

IGC 2026 ASEAN Summit

The Impending Independence of Bougainville

Delegate Background Guide

Field	Description
Committee Type	ASEAN-plus regional crisis summit
Format	Advanced / crisis-capable Model UN committee
Freeze Date	Fictional 2026 summit setting, before the anticipated 2027 Bougainville transition window
Topic	The Impending Independence of Bougainville
Intended Use	Delegate research, country preparation, moderated caucus planning, and final communique drafting

Central Question

Can ASEAN and invited regional powers help prevent a constitutional, diplomatic, economic, or security crisis as Bougainville moves toward possible independence from Papua New Guinea?

Note to Delegates

This guide presents a fictionalized 2026 crisis scenario for educational Model UN use. It is grounded in real historical events: Bougainville's civil war, the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement, the 2019 referendum, continuing negotiations with Papua New Guinea, and rising interest from regional powers.

Delegates should use this guide as a starting point rather than as a script. Your goal is to represent your assigned government's interests, constraints, and negotiating style while responding to new information introduced during committee.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement rested on three core pillars: autonomy arrangements, a referendum on Bougainville's future political status, and weapons disposal. The agreement provided that the referendum would include the option of separate independence. In 2019, Bougainvilleans voted overwhelmingly for independence; the referendum result, however, was not automatically binding and required further consultation and political action by Papua New Guinea.

1. Committee Mandate and Agenda

The 2026 ASEAN Summit has convened in emergency ASEAN-plus format to address the impending independence of Bougainville and the risk of confrontation between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea is not an ASEAN member, but it has longstanding ASEAN ties and participates in regional forums. Its status makes this crisis directly relevant to ASEAN's near abroad, especially because Bougainville sits at the edge of Southeast Asia and Melanesia, near Indonesia, Solomon Islands, Australia, and major Pacific sea lanes.

The summit's task is not simply to debate self-determination in the abstract. Delegates must decide what their governments can realistically support under crisis conditions:

- Prevent renewed violence between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.
- Clarify whether ASEAN should support mediation, neutrality, PNG sovereignty, Bougainville's referendum mandate, or a phased combination of these positions.
- Manage the involvement of larger regional powers without allowing the crisis to become a proxy contest.
- Address resource politics, especially the future of the Panguna mine and broader economic viability.
- Protect civilians, ports, shipping, medical access, food supply, fuel, telecommunications, and humanitarian corridors.
- Produce a credible final communique, mediation framework, transition compact, or humanitarian access plan.

2. Summit Membership and Procedure

This guide uses a 16-delegation educational roster: the eleven ASEAN member states, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu (another Melanesian nation), and the regional powers of Australia, China, India, and the United States. Additional nations may be added to this guide if necessary due to enrollment numbers.

Category	State
ASEAN member	Brunei Darussalam
ASEAN member	Cambodia
ASEAN member	Indonesia
ASEAN member	Laos
ASEAN member	Malaysia
ASEAN member	Myanmar

Category	State
ASEAN member	Philippines
ASEAN member	Singapore
ASEAN member	Thailand
ASEAN member	Timor Leste
ASEAN member	Vietnam
Nearby Melanesian state	Solomon Islands
Invited regional power	Australia
Invited regional power	China
Invited regional power	India
Invited regional power	United States

Procedural Expectations for Students

- A simple majority will be sufficient for any procedural or substantive vote to pass.
- All delegates, regardless of whether they are representing an ASEAN member state or not, will have equal voting status.
- Students may produce a final communique, mediation roadmap, humanitarian access plan, maritime monitoring proposal, development fund, or joint diplomatic statement.
- Students should distinguish between political support, voluntary coordination measures, aid commitments, recognition policy, and binding national obligations.
- Students should speak from the perspective of their assigned state, not their personal views.
- **This simulation is a Crisis Committee, and it will follow the [IGC Crisis Committee Expectations and Rules as posted here](#).**

3. Historical and Strategic Background

3.1 Bougainville's conflict and peace process

Bougainville is an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea located east of PNG's main island and west of Solomon Islands. Its modern political crisis is rooted in identity, geography, resource extraction, environmental damage, wartime trauma, and contested sovereignty.

