



Seeking Common Ground on Climate: Mock Debate Script

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Materials:

- *Pro Argument Sheets (2)*
- *Con Argument Sheets (2)*
- *Timer*
- *Writing utensil*
- *Notepad (to tally votes)*

Debate Script:

Imagine you are all representing different countries at the United Nations. We are trying to pass a new international treaty that will restrict carbon emissions. One of the biggest concerns of the treaty is whether the same emissions standards should apply to every country or if countries at different levels of economic development should follow different standards. The question up for debate is: **Should developing nations like China and India be held to looser emissions standards?**

I'll need four volunteers. Two of you will argue for the proposal, the other two against. Each side gets a list of standard arguments-- you'll have two minutes to study them and you are encouraged to come up with your own arguments. You'll each get to make a one minute opening statement and a one minute rebuttal. I will moderate. At the end of the debate, everyone will have a chance to vote for or against the measure.

>>Collect four volunteers and give each side a list of arguments for and against. Start a timer for two minutes. Ask who wants to give the opening statement and who wants to give the rebuttal.

While they are preparing, here is a little bit of background on the issue at hand:

>>Overlay Country Borders and Country Names. Point to countries on the sphere as you describe them.

Some countries support emissions standards and some don't. Countries like China and India are undergoing heavy economic growth and as a result they are emitting a lot of CO2. They want to keep growing, and CO2 regulations will restrict their growth. Countries like the US and members of the European Union emitted a lot in the past but their emissions are levelling off or are being reduced. Some countries have emitted hardly any CO2 but are still seeing the effects of climate change, so they still have stakes in the decision. Bangladesh, for example, is located directly to the east of India. They depend on India for much of their electricity but they are also at a low elevation and therefore at risk of sea level rise. So sometimes individual countries can have mixed opinions about climate change legislation.

>>When you are done explaining, the two minutes should be up.

>>Read the script-- be sure to vary your tone and be an engaging speaker!

Thank you members of the General Assembly. We are all aware of the impact that carbon dioxide emissions are having on global climate. The scientific consensus is clear. We must act in a concerted effort to reduce global emissions of CO2. We agree that imposing mandatory reductions of CO2 emissions for all countries is a good idea. However, there is conflict about whether some countries should be required to reduce their emissions more than others. We have decided to hold a debate on this issue to determine the best course of action. The proposal: **Developing nations like China and India should be held to looser emissions standards in the treaty.** Delegates from India and China will argue for the proposal. Delegates from the United States and the European Union will argue against.

Delegates from China and India, please make your opening statement in support of the proposal.

>>Allow the first side to make their opening statement.

Thank you. Now we will hear the opening statement from the US and the EU in opposition to the proposal.

>>Allow the second side to make their opening statement.

At this point, we will hear rebuttal from the Chinese and Indian delegates.

>>Let the first side make their rebuttal points.

United States and European Union delegates, your response?

>>*Let the second side make their rebuttal points.*

>>*Have the audience applaud the participants, collect the argument sheets and allow them to return to their seats.*

Thank you to the two sides for arguing their points. The time has come to vote on the motion: China and India should be held to looser emissions standards in the treaty. All those in favor raise their hands. All those opposed. *[Tally the votes.]*

Let's debrief.

(Q?) How did you feel about this exercise? Did you expect the vote to turn out the way it did?

(Q?) What some reasons countries might refuse to sign a treaty to reduce CO2 emissions?

Potential answers: countries do not want to give up any freedoms, CO2 emissions are typically tied to economic growth and all countries want to grow, it isn't or doesn't seem fair.

>>*End of Mock Debate*