



SRMUN VIRTUAL 2021
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Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to the SRMUN Virtual 2021 and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Plenary. The UNGA is comprised of all 193 Members of the United Nations (UN) which provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues. The UNGA occupies itself as the chief deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the UN. It also plays a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. The overarching mission of the UNGA is to recommend diplomatic and multilateral solutions to issues involving peace and security, human rights, development, international law and justice, and social, economic, and political unrest.

By focusing on the mission of the UNGA, we have developed the following topic for the delegates to discuss at SRMUN Virtual 2021:

I. Improving Equitable Distribution of Vaccines

This background guide provides an introduction to the committee and the topic that will be debated at SRMUN Virtual 2021. It should be utilized as a foundation for a delegate's independent research. However, while we have attempted to provide a holistic analysis of the issues, the background guide should not be used as the single mode of analysis for the topic. Delegates are expected to go beyond the background guide and engage in intellectual inquiry of their own. The position papers for the committee should reflect the complexity of these issues and their externalities. Delegations are expected to submit a position paper and be prepared for a vigorous discussion at the conference.

Position papers should be no longer than one page in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies, and recommendations on the topic. For more detailed information about formatting and how to write position papers, delegates can visit srmun.org. **All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, September 17, 2021, by 11:59pm EST via the SRMUN website in order to be eligible for Outstanding Position Paper Awards.**

We are enthusiastic about SRMUN's newest virtual conference, and we wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to working with you in the near future. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions while preparing for the conference.

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Committee History of the General Assembly Plenary

The United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945 after the end of World War II. Created with a focus on maintaining international peace and security, fostering diplomatic relations, encouraging international cooperation, promoting human rights, and helping Member States to meet these goals.¹ The General Assembly (GA) was established in Article 7 of the UN Charter (1945) along with the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.² The GA is the only portion of the UN that has universal membership making it the most inclusive and open body within the UN.³

Non-Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) can participate in GA sessions with the status of Observer, and these groups do not have voting rights.⁴ The GA aims to pass most of its decisions by consensus but also allows for standard voting. Regular decisions during GA sessions only require a simple majority. In the event of electing Member States to the Security Council or the expulsion of a Member State, then a two-thirds majority is required.⁵

The GA's mandate, outlined in Chapter IV (Articles 10-22) of the UN Charter, is to discuss "any questions or any matters within the scope of the [Charter] or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the [Charter]."⁶ The GA also has the ability to make recommendations to the Security Council and all Member States.⁷ The GA recommends peaceful measures and must seek to protect the general welfare of Member States and promote friendly relations among Member States. Article 13 allows the GA to conduct studies and make recommendations based off the findings to promote "international co-operation in the political field and encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification" in addition to "promoting international co-operation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields, and assisting in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."⁸

The GA is a collection of six Main Committees that are based on the primary fields of responsibility: the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee); the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee).⁹ Each of these committees are assigned to different agendas to work to create and adopt resolutions to then be submitted to the GA Plenary.¹⁰ The GA Plenary can also choose to address issues without referring them to one of the other committees.¹¹ The GA Plenary takes the reports provided by the committees to debate, deliberate, and vote on them.¹² In the GA, all 193 Member States each receive one vote.¹³ Each of the six committees elect a chair, three vice-chairs and a rapporteur.; all Member States are eligible to hold these positions.¹⁴ The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) advises the GA on the organization of conferences within the UN. The department work closely with the Secretary-General to schedule conferences and meetings. The DGACM also works to balance the calendars of all GA bodies and "ensure the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources."¹⁵

¹ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 1.

² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 7.

³ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 9.

⁴ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook*, p. 30.

⁵ New Zealand, *United Nations*, p. 12.

⁶ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 4.

⁷ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 10.

⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 13.

⁹ Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 18.

¹⁰ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2017-2018*, 2017, p. 23.

¹¹ New Zealand, *United Nations*, p. 23.

¹² Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations: The Global Dance*, 2006, p. 161; Switzerland, *The PGA Handbook: A practical guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2011, p. 62.