The Panguna copper and gold mine was central to Bougainville's conflict. The mine generated enormous wealth, but it became associated with environmental degradation, unequal distribution of benefits, and anger among landowners. The civil war that followed devastated Bougainville and left lasting distrust between Bougainville, PNG authorities, landowner communities, and outside companies.

The 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement ended large-scale fighting and created a framework for autonomy, weapons disposal, and a future referendum. The referendum was held in 2019. The result overwhelmingly favored independence, but the referendum was not self-executing. It required further consultation and final action through Papua New Guinea's political institutions.

3.2 The 2027 transition issue

Bougainville's leaders have pushed for independence by 2027. Papua New Guinea's leaders have emphasized that any final status must be resolved constitutionally and with PNG parliamentary involvement. The gap between Bougainville's expectation of implementation and PNG's insistence on sovereign parliamentary authority creates the central tension of this simulation.

3.3 Why ASEAN cares

ASEAN's diplomatic culture emphasizes sovereignty, territorial integrity, peaceful dispute settlement, consensus, and non-interference. Bougainville tests these principles in a complicated way: the dispute is

outside ASEAN, but it is near ASEAN's strategic environment and directly relevant to Indonesia, maritime Southeast Asia, and regional stability.

ASEAN must also decide whether regional organizations should help implement peace agreements beyond their borders. If ASEAN avoids the issue entirely, larger powers may dominate the response. If ASEAN intervenes too strongly, some members may see that intervention as a dangerous precedent.

3.4 Why major powers care

- China has expanding Pacific diplomacy, infrastructure, mining, port, and security interests.
- The United States sees the Pacific Islands as central to strategic competition and regional partnership.
- Australia views Papua New Guinea and the Pacific as core security interests.
- India seeks a larger Indo-Pacific diplomatic role and closer ties with ASEAN and Pacific Island states.
- Solomon Islands is geographically close and vulnerable to spillover.
- Indonesia is concerned about separatist precedents near its own Papua provinces.

4. Fictional 2026 Situation for Committee

At the start of committee, the following fictionalized facts are assumed to exist. Delegates should treat these as the common baseline for debate unless the dais introduces new updates during committee.

- Papua New Guinea has announced that it will not accept a unilateral declaration of Bougainvillean independence.
- Port Moresby argues that the 2019 referendum was consultative, not self-executing, and that PNG's Parliament must determine the final political status.
- The Autonomous Bougainville Government argues that the referendum result and subsequent political commitments created a clear mandate for independence by 2027.
- Bougainvillean leaders warn that further delay could cause the peace process to collapse.
- PNG security officials have increased monitoring of maritime traffic and flights into Bougainville.
- Bougainvillean police and local veterans' networks are mobilizing community protection committees.
- Neither side has declared war, but both sides are preparing for escalation.
- ASEAN has called an emergency summit because instability could affect Indonesia, Solomon Islands, Australia, maritime corridors, regional diplomacy, and great-power competition.

5. Core Issues Before the Summit

Issue	Questions for Delegates
Recognition and sovereignty	Should the summit affirm PNG's territorial integrity, Bougainville's right to self-determination, or both? Should any state threaten recognition of Bougainville if PNG blocks the transition?
Mediation	Should ASEAN create a contact group? If so, should it include Indonesia, Australia, Solomon Islands, and neutral ASEAN members? Should China, the United States, and India be included or kept outside the core process?
Security and demilitarization	How can the parties avoid renewed fighting? Should the summit support international monitors, police training, weapons disposal verification, or maritime deconfliction?
Panguna and economic viability	Bougainville's future statehood depends partly on revenue. Should the summit support reopening, remediation, compensation, transparent revenue-sharing, or a moratorium?

