate, think about how you can create a service project about some of the same ideas.

- Can you use your debate to propose specific actions or weigh the effectiveness of different actions? If so, your service project could take one or more of the actions you debate.
- Can you use your debate to bring to light important information your audience might not have? If so, your service project could spread that important information to your community and beyond.

Types of debate cases

There are many ways to argue in favor of the resolution; this guide will explain one of the most common: the Comparative Advantages Case. If your team doesn't have much debate experience, you should probably use this format. If you're an experienced debate team, you're welcome to use another type of debate case.

The Comparative Advantages Case

With the comparative advantages case, you'll need to show that your proposal for reducing poverty should have a higher priority than combating global climate change. The proposition team – the one arguing in favor of the resolution – must show that its plan is worth the trade-offs.

These instructions will guide you through 4 steps:

1. Propose a plan for reducing poverty.
2. Demonstrate that the UN cannot “do both” when it comes to your plan.
3. Argue that the advantages of your plan outweigh the disadvantages of any negative effects on global climate change.
4. Use values or principles to show why your plan for reducing poverty should take priority over combating global climate change.

Step 1: Propose a Plan for Reducing Poverty

First, you'll need to propose a plan for poverty reduction. Every plan requires an actor and an action. Additional supporting elements can strengthen your plan.

Describe the Actor

The “actor” is the individual, group, government, or other organization you think should enact your plan. This resolution names the actor: it's the United Nations. So part of your work already is done. You might want to name a particular agency of the UN, though. Which division of the United Nations should carry out your plan? You can choose any part as long as you defend the choice.

This is the crux of your plan: What policy should the actor adopt? What action should the individual



or group take? In this step you need to describe the particular actions you favor.

Define the action as specifically as you can. If you're proposing that the United Nations start programs to develop infrastructure in developing countries, specify the types of infrastructure and the particular countries. If you're proposing direct grants to developing countries to reduce poverty, how big will the grants be? What kinds of projects will the grants fund?

Add Additional Elements

Your plan can include additional elements you think will strengthen it. Examples:

- Funding. Who should fund the plan?
- Enforcement. How should your plan be enforced?

Additional elements such as these will make your plan more compelling.

Step 2: Demonstrate that the United Nations "cannot do both" when it comes to your plan.

You must show that your plan for reducing poverty can't be implemented simultaneously with combating climate change.

You could argue that reducing poverty is never compatible with combating global climate change, but you'd have a difficult time responding to the arguments of the negative team. From your research, you can probably cite several examples of actions that reduce poverty and combat global climate change at the same time. The opposing team could weaken your general argument with those examples. In fact, your opponents might persuasively argue that

combating global climate change is one good way to reduce poverty.

Instead, you'll create a stronger case if you argue that certain circumstances prevent the UN from reducing poverty and combating climate change at the same time. Your first step will be to identify the circumstances. You could choose specific conditions, regions, or actions.

Specific Conditions

You could propose that, in countries where the unemployment rate is more than 30%, the UN should prioritize creating jobs over combating climate change. Those jobs might be in factories or transport, sectors responsible for carbon emissions. To defend this argument, you wouldn't need to suggest that combating global climate change is unimportant. You just need to show that it's less important than alleviating unemployment in countries where the rate is high.

Specific Regions

Alternatively, you might focus on a specific country or region. You could propose a plan for the UN to deliver seeds and fertilizers to farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, where crop yields are low. Your plan might increase carbon emissions from transportation and road building. You could argue that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the threat from poverty is more urgent than the threat from global climate change.

Specific Actions

As a third alternative, you could argue that specific actions to reduce poverty are so essential that they justify setting aside other actions that combat global climate change. For example, you could argue that one of the best ways to reduce poverty in the developing world is by fixing or creating



infrastructure. Building infrastructure like bridges, roads, or hospitals could lead to deforestation and increased carbon emissions. You could argue that these actions need to be taken in the short term to reduce poverty.

The circumstances you choose should be part of your plan. That way, you're defending the resolution in a specific scenario, not in all possible cases.

Step 3: Argue that the advantages of your plan outweigh the disadvantages of any negative effects on global climate change.