¹³ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 18.

¹⁴ New Zealand, *United Nations*, p. 23.

¹⁵ "Mandate | Department for General Assembly and Conference Management." *United Nations*, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/coc/mandate>.

The GA's regular session is scheduled each year on the Tuesday of the third week of September.¹⁶ General debate is normally the beginning of the session and lasts seven to nine days.¹⁷ Debate is centered around a theme chosen by the President-elect of the GA and the Secretary-General.¹⁸ The theme of the 75th session of the GA is "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism - confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action."¹⁹ Other than the yearly session, the GA can also call for special or emergency special sessions.²⁰ Special sessions are called upon by the Secretary-General at the request of either the Security Council or a majority of the members of the UN.²¹ The last special session that convened was in December 2020, and it was requested by a majority of Member States to address COVID-19.²² An emergency special session can be convened within 24 hours and called on by any seven members of the Security Council, or by a majority of the members of the UN when the Security Council "fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security..."²³ The last emergency special session to convene was June 13, 2018, to address the draft resolution, "Protection of the Palestinian Civilian Population."²⁴ The session ultimately adopted the draft resolution to "[deplore] the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory..."²⁵

Maintaining the priorities outlined in the Decade of Action, while also keeping in mind the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the UN's goals, the Declaration for the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the UN was passed.²⁶ In this document, the GA addressed diverse issues from the effects of climate change on developing Member States, ongoing armed conflicts, to increasing youth participation and development, and fully addressing the current COVID-19 pandemic, among others.²⁷ Other actions taken by the GA include the first Summit on Biodiversity.²⁸ At the summit, 150 Member States participated in the dialogue on biodiversity.²⁹ More than 150 Member States also participated in the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.³⁰ Through this event, Member States discussed actions to empower women and girls.³¹

¹⁶ UN DPI, *Basic Facts about the United Nations: 42nd Edition*, 2017.

¹⁷ "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) | General Assembly of the United Nations," *United Nations*, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://gadebate.un.org/en/faq>

¹⁸ "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) | General Assembly of the United Nations," *United Nations*.

¹⁹ Bozkir, Volkan, "Letter on the Theme of the General Debate for UNGA75," August 8, 2020. Letter. *United Nations*. Accessed February 1, 2021. <https://www.un.org/pga/74/2020/08/10/theme-for-the-general-debate-of-the-75th-session/>

²⁰ *Basic Facts about the United Nations: 42nd Edition*, New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2017.

²¹ "Special Sessions," *United Nations*, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/special.shtml>.

²² United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/4, *Special Session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic*, A/RES/75/4, (November 9, 2020), <https://undocs.org/a/res/75/4>.

²³ "Emergency Special Sessions," *United Nations*, accessed February 21, 2021,

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml>.

²⁴ "Tenth Emergency Special Session," *United Nations*, accessed February 1, 2021,

<https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency10th.shtml>.

²⁵ UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts Resolution on Protecting Palestinian Civilians Following Rejection of United States Amendment to Condemn Hamas Rocket Fire*, 2018.

²⁶ "Declaration on the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations," October 20, 2020, *United Nations*,

<https://www.un.org/en/un75/commemoration#:~:text=Titled%20E2%80%9CDeclaration%20on%20the%20commemoration,centre%20build%20trust%20improve%20digital>.

²⁷ "Declaration on the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations," *United Nations*.

²⁸ "United Nations Summit on Biodiversity," *United Nations*, accessed February 1, 2021.

<https://www.un.org/pga/75/united-nations-summit>

[obiodiversity/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Summit%20on%20Biodiversity%20will%20be%20convened%20by,with%20and%20depend%20on%20biodiversity](https://www.un.org/pga/75/united-nations-summit-obiodiversity/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Summit%20on%20Biodiversity%20will%20be%20convened%20by,with%20and%20depend%20on%20biodiversity)

²⁹ "United Nations Summit on Biodiversity." *United Nations*. Accessed February 1, 2021.