Issue	Questions for Delegates
Great-power competition	How can the summit prevent aid, recognition, investment, or security assistance from turning Bougainville into a strategic foothold?
Maritime and humanitarian access	How should delegates protect medical access, food supply, fuel, civil aviation, shipping, and communications if tensions escalate?
Precedent	How can delegates address Bougainville without creating language that other separatist movements or governments interpret as a universal rule?

6. Country Briefs and Starting Positions

The following briefs are starting points for student research and in-committee strategy. Delegates should expand these notes with current foreign-policy research, official statements, and regional context.

Brunei Darussalam

Brunei is a small, wealthy monarchy that prioritizes sovereignty, stability, and quiet diplomacy. It is unlikely to take an aggressive public stance, but it can play a useful role as a low-profile mediator within ASEAN. Brunei will be cautious about endorsing unilateral independence because it values territorial integrity and non-interference. However, it may support humanitarian access, dialogue, and a phased settlement if all parties agree.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
ASEAN unity; peaceful settlement; non-interference; quiet mediation.	Public pressure that fractures ASEAN or appears to violate PNG sovereignty.	Small-state diplomacy; ASEAN consensus politics; monarchy and sovereignty.

Cambodia

Cambodia is likely to emphasize sovereignty, non-interference, and caution toward separatist claims. It may be sympathetic to PNG's argument that constitutional processes must be respected. Cambodia will also be attentive to China's position and may resist language that appears to criticize Chinese involvement in the Pacific. However, Cambodia has an interest in being seen as a constructive ASEAN member and may support a neutral mediation track.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Non-interference; consensus; avoidance of anti-China language; peaceful dialogue.	Recognition of Bougainville without PNG consent.	Cambodia's ASEAN diplomacy; China-Cambodia ties; post-conflict state rebuilding.

Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the most important delegations. It shares the island of New Guinea with PNG and is deeply sensitive to separatist precedent because of issues in Papua and West Papua. Jakarta is likely to oppose any ASEAN statement that appears to legitimize unilateral secession. At the same time, Indonesia does not want violence near its border, refugee flows, arms movement, or instability in Melanesia.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
PNG territorial integrity; border stability; no separatist precedent; ASEAN centrality.	Recognition of Bougainville or language that can be applied to Indonesian Papua.	Indonesia-PNG border; Papua sensitivities; ASEAN leadership role.

Laos

Laos tends to favor quiet diplomacy, sovereignty, and consensus. It is unlikely to lead the debate but could support language emphasizing peace, development, and constitutional process. Laos may avoid direct criticism of PNG, Bougainville, China, or any major power. Its role can be useful in drafting compromise language acceptable to more cautious ASEAN states.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Consensus; neutrality; development support; non-interference.	Coercive measures or recognition without agreement.	Landlocked ASEAN diplomacy; Laos-China ties; small-state neutrality.

Malaysia

Malaysia may seek a middle position: respect PNG's sovereignty while recognizing the political weight of Bougainville's referendum. Malaysia has experience with federalism, autonomy, and regional diplomacy. It may support an ASEAN-led contact group, confidence-building measures, and humanitarian guarantees. Malaysia could be a credible bridge between cautious non-interference states and those favoring stronger mediation.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
ASEAN mediation; peaceful transition framework; balanced language.	Great-power domination of the process or rushed recognition.	Malaysia's federal structure; ASEAN diplomacy; Commonwealth ties.

Myanmar

Myanmar's delegation will be extremely sensitive to issues of separatism, civil conflict, recognition, sanctions, and international intervention. It is likely to strongly oppose recognition of Bougainville without PNG consent. Myanmar may use the debate to defend strict sovereignty and reject external involvement in internal conflicts. Other delegations may be reluctant to give Myanmar a leading role because of its own domestic crisis.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Sovereignty; non-interference; rejection of external pressure.	Any precedent for international recognition of breakaway entities.	Myanmar's internal conflicts; ASEAN's Myanmar dilemma; sovereignty rhetoric.

