

ARISMUN 2020: United Nations General Assembly

Chair & Co-chair: Lois Ayitevie & Anik Mukherjee

INTRODUCTION TO COMMITTEE

Dear delegates, this is the chair report for the General Assembly committee on the topics “International Laws and Regulations for Vaccinations”, and “The Rights of People to Self-Determination” which will be simulated in ARIS’ inaugural Model UN conference.

Model UN is a simulation of the United Nations (UN) that is done at a high school and university level. MUN aims to educate the participants on civics, global issues, it aims to bring people together as a global community where participants can debate, practice public speaking, practice their researching and writing skills.

The General Assembly is one of six principal organs of the United Nations, serving as the prominent deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN. In our debates, try and lobby and merge according to your country’s political beliefs and political standpoint. In our sessions try to reach consensus as much as possible; the General Assembly works with consensus, but in this conference, however, the committee does not need to reach consensus. Nevertheless, it would be great if we could.

Before the conference, it is imperative to investigate the position of the country you will represent on the topic discussed. For that, we recommend that you look at more than media sources that refer to your country’s position, look at official documents passed by your government, past declarations and the International Alliances/Opposition your country may face in the committee.

Having said all this, we wish you all the best. We look forward to chairing you all. Good luck!

Sincerely,

Chair Lois Ayitevie & Co-chair Anik Mukherjee

TOPIC A: INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS FOR VACCINATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The creation and development of vaccines have helped to eradicate various diseases and create immunity for populations. Immunization currently prevents 2-3 million deaths every year. Vaccination has been recognized as one of the Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century, and it is undeniable that vaccination has been extremely vital in the prevention of certain diseases. Vaccinations have been able to prevent a significant number of deaths worldwide; vaccine-preventable diseases are a common cause of child mortality worldwide, and each year. Vaccination coverage for children, especially, is the primary method of prevention of infectious diseases. Several common childhood diseases, including

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smallpox and rinderpest, that were common in the past have now been wiped out. Even now, vaccines have nearly eradicated malaria and polio.

The WHO has so far achieved 85% global vaccination coverage. While the uptake of new and underused vaccines is increasing, there has been no significant change to global vaccination coverage over the last few years, and there are several epidemics that have still Page | 8 not been eradicated after years of effort (Fig 1). The WHO estimates that increasing global immunization coverage could prevent 1.5 million deaths worldwide. Two of the key challenges to increasing global immunization coverage are vaccine provisions in vulnerable areas, such as regions of conflict, and the inept public health systems and living conditions that contribute to this vulnerability to disease outbreaks.

BACKGROUND

Today's vaccines can protect against twenty-six potentially deadly infections. Of these, eleven are considered essential childhood vaccines that should be given according to a defined schedule during routine primary care, starting from infancy and extending into early childhood. Others, such as meningitis and cholera vaccines, are used in high-risk regions to protect people of all ages against outbreak diseases.

More than thirty million children under five suffer from vaccine-preventable diseases every year in Africa. Of these, annually, over half a million children die from these diseases, due to limited access to immunization services and because recurrent vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks persist in many countries. Furthermore, even though since 2000, significant progress has been achieved with nine new antigens successfully introduced into routine immunization programs, WHO estimates that 13 million children worldwide are under-vaccinated as a result of the conflict.

Vaccine policies have played an essential role in diseases prevention. Despite the positive outcome of these policies, there have been recent outbreaks of specific vaccine-preventable diseases. Currently, ignorance and spread of fake news are causing lower immunization coverage increasing the risk of an outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases. False information is spread about the potential side effects of vaccines which instills fear about the alleged adverse effects. Some people have the belief that vaccines cause more harm than good to children who receive them. Opposition to vaccines is not a new phenomenon; it has existed since the initial emergence of vaccines in the 18th century. These objections were mostly against the measles, mumps and rubella(MMR) vaccines. Nevertheless, there has recently been a massive surge in opposition to vaccines in general. Now vaccine hesitancy is a huge problem, and it is encountered globally despite the availability of vaccine services.

Vaccine hesitancy has been reported in more than 90% of countries in the world. There have also been recent trends of parents refusing to get their children vaccinated due to perceived fears concerning vaccines such as a connection development of autism in young children and claims that vaccines are toxic. Anti-vaccination campaigns, which are now on the rise, have detrimental impacts on vaccine uptake levels and inadequate vaccination leads to the spread of infectious diseases. Now there have been several counts of measles outbreaks in

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Western countries where the measles virus was considered eliminated previously. Access to technology has also eased access to medical information online, and this has dramatically affected the healthcare industry.

INTERVENTIONS

Many European countries, as well as others, in an attempt to protect their citizens enforce mandatory vaccinations for certain diseases. In most cases where vaccines are mandatory, they apply only to childhood immunisation. These attempts have helped reduce local outbreaks and mortality associated with vaccine-preventable diseases. Though, this solution may be useful, the question of whether mandatory vaccination laws can be implemented with adherence to fundamental human right laws and ethics rises. Educating parents on vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases could also be an option. Educating parents can significantly help refute common myths associated with vaccines and also give people an in-depth understanding of the purpose and benefit of receiving vaccines.