[https://www.un.org/pga/75/united-nations-summit-](https://www.un.org/pga/75/united-nations-summit-obiodiversity/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Summit%20on%20Biodiversity%20will%20be%20convened%20by,with%20and%20depend%20on%20biodiversity)

[obiodiversity/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Summit%20on%20Biodiversity%20will%20be%20convened%20by,with%20and%20depend%20on%20biodiversity](https://www.un.org/pga/75/united-nations-summit-obiodiversity/#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Summit%20on%20Biodiversity%20will%20be%20convened%20by,with%20and%20depend%20on%20biodiversity)

³⁰ "UNGA High-level Meeting to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Beijing Women's Conference." *IISD*, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/unga-high-level-meeting-to-celebrate-25th-anniversary-of-beijing-womens-conference/>.

³¹ "UNGA High-level Meeting to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Beijing Women's Conference." *IISD*.

Looking to the future, the President of the GA, Volkan Bozkir, launched an initiative titled #Vaccines4All, to “support multilateral efforts to achieve fair and equitable access to [COVID-19] vaccines.”³² The GA President shared his vision, stating, “The world is facing pressing problems...COVID-19 has shown us more clearly than ever that countries cannot address these challenges on their own. Global problems require global solutions, and that is why we need to recommit to multilateralism...”³³ Most recently, the GA has requested for a special session beginning June 2, 2021.³⁴ The session will address the “Challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation.”³⁵ The 2021 Parliamentary Hearing of the GA will support the special session by focusing on corruption and international cooperation.³⁶

³² Bozkir, Volkan. “Briefing to the General Assembly on Priorities.” January 21, 2021. *United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/pga/75/2021/01/21/briefing-to-the-general-assembly-on-priorities/>

³³ “PGA 75,” *United Nations*, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/pga/75/>.

³⁴ “Special Sessions.” *United Nations*, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/special.shtml>.

³⁵ “Special Sessions.” *United Nations*.

³⁶ “Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations.” *IPU*, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.ipu.org/event/annual-parliamentary-hearing-united-nations-1>.

I. Improving Equitable Distribution of Vaccines

“Vaccines are only effective if enough people get them. We are only as safe as the most vulnerable among us.” -Volkan Bozkir, President of the United Nations General Assembly³⁷

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 2-3 million lives each year have been saved due to vaccines.³⁸ The number of cases of disease like polio, measles, chicken pox, and smallpox have fallen dramatically as access to these vaccines have increased, largely through efforts by the WHO, the United Nations Children’s Fund, (UNICEF), and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).³⁹ The UNGA reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring equitable access to vaccines with the passing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁴⁰ SDG 3, focused on Good Health and Well-being, specifically lists a number of targets relating to vaccinations including the eradication of a number of communicable diseases like Hepatitis B with one of the indicators being “Proportion of the population with access to affordable medicines and vaccines on a sustainable basis.”⁴¹

Unfortunately, there continues to be a large vaccination disparity among developed and developing Member States, with the latter still experiencing outbreaks of diseases the former has essentially eradicated.⁴² Member States who are experiencing armed conflict or humanitarian disasters are seeing a lower vaccination rate and thus a higher infection rate when it comes to communicable diseases.⁴³ In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to the fall in vaccination rates over the last year. In 2020, over 23 million children, primarily from low-income Member States, missed a routine vaccination.⁴⁴

History

Prior to the advent of vaccines, millions of people, particularly children, died from preventable diseases each year.⁴⁵ Vaccines contain a small amount of a specific bacteria or virus that the vaccine is designed to inoculate against.⁴⁶ Once introduced into the body, the immune system begins its response, creating antibodies and quickly fighting off the foreign bacteria or virus, often without the individual experiencing significant symptoms.⁴⁷ The immune system then “remembers” the bacteria or virus so that if the individual is exposed in the future, the immune system quickly identifies the disease and attacks it quickly so that the infection is unable to develop.⁴⁸ Some diseases require just

³⁷ “#Vaccines4All,” *United Nations General Assembly*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.un.org/pga/75/vaccines4all/>

³⁸ Samantha Vanderslott, Bernadete Dadonaite, and Max Roser, “Vaccinations,” *Our World in Data*, last modified December 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/vaccination>

³⁹ “Immunization,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/immunization>

⁴⁰ “Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages,” *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Sustainable Development*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

⁴¹ “Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages,” *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*.