Philippines

The Philippines may be more open than some ASEAN members to discussing autonomy, peace agreements, and self-determination because of its experience with the Bangsamoro peace process. It will still be cautious about unilateral independence, but it may understand the importance of honoring a negotiated referendum. Manila could support monitors, autonomy-to-independence roadmaps, and conflict-prevention mechanisms.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Peace-process implementation; ASEAN diplomacy; maritime stability; democratic legitimacy.	Armed escalation, forced suppression, or a process that ignores the referendum entirely.	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region; peace agreements; maritime security.

Singapore

Singapore will focus on rules, stability, trade, legal process, and crisis management. It is unlikely to support sudden recognition, but it may push for a credible, rules-based process that prevents violence and reassures investors. Singapore can be a strong drafter of technical language: mediation timelines, legal guarantees, maritime access, and economic transition plans.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Rule of law; peaceful settlement; trade stability; ASEAN credibility.	Disorder, unilateral escalation, or vague commitments without enforcement mechanisms.	Small-state international law; port security; ASEAN economic diplomacy.

Thailand

Thailand may favor a careful, non-confrontational approach. It is likely to support ASEAN consensus, quiet mediation, and avoidance of any statement that corners PNG. Thailand may also be interested in humanitarian assistance and regional stability. It will not want the summit to become a stage for U.S.-China rivalry.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Consensus; neutrality; humanitarian assistance; avoidance of confrontation.	Formal recognition or sanctions that split ASEAN.	Thailand's ASEAN role; conflict mediation; civil-military politics.

Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is the newest member of ASEAN, and it brings a distinct sensibility to the committee, as it was occupied by Indonesia for decades. Timor-Leste remains wary of domination and influence by Indonesia, its much larger neighbor, and is therefore expected to support Bougainville's attempts to become independent. It will look to honor the referendum results, and to bandwagon with Australia, the USA, and other outside powers that share this view.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Support of self-determination as a principle among nations. As a small nation, Timor-Leste must proceed cautiously and seek allies, however.	Papua New Guinea attempting to assert military control and disregarding the referendum settlement.	Timor-Leste's history of occupation by Indonesia; also the West Papua conflict as a historical analog.

Vietnam

Vietnam will likely emphasize sovereignty and territorial integrity, but it also understands the importance of resisting coercion by larger powers. Hanoi may support a peaceful, negotiated outcome that respects the 2019 referendum while avoiding unilateral recognition. Vietnam may be wary of expanding Chinese influence in Bougainville or PNG and could quietly support ASEAN mechanisms that prevent strategic capture.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Sovereignty; anti-coercion; ASEAN centrality; cautious balancing of China.	Chinese-dominated settlement, unilateral secession precedent, or armed conflict.	Vietnam's South China Sea diplomacy; sovereignty doctrine; balancing strategy.

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is Bougainville's closest neighbor and has ethnic, geographic, and maritime proximity to the crisis. It will worry about refugees, arms flows, fishing, border communities, and great-power competition. Solomon Islands may be sympathetic to Bougainvillean identity and self-determination, but it will also avoid directly provoking PNG. Its own relations with China and Australia may shape its diplomacy.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Border stability; humanitarian access; maritime monitoring; avoiding proxy competition.	Militarization near Solomon waters or exclusion from decisions affecting its neighborhood.	Solomon Islands-China security ties; Melanesian diplomacy; Bougainville border communities.

Australia

Australia is one of the most influential external delegations. It has deep historical, security, economic, and aid relationships with PNG and the Pacific. Canberra wants peace, stability, and no strategic vacuum for

China. Australia will not want to openly break with PNG, but it may pressure both PNG and Bougainville to accept a phased, internationally supported settlement. Australia may support police assistance, humanitarian planning, election support, and economic transition packages.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Regional stability; PNG partnership; no renewed war; limiting Chinese influence; humanitarian readiness.	Chinese security foothold, armed conflict, unilateral declaration followed by violence.	Australia-PNG relations; Pacific Step-up; Bougainville peace monitoring history.