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

The Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly came up with a global immunization strategy (WHA58.15)

KEY TERMS

1. **Vaccination:** Vaccination is the administration of antigenic material (a vaccine) to stimulate an individual's immune system to develop adaptive immunity to a pathogen. Vaccination can make individuals immune to the disease that the vaccine is specific to.
2. **Immunization:** "Immunization prevents illness, disability and death from vaccine-preventable diseases including cervical cancer, diphtheria, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), pneumonia, polio, rotavirus diarrhoea, rubella and tetanus." (WHO, 2018c)
3. **Herd immunity:** A population's collective resistance to the spread of a contagious disease due to a sufficiently high proportion of individuals in the population being immune to the disease, as can be achieved through the vaccination of a community of people.
4. **Epidemic:** The widespread prevalence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time, often spreading rapidly (e.g. within weeks).
5. **Pandemic:** The prevalence of an infectious disease over a whole country or world at a particular time.
6. **Universal health coverage:** All people receiving quality health services that meet their needs without exposing them to financial hardship in paying for them.

TOPIC B: THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE TO SELF-DETERMINATION

INTRODUCTION

The right to self-determination is the ability of people to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". The right to self-determination is also linked to the process of decolonization - it allows former colonies to govern themselves. Exercise of this right can be done by taking political independence or having full integration within a state.

KEY TERMS

Non-Self-Governing Territory - A Territory whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government.

BACKGROUND

In 1945, when the United Nations was founded at the end of World War II, 750 million people lived in self-governing territories and colonies. Since then, millions of people have declared independence, established their own countries and exercised their right to self-determination.

The right to self-determination is a human right universally recognized by the international community; all nations have the right to self-determination. However, people are not always allowed to exercise this right for various reasons:

- Israel was founded in 1948 after a long struggle for self-determination. However, it has also created a refugee situation for the people of Palestine. Moreover, today, Palestinians are trying to exercise their right to self-determination by creating their state alongside Israel. Additionally, Palestine is trying to become a member of the United Nations, but the United States is stopping its bid for membership.
- The people of Tibet are trying to exercise their right to self-determination by establishing their own country, but the Chinese army occupies them. The leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, is in exile and travels the world to talk about Tibet's self-determination and peaceful resistance.
- The Chechen people are also trying to exercise their right to self-determination by leaving Russia. However, the Russian government does not believe that Chechnya has the right to self-determination, which has led to violence in Chechnya, including the formation of rebel groups and accusations of terrorism.
- Currently, there have been waves of violence in South Africa due to the continued existence of apartheid policies and structures. Because of the high foreign occupancy, the people of South Africa struggle for independence and complete

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liberation from colonial domination. Now terrorist groups have been established, creating conflicts and destabilizing the legitimate governments of South Africa. Additionally, the people of South Africa are facing some violation of human rights as a result of their fight and struggle for self-determination and independence. The apartheid policies which are still held violate the right to self-determination of the black South Africans.

Millions of people around the world are trying to exercise their right to self-determination, but, this threatens the security of other countries and leads to violence. The concept of self-determination is a mighty one. It evokes emotions and fears, which often can stir up conflicts leading to violence and bloodshed. The struggle for self-determination is a powerful force today. Towards the end of World War II, self-determination became popular and was even used as a principle to fight against fascism. Self-determination was transformed from a just principle to the right in the 1960s.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Although the UN and the international community have taken many actions to recognize the right to self-determination and assist former colonies, problems persist that affect millions of people and lead to violence.

There are three areas regarding the struggle for self-determination in which this committee can take action:

- **Question of Palestine:** The struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination has been a controversial issue as old as the UN itself. In 2012, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 67/19 on the "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" and 67/23 on the "Status of Palestine in the United Nations." How can the international community aid Palestinians in their struggle for self-determination – without threatening Israel and the stability of the Middle East? Can Palestine be admitted to the United Nations as a member – even if the United States opposes its membership?
- **Minority Groups:** From Tibet to Chechnya to North America, minority groups around the world struggle for self-determination. They struggle to preserve their cultural identity, to govern themselves, or to declare their independence. Can the international community help minority groups achieve self-determination? Or does this pose a threat to the countries in which these groups reside?
- **Decolonization:** Many former colonies and territories have achieved self-determination and statehood, but they still struggle to govern themselves, often facing instability and insecurity. Can the international community help these countries realize their dreams of self-determination? The right to self-determination is an essential human right that goes straight to the heart of what it means to be a people and what it means to be a state. At the same time, the struggle for this right must be balanced against the national security of states. If a balance is not found, then millions will continue to struggle and face strife and violence.

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RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

General Assembly Resolution : Self determination A/RES/47/82

The United Nations and Decolonization: <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/index.shtml> •

General Assembly Resolutions 67/19 and 67/23

Minority Rights Group – Self-Determination: <http://www.minorityrights.org/2813/themes/>

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