⁴² “Immunization,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*.

⁴³ “Immunization and Conflict,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/immunization-and-conflict>

⁴⁴ “COVID-19 Pandemic Leads to Major Backsliding on Childhood Vaccinations, New WHO, UNICEF Data Shows,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*, July 15, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/covid-19-pandemic-leads-major-backsliding-childhood-vaccinations-new-who-unicef-data>

⁴⁵ “Why are Childhood Vaccines so Important?” *Center for Disease Control*, last modified May 16, 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/howvpd.htm>

⁴⁶ “COVID-19 Pandemic Leads to Major Backsliding,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*.

⁴⁷ “How Vaccines Work,” *British Society for Immunology*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.immunology.org/celebrate-vaccines/public-engagement/guide-childhood-vaccinations/how-vaccines-work>

⁴⁸ “How Vaccines Work” *British Society for Immunology*.

one round of vaccines and others require multiple rounds or boosters.⁴⁹ Most vaccines are administered the infants and young children, since the fatality rate for many of these diseases are higher for children under five.⁵⁰

The first disease to be completely eradicated by vaccines was smallpox.⁵¹ Those infected with smallpox experienced high fevers, vomiting, fatigue, and an identifiable rash.⁵² There was no cure for smallpox, which resulted in patients dying in up to 30 percent of cases.⁵³ Some of those who survived were left with permanent scars and sometimes blindness.⁵⁴ In the 20th century alone, smallpox claimed the lives of over 300 million people.⁵⁵ Despite its high mortality rate, medical professionals observed that once a person contracted and recovered from the smallpox infection, they would be immune from future infections.⁵⁶ In 1796, British physician Edward Jenner created a vaccine for Small Pox, paving the way for the first inoculations against childhood diseases.⁵⁷

By the mid 20th century, there was a stark inequity in the vaccination efforts in the global North and the global South. Member States in North America and Europe were seeing high vaccination rates and thus low infection rates.⁵⁸ For example, the last documented case of smallpox in the United States (US) was in 1949 and smallpox was deemed eradicated in Europe by 1953.⁵⁹ In 1959, the WHO began looking for a way to completely eradicate smallpox at the global level.⁶⁰ By 1967, the WHO launched the Intensified Eradication Program (IEP), which sought to increase production and distribution of the smallpox vaccine in South America, Africa, and Asia.⁶¹ While the WHO initially began with a mass vaccination effort, it later switched the ring vaccination method as a way to eradicate the disease.⁶² The ring vaccination method focused vaccination efforts were targeted at the local level, in areas experiencing spikes in small pox infections, instead of trying to vaccinate as many people as possible.⁶³ Those individuals who were exposed were quarantined and vaccinated.⁶⁴ This proved to be a more cost effective path towards eradication.⁶⁵ The last reported case of smallpox was in 1977 and in 1980, and the WHO declared that smallpox had been eradicated, becoming the first communicable disease to receive this proclamation.⁶⁶ It is estimated that over 200 million lives have been saved since its eradication.⁶⁷

Since smallpox has been formally eradicated, there are presently 15 childhood diseases that can be made preventable through vaccines: Diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae type b, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Influenza, Measles, Meningococcal, Mumps, Pertussis, Pneumococcal disease, polio, Rotavirus, Rubella, Tetanus, and Chicken Pox.⁶⁸ Vaccinations begin being administered in infancy, where children are at a greater risk for infections since their

⁴⁹ “Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Herd Immunity, Lockdowns, and COVID-19,” *World Health Organization*, December 31, 2020 <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/herd-immunity-lockdowns-and-covid-19>

⁵⁰ Max Roser and Hanna Ritchie, “Burden of Disease,” *Our World in Data*, last accessed July 31, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/burden-of-disease>

⁵¹ “Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/smallpox>

⁵² “Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*.