To convince the audience that your plan should take priority, show that it has significant advantages that outweigh any negative impact on global climate change. What advantages does your plan have over the status quo (the way things are now)?

Out of the advantages your team identifies, focus on 1, 2, or 3. These advantages will be your primary arguments, so you should be able to back them up with compelling evidence. Evidence might include statistics, expert recommendations, policy analysis, examples, pilot studies, or other sources of credible information. You can decide to focus on only one advantage if you can provide varied, convincing evidence of its importance!

Don't assume that others will see the benefits of your plan on their own. You'll need to make the connections for your audience.

First, explain what will happen as a result of your plan: How will your plan impact the problem of poverty? If your plan includes infrastructure development, for example, will the infrastructure development create employment for people who

are currently unemployed? If your plan is to improve access to agricultural inputs, how will that access reduce poverty among farmers?

Then, explain why this result is good. Why would someone want to increase employment or increase income for small farmers? Show how the effects you describe are connected to common values like equity and human rights.

Finally, compare those advantages to the alternative course of action, combating global climate change. Your job is to demonstrate that the advantages of your plan justify setting aside an alternative action.

Step 4. Use values or principles to show why your plan for reducing poverty should take priority over combating global climate change.

One of the most straightforward ways to argue that one action should take higher priority than another is to suggest a general principle on which the comparison should be based. Frequently used principles are urgency, reparability, and magnitude. Here are ways you might use these three principles in comparing poverty reduction to combating global climate change.

Urgency

The principle: Actions which are more urgent should be given priority over actions which are less urgent. Example: "Poverty reduction cannot wait. Millions of people face malnutrition, poor health, and even death. We simply must solve this problem before we tackle the problem of global climate change."



Reparability

The principle: If certain problems are not solved, the effects may not be reparable. We should focus on problems which are not reparable.

Example: “If we do not set poverty reduction as our priority in Sub-Saharan Africa, entire cultures and populations will be lost to starvation and AIDS. These lives can never be recovered. Since failing to tackle poverty would have irreparable effects, poverty reduction should have a higher priority.”

Magnitude

The principle: Problems of a higher magnitude should be given priority over problems of a lower magnitude.

Example: “Poverty rates in rural areas of developing countries are so high that the problem overwhelms the problem of climate change in magnitude.”

*Next Step: Develop a Case
for the Opposition* ►



IV. Develop a Case for the Opposition

The difficult part about being on the opposition side is that your primary responsibility will be to respond to the arguments of the proposition team, and you won't hear those arguments until the debate begins. As a result, you'll need to do as much preparation as you can...but also be prepared to think on your feet!

If you've just finished reading the guide on creating a case for the proposition, you know that the proposition team will need to: 1) propose a plan of action for combating poverty, 2) demonstrate why the United Nations cannot implement their plan while also combating climate change, 3) show the advantages of their plan, and 4) explain why those advantages make the plan a higher priority.

Opposing the Comparative Advantages Case

As the opposition team, you have many options for advocating against the proposition team's case. One good place to start is with the team's plan for reducing poverty. Can you identify weaknesses? These instructions cover three common opposition strategies; you can use them in any combination.

Strategy 1: Argue against the advantages of the proposition team's plan.

The opposition team can choose to argue that the proposition team's plan doesn't have the advantages they say it does. For this resolution, you could argue that poverty would persist even if the United Nations adopted the proposition team's plan.

To do this, start by naming the problem described by the proposition team. ("The proposition team says their plan will reduce the number of people in South Asia who survive on less than \$1 a day.")

Then show how that problem would persist under their plan, identifying weaknesses in the team's reasoning. Two common flaws in logic to look for are wrong cause and alternate cause.

Wrong cause: The problem of poverty is caused by something other than what is described by the proposition team.

Example: "The proposition team proposes building more factories in South Asia to provide jobs, but the lack of jobs is not the cause of poverty. The cause of poverty in South Asia is low agricultural productivity, not lack of jobs."

