



Guidelines for Council of Europe Ministerial Declaration Writing¹

Committee of Ministers

The Council of Europe is made up of two organs set up under its statute, the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

The Committee of Ministers is the Council of Europe's decision-making body. It comprises the Foreign Affairs Ministers of all the member states, or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg. It is both a governmental body, where national approaches to problems facing European society can be discussed on an equal footing, and a collective forum, where Europe-wide responses to such challenges are formulated. In collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly, it is the guardian of the Council's fundamental values, and monitors member states' compliance with their undertakings.

The work and activities of the Committee of Ministers include:

- Political dialogue.
- Interacting with the Parliamentary Assembly.
- Interacting with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
- Admitting new member States.
- Monitoring respect of commitments by member states.
- Concluding Conventions and agreements - Over 190 treaties have now been opened for signature. The best known is the European Convention of Human Rights.
- Proposing recommendations to [member states](#).
- Adopting the budget.

¹ This document was inspired by and based on the "Guidelines for Communique Writing" of ThessISMUN (www.thessismun.org).

- Adopting and monitoring the Program of Activities.
- Implementing cooperation and assistance programs.
- Supervising the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

The working documents of the Committee of Ministers and the adopted texts are available on line. The adopted texts gather the treaties and conventions, the declarations and conclusions, the recommendations to member states, the resolutions and decisions. A selection of these documents is also published in paper format and is available from Council of Europe Publishing. Most of the activities and news can be consulted on the Committee of Ministers official web site.

Regarding to the **Summit Meetings**, they are summoned whenever issues of vital importance have to be addressed. Items discussed and decisions taken at meetings of the Committee cover all aspects of the Council's activities and are frequently based on reports and recommendations prepared by subordinate committees at the Council's request. Equally, subjects may be raised by any one of the national representatives or by the Co-Presidents. Ministers inform and explain the views and policy decisions of their governments to their colleagues round the table. Conversely they report back to their governments on the views expressed and positions taken by other governments, informing them of new developments and keeping them abreast of movement towards consensus on important issues or areas where national positions diverge. Decisions are being made under Unanimity and Common Accord.

The CoE Ministerial Summit Simulation in RhodesMRC

As soon as you receive your country assignment, you should begin your research. You may divide your research into four categories:

- **Research on the history of the Council of Europe, on the structure and functioning of its bodies, on the role the Partnership plays in International and Regional Politics.**
- **Research on the history and functional purpose of the Council.**
- **Research on your assigned country's background, its political and economic system, political structure and current political affairs, its culture and values.**
- **Research on your assigned country's policies with regard to the certain**

topic, on country's viewpoints in all relevant issues.

Bear in mind that many of your sources may be biased. If possible, try to find independent confirmation of the information you have obtained, from more than one source. Moreover, when gathering information it is important to distinguish between **opinions and facts**. Facts are used to support opinions. Whenever possible use facts to support your arguments. Eventually, you will be presenting an opinion and must defend it against other opinions, thus it is crucial for you to be familiar with different viewpoints and opinions on your topic. Become familiar with arguments that are different from the one your country is likely to take on your topic. Remember, it is up to you to decide which particular points you want to focus on in your own arguments and this decision needs to be guided by your country's position. Bear in mind that you should speak in the name of the country that you are representing. Study already adopted decisions on your topic to find out what issues tend to be discussed when your topic is debated.

Here are some common Internet resources to help you get started:

- The European Union site for the Council of Europe Partnership. http://eeas.europa.eu/organisations/coe/index_en.htm
- The home page of the Council of Europe <mailto:http://www.coe.int/lportal/web/coe-portal>
- The Permanent Missions of the United Nations member states. <http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml>
- The USA Department of State as well as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office websites contain *country profiles* sections. www.state.gov and www.fco.gov.uk
- The Central Intelligence Agency (World Factbook) website contains reports on economic, political and social conditions of most of the countries in the world. www.cia.gov
- The International Crisis Group website. www.icg.org
- The Brookings Institution website. www.brookings.edu
- The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (english site). <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/>

Finally, if you have tried these different resources and still face difficulties finding information, you may ask for help from the **RhodesMRC Board**.