⁵³ “Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*.

⁵⁴ “Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*.

⁵⁵ “Commemorating Smallpox Eradication – A Legacy of hope, for COVID 19 and Other Diseases,” *World Health Organization*, May 8, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news/item/08-05-2020-commemorating-smallpox-eradication-a-legacy-of-hope-for-covid-19-and-other-diseases>

⁵⁶ Sophie Ochmann and Max Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/smallpox#smallpox-disease-transmission-symptoms>

⁵⁷ Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁵⁸ William H. Schneider, “Smallpox in Africa During Colonial Rule” *Medical History* vol. 53(2) (April 2009), 193-227, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2668906/>

⁵⁹ “History of Small Pox” *Center for Disease Control*, last modified February 20, 2021 <https://www.cdc.gov/smallpox/history/history.html>

⁶⁰ Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁶¹ Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁶² Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁶³ Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁶⁴ Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁶⁵ Ochmann and Roser, “Smallpox,” *Our World in Data*.

⁶⁶ “Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*, accessed July 31, 2021, https://www.who.int/health-topics/smallpox#tab=tab_1

⁶⁷ “Smallpox,” *World Health Organization*.

⁶⁸ Beth Jarosz and Reshma Naik, “Progress Stalls on Vaccine-Preventable Diseases” *Population Reference Bureau*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.prb.org/resources/progress-stalls-on-vaccine-preventable-diseases/>

immune systems have not fully developed.⁶⁹ Around 30 percent of deaths among children under the age of five are attributed to vaccine preventable diseases each year.⁷⁰

Actions Taken by the UN

After the success of the smallpox eradication effort, the international community shifted its focus towards eliminating other devastating childhood diseases. Following the 1990 World Summit for Children, and consultation with WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UNGA passed A/RES/45/625, which included immunization targets, including the goals of global eradication of polio and to achieve global immunization coverage of at least 90 percent of children under one, both by the year 2000.⁷¹ As a result, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) was founded as a public-private partnership among UNICEF, WHO, Rotary International, and a number of national governments.⁷² GPEI has worked in numerous Member States delivering and administering vaccines to the world's most vulnerable populations, with the goal of complete eradication for the polio virus.⁷³ Presently, polio has been eradicated in 170 Member States and the global immunization coverage is around 82 percent.⁷⁴

In May 2005, the World Health Assembly (WHA), the governing body of WHO, passed WHA58.15, which was a Global Immunization Strategy.⁷⁵ This strategy urged Member States to adopt immunization targets previously adopted by the UNGA in A/45/625.⁷⁶ Further, this Global Immunization Strategy specifically called for increased partnerships among UN bodies like UNICEF, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and developing Member States in order to ensure vaccines were reaching the most vulnerable populations.⁷⁷

In September 2018, UNICEF released the “UNICEF Vaccination Roadmap 2018-2030.”⁷⁸ In this document, UNICEF once again reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating vaccine-preventable diseases and increasing equitable distribution of those vaccines to the most vulnerable populations.⁷⁹ It estimated that around 19.4 million children were either unvaccinated or undervaccinated in the year 2018.⁸⁰ The Roadmap also introduced the method of using immunization coverage as an indicator of child equity, since many undervaccinated and unvaccinated children are clustered in conflict zones, remote rural communities, and urban slums.⁸¹

Current Situation

⁶⁹ “Making the Vaccine Decision: Addressing Common Concerns,” *Center for Disease Control*, last revised August 5, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/why-vaccinate/vaccine-decision.html>

⁷⁰ “UNICEF Vaccination Road Map 2018-2030,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*, September 2018, https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/UNICEF_Immunization_Roadmap_2018.pdf

⁷¹ United Nations General Assembly Agenda Item 151, *World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children in the 1990s*, A/45/625, September 30, 1990, <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/4115943.01462173.html>

⁷² “Who We Are,” *Global Polio Eradication Initiative*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://polioeradication.org/who-we-are/>

⁷³ “Who We Are,” *Global Polio Eradication Initiative*.