Alternate cause: While the cause identified by the proposition team does contribute to poverty, there are other factors that will cause the same problem even if the proposed plan is adopted. Example: "Government corruption in South Asia is so great that even if jobs were produced they would not go to the people who need them."



Strategy 2: Argue that the disadvantages of the plan outweigh the advantages

Step 1. Choose a part of the plan you think is weak.

Example: The plan suggests that the United Nations should develop infrastructure in certain countries as a means of providing jobs and reducing poverty. You think you'll be able to demonstrate disadvantages associated with infrastructure development that will far outweigh the advantages.

Step 2. Show that the part of the plan you're talking about creates a specific effect.

Example: "Providing infrastructure development will lead to deforestation."

Step 3. Show how that effect will have negative consequences.

"Deforestation will cause widespread erosion, reducing crop yields in a region that already can't grow enough food to feed its people. Poverty will increase as a result of the plan."

Remember that you must demonstrate to your audience not just what will result, but why that effect is bad.

You could choose to show negative consequences in terms of poverty, climate change, or both. In each case, your job is to show that those negative consequences far outweigh the advantages of the plan.

Strategy 3: Argue that a general moral or ethical principle justifies assigning a higher priority to global climate change.

To make an argument based on a principle, the opposition team can apply the same three principles described earlier: urgency, reparability, and magnitude. Here are examples of ways to use each principle to argue that global climate change is a higher priority than poverty reduction.

Urgency

"We are on the brink of destroying the Earth's natural resources. If we do not act immediately, we will no longer have the opportunity to act in a way that combats climate change."

Reparability

"Once the Earth's climate is changed, it is changed forever, at least in human terms. Once changed, we could never return the environment to its present state."

Magnitude

"The magnitude of this problem is huge. It will dislocate living species, upset food production, and deplete fresh water supplies on every continent."

**Next Step: Organize
Your Public Debate** ►



IV. Organize Your Public Debate

Step 1: Reserve a Venue

Your coach and school administrators can probably help you reserve a space where a public audience can watch your debate. Most Global Debates competitors hold debates in their schools. Town halls and other meeting places also make good sites for public debates. Choose a day and time that doesn't conflict with holidays or major community events.

Step 2: Identify a Moderator

To make sure the debate runs smoothly, you'll need a moderator to keep time, introduce each speaker, and thank each speaker after he or she has finished. Your coach can serve as moderator. Just make sure the moderator knows the format and has a good stop-watch.

Step 3: Advertise the Debate

The more ways you publicize your debate, the more points you'll earn in the Global Debates competition. For tips on maximizing the impact of your debate, download the guide to Press Releases.

You can earn points by:

- Sending out press releases to earn press coverage
- Inviting local governmental officials & other community members

If any local news outlet covers the debate, submit that coverage for points!

Step 4: Arrange Video, Audio, and Photographic Recording

To receive points for your public debate, you'll need to document it with video footage, an audio recording, and/or photographs. You may be able to rent cameras and other equipment from your school. If you can interest local media outlets through your advertising, they will probably be willing to share their photographs or footage. The more documentation, the better!

Next Step: Debate ►



V. Debate

Now that you have conducted research, defined your plan, developed your plan into a debate case and created a case for the opposition, you're ready to prepare for your public debate. If you haven't debated formally before, don't panic! The best way to get more comfortable is practice. After each practice debate, your coach and teammates can provide valuable feedback.

Step 1. Learn the Global Debates Format

The debate format you'll use is a modified form of what's known as Public Forum debate. The format consists of alternating speeches followed by crossfires, which are question-and-answer sessions between debaters. Each debater will give a total of two speeches (refer to the chart on the following page).

Here are the 4 types of speeches:

1. Opening speeches set the stage for the debate by laying out each team's main arguments.
2. Rebuttal speeches develop each team's arguments, covering only the most important issues in the debate.
3. Summary speeches summarize your team's position and one or two convincing ideas.
4. Final Focus speeches provide an overview of the entire debate and emphasize one or two convincing ideas.

Step 2: Practice giving speeches

After all of your research and planning, you should have lots of written material. How do you translate your case into effective speeches?