China

China will present itself as a supporter of sovereignty, development, infrastructure, and non-interference. Beijing may publicly support PNG's territorial integrity while quietly keeping channels open to Bougainville in case independence becomes inevitable. China may offer investment, mining, ports, roads, telecommunications, and reconstruction assistance. Other delegations may fear that Chinese aid could become strategic leverage.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Non-interference; development access; infrastructure diplomacy; avoiding U.S.-led containment.	Exclusion from reconstruction; language accusing China of destabilization; foreign military bloc formation.	Belt and Road in the Pacific; China-Solomon Islands ties; resource diplomacy.

India

India will seek a visible Indo-Pacific role without appearing neo-imperial or overly aligned with the United States. It may support democratic processes, peaceful settlement, capacity-building, and development assistance. India may also see the crisis as an opportunity to expand ties with ASEAN and Pacific Island states. It will likely oppose coercive changes to the status quo but may be more sympathetic than China to the referendum mandate.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Peaceful transition; rules-based order; development diplomacy; counterbalancing China.	Chinese monopoly over post-crisis infrastructure or security arrangements.	Act East policy; Indo-Pacific strategy; India-Pacific Islands cooperation.

United States

The United States will frame the crisis through democratic legitimacy, conflict prevention, Pacific stability, and strategic competition. Washington may emphasize the 2019 referendum and warn against coercion, but it must also maintain relations with PNG and avoid appearing to force secession. The U.S. may offer observers, development aid, police training, anti-corruption support, and coordination with Australia.

Likely Priorities	Red Lines	Research Starting Points
Peaceful self-determination process; preventing violence; limiting Chinese influence; supporting partners.	Chinese security presence, violent suppression, blockade, or intimidation of Bougainvillean leaders.	U.S. Pacific strategy; island diplomacy; democracy promotion.

7. Negotiating Blocs and Coalition Possibilities

Bloc	Possible Members	Main Orientation
Sovereignty-first bloc	Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and China	Emphasizes territorial integrity, non-interference, constitutional process, and opposition to premature recognition.

Bloc	Possible Members	Main Orientation
Referendum-implementation bloc	Philippines, United States, Timor-Leste	Argues that the 2019 referendum cannot be ignored and that delay risks renewed conflict.
ASEAN-mediation bloc	Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam	Seeks balanced language: no unilateral recognition, no violent suppression, and a structured roadmap.
Pacific-stability bloc	Australia, Solomon Islands, United States	Focuses on humanitarian access, policing, border stability, and avoiding renewed war.
Strategic-competition bloc	China, United States, Australia, India, Vietnam, Solomon Islands	Watches infrastructure, mining, security assistance, ports, telecommunications, and diplomatic recognition.

8. Strategic Options Before the Committee

Option	Description	Advantages	Risks
Option A: Full support for PNG sovereignty	Affirm that Bougainville's final status must be determined only through PNG's constitutional process.	Respects sovereignty and reassures Indonesia and other ASEAN states.	Angers Bougainville, weakens the referendum's legitimacy, and may trigger unilateral action.
Option B: Recognition pathway for Bougainville	Call for a fixed timetable to independence by 2027 and warn that delays may lead to diplomatic recognition.	Honors the referendum and pressures PNG to act.	Risks confrontation with PNG and creates a separatism precedent.
Option C: ASEAN-led mediation contact group	Create a small contact group to mediate between PNG and Bougainville.	Practical and balanced; preserves ASEAN centrality.	PNG may see it as interference; Bougainville may see it as delay.
Option D: Pacific stabilization package	Focus on humanitarian access, policing support, maritime monitoring, and economic assistance without deciding final status.	Reduces risk of violence and may win broad support.	Avoids the core political question.
Option E: Phased independence compact	Recommend a staged transition: ratification, constitutional talks, revenue-sharing, border arrangements, security guarantees, and recognition after benchmarks.	Balances self-determination and stability.	Requires trust, funding, and enforcement.