⁷⁴ “Polio Free Countries,” *Global Polio Eradication Initiative*, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://polioeradication.org/where-we-work/polio-free-countries/>

⁷⁵ World Health Assembly resolution 58.15, *Global Immunization Strategy*, May 25, 2005 http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/20365/WHA58_15-en.pdf;jsessionid=F636359CCBCD094836A51FC34F6496F9?sequence=1

⁷⁶ World Health Assembly resolution 58.15, *Global Immunization Strategy*.

⁷⁷ World Health Assembly resolution 58.15, *Global Immunization Strategy*.

⁷⁸ “UNICEF Vaccination Road Map 2018-2030,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*, September 2018, https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/UNICEF_Immunization_Roadmap_2018.pdf

⁷⁹ “UNICEF Vaccination Road Map 2018-2030,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*

⁸⁰ “UNICEF Vaccination Road Map 2018-2030,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*

⁸¹ “UNICEF Vaccination Road Map 2018-2030,” *United Nations Children’s Fund*

On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, a global pandemic.⁸² To date, there have been almost 200 million known cases of COVID resulting in over four million deaths.⁸³ The virus is constantly evolving, with the Delta variant proving to be highly transmissible, in some cases even among vaccinated persons.⁸⁴ As of July 2021, the Delta variant was present in at least 132 Member States.⁸⁵ The WHO reported that the majority of new COVID cases, even those involving the Delta variant, are among unvaccinated populations.⁸⁶

While over four billion COVID vaccine doses have been administered worldwide, those doses have been heavily concentrated in wealthier, developed Member States. For example, the continent of Africa, which accounts for around 18 percent of the world's population, as only administered two percent of global vaccinations, with some Member States not yet having access to any vaccinations whatsoever.⁸⁷ According to the New York Times, "84 percent of shots that have gone into arms worldwide have been administered to high and upper-middle-income countries. Only 0.3 percent of doses have been administered in low-income countries."⁸⁸ The WHO has set a goal of getting every Member State to at least 10 percent vaccination rate by the end of September 2021, though current trends show that over two-thirds of African Member States are not on track to reach that target due to armed conflict, humanitarian disasters, and difficulty reaching rural communities.⁸⁹

In November 2020, UNGA President Volkan Bozkir announced the #Vaccines4All initiative which called upon Member States to work together to ensure equitable distributions of COVID vaccines.⁹⁰ The UNGA promised to keep COVID vaccines at the forefront of its agenda during the 75th Session.⁹¹ Additionally, the UN Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted S/RES/2565 which urged cooperation between Member States, the UN and in conjunction with the COFAX facility in order to "facilitate equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines in armed conflict situations, post-conflict situations, and complex humanitarian emergencies."⁹² Further, the UNSC called for unhindered humanitarian access to those areas in order to distribute COVID vaccinations to vulnerable populations.⁹³

Additionally, the pandemic, as well as ongoing armed conflict, has disrupted other routine vaccination efforts. In the year 2020 alone, over 23 million children missed vaccinations, the highest number since 2009.⁹⁴ Because of the COVID-19 lockdowns, the WHO ordered that all polio vaccination campaigns be temporarily stopped in order to prevent door-to-door spread of COVID-19.⁹⁵ The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which works in conjunction with the WHO, reported there were 1,226 cases of polio recorded in 2020, an almost 800 percent increase as compared to 2018.⁹⁶ Most of these new cases are vaccine-derived polio, which is caused by small portions of earlier versions of the virus, that are present in the oral polio vaccine.⁹⁷ This vaccine version of the virus can be spread

⁸² "WHO Director-General's Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19", *World Health Organization*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

⁸³ "WHO Coronavirus Dashboard," *World Health Organization*, last modified July 30, 2021, <https://covid19.who.int/>

⁸⁴ Amarjeet Singh, "Delta Variant, a Warning the COVID-19 Virus is Getting 'Fitter and Faster,'" *United Nations News*, July 30, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096792>

⁸⁵ Singh, "Delta Variant," *United Nations News*.