The place to start is with a plan. Speaking is different than writing. If the audience can't follow your logic, they can't go back and listen to the point again. For that reason, you need to:

- Tell the audience what you're going to tell them
- Tell them each thing, one at a time
- Tell them what you told them

At the very beginning of your speech, you need to provide a map for your audience. Here's an example of a roadmap:

"In my speech, I'll show you that my team's plan has 3 main advantages: A, B, and C. Then, I'll explain why prioritizing poverty reduction follows principle X."

After the road map, move through each point in the order you said you'd make them. Watch your time to make sure you spend most of your time on your strongest arguments. To help the audience follow your speech, tell them every time you move to a new topic:

"So that's the third advantage of our plan, increasing incomes for the community in addition to farmers. Now I'll explain why prioritizing poverty reduction follows the principle of equity."

The best way to know whether your speeches are well organized and easy to follow is to practice giving them in front of your teammates, teachers, family, and friends. After each practice speech, ask the listener to tell you what your three main points were. If he or she can't name your main points, spend more time referring to a clear road map in your next attempt.



Step 3: Practice the full debate

In order to feel ready for your public debate, practice the full debate at least twice with your teammates. Each debater should get the chance to debate on both the affirmative and negative team. Before each debate, read through the plans you've prepared and review the debate format. Make sure you understand the roles and responsibilities you'll have in each role.

For more in-depth information about debate, check out these websites:

www.idebate.org (International Debate Education Association (IDEA))

www.nflonline.org (National Forensic League)

Step 4: Debate!

Capture your debate with a two-minute video and submit it [here](#).

Earn Points to win a trip to the 2010 IDEA Youth Forum!

Take your debate one step further by participating in the Global Debates Point Activities. For more information, go to [here](#).



Global Debates Format

SPEECH	SPEAKER	ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY	TIME
Opening Speech	Affirmative Speaker 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic • Present the debate case you've created for your action plan • Conclude the speech 	4 minutes
Opening Speech	Negative speaker 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce your speech • Refute selected arguments made by the affirmative team • Present the advocacy statement and arguments you've created for the opposition • Conclude the speech 	4 minutes
Crossfire	Between Affirmative Speaker 1 and Negative Speaker 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both speakers must stand for the crossfire. • Ask and answer questions to clarify and define areas of clash (areas where the two teams disagree). • Ask and answer questions that reveal weaknesses in your opponent's case and strengths in your own. 	2 minutes
Rebuttal Speech	Affirmative Speaker 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refute selected arguments made by the negative team • Address the major areas of clash; for each area of disagreement, show why the affirmative team's argument is most persuasive. • This speech should be limited to only the most important issues in the debate. 	4 minutes
Rebuttal Speech	Negative Speaker 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refute selected arguments made by the affirmative team • Address the major areas of clash; for each area of disagreement, show why the negative team's argument is most persuasive. • This speech should be limited to only the most important issues in the debate. 	4 minutes
Crossfire	Affirmative Speaker 2 and Negative Speaker 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both speakers must stand during this crossfire • Ask and answer questions that focus on areas of agreement and disagreement. • Ask and answer questions that put your side in the best light. 	2 minutes
Summary Speech	Affirmative Speaker 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief summary of the debate so far from the affirmative point of view. • Focus on one or two key ideas which present your side in the best light. 	2 minutes
Summary Speech	Negative Speaker 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief summary of the debate so far from the negative point of view. • Focus on one or two key ideas which present your side in the best light. 	2 minutes
Grand Crossfire	All four speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four speakers remain seated and in view of the audience and judges. • The affirmative team asks the first question. After that, all debaters may question and answer at will. • Ask and answer questions that identify areas of agreement and disagreement. • Ask and answer questions that expose the weaknesses of the opposing team's case and the strengths of your team's case. 	3 minutes
Final Focus	Affirmative Speaker 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief overview of the debate from the affirmative team's perspective. • Focus on one or two key issues, framing them in a way that shows your team in its best light. 	1 minute
Final Focus	Negative Speaker 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief overview of the debate from the negative team's perspective. • Focus on one or two key issues, framing them in a way that shows your team in its best light. 	1 minute