Furthermore it is of critical importance to:

- Review the RhodesMRC Rules of Procedures for the Council of Ministers for the Ministerial Summit of the Council of Europe. These rules are intended to create a level playing field allowing each delegate/country to accomplish their individual goals in speaking about their policies while maximizing opportunities for the group to reach consensus on the issue.
- Remember it is not your opinion you are illustrating and defending, but the country's you are representing. The Co-Presidents of the committee, will be responsible for the implementation of the official policy of each state by its representative in the committee. Delegates that diverge from their assigned country's official policy, will be advised towards the correction of their policy and provided with the appropriate material on this extent by the Co-Presidents of the Council.
- Be aware of different political perspectives.
- Attain a good knowledge of your allies and your opposition. In order to adequately represent your country during the model, you will need to interact with delegates from other countries. Knowing their positions on your topic will help you predict their arguments during debate. This will be very useful in helping you decide in advance where it might be useful to seek cooperation or compromise.
- Congratulate the members of your delegation (and fellow delegates representing different countries and viewpoints) on their contributions to the council sessions.

Ministerial Declaration Writing and Submission

Ministerial Declarations are official documents that have been passed by the Council of Ministers aiming to address a particular problem or issue. Ministerial Declarations are actions of the Council of Europe submitted in draft form under the sponsorship of the delegations working in a council. Primarily, declarations address the general concern, as well as particular worries, to a given situation and recommended action to be taken by the members of the Council. Council of Europe Ministerial Declarations are (only) considered to be binding for the member states, since they are adopted by consensus based on good faith and a strong concern for the common good.

Draft Ministerial Declarations are Ministerial Declarations as they are drafted and passed in committee sessions that are taking place during the RhodesMRC Conference. The CoE Ministerial Declarations have to be adopted in absolute consensus.

It is important to acknowledge that in drafting a Ministerial Declaration wording will

influence its acceptance among fellow delegates. The draft Ministerial Declarations should be clear and concise. Consequently, the better the substance of a Draft Ministerial Declaration is the higher the success of achieving consensus in the council session. The main aim of Ministerial Declaration writing is to put down ideas in a clear and concise manner in accordance with the provided format.

A regular CoE Declaration has the following pattern:

Draft Declaration

The Heading, identifying the type of the meeting (Ministerial or Heads of State and Government Summit) in which the Declaration is introduced.

Numbering: the sequel number of each Draft Declaration, presented by the President along with the submission of the Declaration by the Sponsor, i.e. CoE Draft Ministerial Declaration. **CoE/MD/A/08-Dec-2011/1**, which indicates the **first** Draft **Ministerial** Declaration submitted in the Council of Europe by the Committee of Ministers, on topic Area **A**, on the **8th of December 2011**.

Sample of a Draft Ministerial Declaration

Draft Ministerial Declaration

Ministerial Summit of the Council of Europe

held at,

Rhodes, October 21th, 2011

1. *Today the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe met in Foreign Ministers Session, in Rhodes, to advance the ...*
2. *At our meeting today...*
3. *We are committed to the continuing success of the Council of Europe Partnership...*
4. *We welcome the adoption...*
5. *We fully support the negotiations...*
6. *We strongly condemn terrorism...*

7. *In response to the call by the government of ...*
8. *Council of Europe will continue to play an essential role in regional security and stability...*
9. *We welcome the initiative...*
10. *We express our concerns about ...*
11. *We express / our deep appreciation...*
12. *We fully agree with the statements...*
13. *We recognize the need/ the importance...*
14. *We reaffirm our determination...*
15. *We reiterate our commitment to the...*

Each clause is numbered (1-...). All the clauses end with dot. Each clause may contain more than one sentence.

Amendments

After Draft Ministerial Declarations have been submitted to the committee for discussion, they may be modified through changes known as amendments, suggested by the delegates of the committee, representing adjusted perspectives or proposals on the topic under discussion. Phrasing and purpose of the amendment should complement the Draft Ministerial Declaration.

There are two types of amendments as outlined in the **Rules of Procedure** as well:

1. **Non Substantive Amendments**, correcting grammatical, spelling or formatting mistakes will be automatically adopted without vote from the committee, at the discretion of the President.
2. **Substantive Amendments**, which are due to change the substantial meaning of the Ministerial Declaration shall be unanimously adopted by the committee.