9. Delegate Preparation Guide

9.1 What delegates should prepare before committee

- A clear opening position on PNG sovereignty and Bougainville's referendum mandate.
- Two or three acceptable final-communique phrases your country could support.
- A list of countries your delegation can work with in caucus.
- One humanitarian proposal and one political proposal.
- A response plan if PNG delays ratification, Bougainville announces a unilateral timetable, or a security incident occurs.

- A realistic understanding of what your country can offer: mediation, aid, recognition, police support, observers, investment, or diplomatic pressure.

9.2 Questions for delegates

1. Does your country prioritize sovereignty, self-determination, ASEAN unity, conflict prevention, or great-power positioning?
2. Would your government recognize Bougainville if PNG blocks independence?
3. Should ASEAN mediate a crisis outside its formal membership?
4. How should the summit handle Indonesia's concern about separatist precedent?
5. Should major powers be included in mediation or kept at arm's length?
6. What role should Australia play, given its history and proximity?
7. How should the future of Panguna be handled?
8. Should economic viability be a condition for independence?
9. What humanitarian protections are needed if tensions escalate?
10. What final communique language could all parties accept?

10. Suggested Final Communique Architecture

Delegates are encouraged to build final products that are specific, realistic, and implementable. A strong final communique or resolution package should include several of the following components:

Component	Possible Content
Political principles	Affirm peaceful settlement, rejection of violence, respect for agreements, and careful acknowledgment of both PNG sovereignty and Bougainville's referendum mandate.
Mediation mechanism	Create an ASEAN-plus contact group with a fixed reporting timeline and direct communication channels to PNG and Bougainville.
Security guarantees	Call for no deployment of offensive forces, no blockade, no intimidation of civilian leaders, and no armed mobilization by non-state groups.
Humanitarian access	Protect ports, airports, hospitals, food shipments, fuel supplies, medical evacuation, and civilian communications.
Economic transition	Create a Bougainville development and remediation fund, with special attention to Panguna, landowners, environmental cleanup, and revenue transparency.
Great-power restraint	Require all external assistance to be transparent, civilian-led, and coordinated through the summit or contact group.
Timeline	Establish a phased roadmap toward final-status resolution before the 2027 deadline, including PNG parliamentary action, Bougainville constitutional planning, and international observer access.

11. Suggested Delegate Deliverables

- Final communique
- ASEAN-plus mediation roadmap
- Bougainville transition compact
- Humanitarian access plan
- Maritime monitoring proposal
- Panguna remediation and development fund

- Non-recognition / recognition framework
- Security deconfliction agreement
- Joint statement to PNG and Bougainville
- Emergency observer mission mandate

12. Source Note and Research Starting Points

This guide is designed for educational simulation use. Delegates should conduct additional research from official government statements, ASEAN documents, regional news sources, and scholarly summaries of the Bougainville peace process.

Topic	Suggested Research Starting Point
Bougainville Peace Agreement	United Nations Peacemaker archive; autonomy, weapons disposal, and referendum framework.
2019 Bougainville referendum	International Foundation for Electoral Systems and Bougainville Referendum Commission summaries; referendum result and implementation context.
ASEAN principles	ASEAN Charter; sovereignty, non-interference, peaceful settlement, and consensus.
PNG-ASEAN relationship	Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs statements on ASEAN observer and ASEAN Regional Forum participation.
Panguna mine and conflict legacy	Recent reporting and human-rights/environmental assessments on Panguna, landowners, and the civil war legacy.
Current political context	Recent reporting from regional outlets such as The Diplomat, ABC, The Guardian, and Pacific-focused news sources on the 2027 transition debate.