⁸⁶ Singh, "Delta Variant," *United Nations News*.

⁸⁷ Rodney Muhumuza and Farai Mutsaka, "In Poorest Countries, Surges Worsen Shortages of Vaccines," *Associated Press*, June 17, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/africa-coronavirus-pandemic-health-a4e722e082aa06a2c25f59f24b0a8eaf>

⁸⁸ Josh Holder, "Tracking Coronavirus Vaccinations Around the World," *The New York Times*, July 30, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-vaccinations-tracker.html>

⁸⁹ Singh, "Delta Variant," *United Nations News*.

⁹⁰ "#Vaccines4All," *United Nations General Assembly*, accessed July 31, 2021 <https://www.un.org/pga/75/vaccines4all/>

⁹¹ "#Vaccines4All," *United Nations General Assembly*.

⁹² United Nations Security Council resolution 2565, *Resolution 2565 (2021) / adopted by the Security Council on 26 February 2021, S/RES/2565*, February 26, 2021,

[https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%2FRES%2F2565\(2021\)&Language=O&DeviceType=Desktop](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%2FRES%2F2565(2021)&Language=O&DeviceType=Desktop)

⁹³ United Nations Security Council resolution 2565.

⁹⁴ Jason Beaubien, "The Campaign to Wipe Out Polio Was Going Really Well...Until it Wasn't" *National Public Radio*, October 30, 2020, accessed July 31, 2020 <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/10/30/929080692/the-campaign-to-wipe-out-polio-was-going-really-well-until-it-wasnt>

⁹⁵ Beaubien, "The Campaign to Wipe Out,"

⁹⁶ Beaubien, "The Campaign to Wipe Out,"

⁹⁷ Beaubien, "The Campaign to Wipe Out,"

through feces and wastewater and if given enough time and space to spread, can become just as infectious as the “wild” version of polio.⁹⁸ Due to improvements in the modern polio vaccine, children vaccinated after 2016 do not have immunity against vaccine-derived polio.⁹⁹

Conclusion

It is estimated that upwards of five million lives are saved each year due to vaccination efforts. In 1980, the world officially eradicated smallpox, which had been one of the deadliest childhood diseases for centuries. The international community has proven that it has the ability drive the eradication of other communicable diseases, like polio, as long as the partnerships and cooperation among Member States and NGOs is strong. Because infectious diseases can spread quickly, it is imperative that the international community stay on top of vaccinations to curb the spread of these diseases.

The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the slowing of routine vaccinations for children, almost exclusively in developing Member States, leaving millions of children vulnerable to preventable diseases. Additionally, accessibility to COVID-19 vaccines in the developing world has been difficulty, with the overwhelming majority of administered vaccinations occurring in North America, Europe, and in Member States with high Gross Domestic Product(GDP) like China, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. This stark disparity cannot be ignored and must be addressed quickly by the international community.

Committee Directive

COVID-19 is presently the most pressing public health threat facing the international community. While vaccines are available and effective, there is a large disparity in vaccination rates between developed and developing Member States. Delegates should consider innovative ways to increase vaccine distribution and to specifically reach those populations who are struggling to access COVID vaccines. Additionally, because most of the UN’s past vaccination campaigns have been focused on young children, delegates should be mindful of tactics that could be used to target adult populations when it comes to COVID vaccines. COVID-19, along with prolonged conflict and humanitarian disasters, has also disrupted routine vaccination efforts for diseases such as polio, measles, and other communicable diseases, leaving millions of the world’s most vulnerable children unvaccinated. Delegates should be thinking of solutions to resume child vaccination campaigns while also being mindful of the difficulties that come with navigating a post-COVID-19 world.

⁹⁸ Beaubin, “The Campaign to Wipe Out,”

⁹⁹ Beaubin, “The Campaign to Wipe Out,”