# United Nations General Assembly

### Agenda 1: Addressing Crisis Management of Global Public Health Risks

#### Background Information:

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines public health as “the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society”. As such public health risks are diseases, epidemics and outbreaks that threaten the health and safety of people and nations (WHO, 2020). Since early civilization, pandemics, epidemics and outbreaks of diseases have led to substantial loss of life and suffering. These include, historically, cholera, influenza, polio, the bubonic plague, the pneumonic plague and many others. With the dawn of the 21st century, and the technological globalization that came with it,these issues began to pose a substantially larger threat, as viruses and diseases spread easily across borders, countries and continents.

As technology developed, and international travel and immigration became more common, the threat posed to individuals by unmanaged public health risks became increasingly pervasive. The late 20th and 21st century bore witness to several public health crises including;

* Ebola
* SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak
* Cholera
* H1N1 influenza virus
* MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome)
* Zika virus
* HIV and AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)
* Wuhan Coronavirus (COVID-19)
* Avian Influenza
* Dengue Fever, Malaria, Typhoid

(Healthline, 2018; World Atlas, 2018)

The above epidemics, pandemics and outbreaks, as well as many more that are not listed, resulted in extreme loss of life and economic and financial repercussions. During the 2002 outbreak SARS led to 8098 cases of infected individuals, with over 770 deaths registered across 37 countries. The 2016 Yemeni cholera outbreak resulted in 1.4 million cases in only 3 years, and the Ebola virus caused global panic along with over 28,600 cases and 11, 325 deaths (World Atlas 2018, CDC 2016). Perhaps the most prominent public health threat to society is HIV and AIDS, with 75 million reported cases since the emergence of the virus, and 32 million deaths. At the end of 2018 37.9 million individuals were living with the incurable disease (WHO, 2020).

The recent Wuhan Coronavirus outbreak has become one of the deadliest respiratory outbreaks in modern history, and the WHO recently called a global health emergency. The virus has infected over 80 000 people, including citizens from Japan, Korea the USA and many more. The virus has also resulted in the deaths of 2, 707 infected individuals, and has spread to more than 30 countries (Aljazeera, 2020; worldometers, 2020). As a result of the delays to production within China and the subsequent global market uncertainty, stocks have dropped to worryingly low levels, and many manufacturing industries are undergoing economic stress.

Pandemics, epidemics and outbreaks are not the only public health crises that face the global community. The rise current leading causes of death in the world are blood pressure, tobacco use, high blood glucose levels and obesity (WHO, 2009). These diseases, including cancers, are referred to as NCDs (Non Communicable Diseases). NCDs could be exacerbated by environmental factors like air pollution, as well as by a lack of public health knowledge and education. Less economically developed countries (LEDC’s) also face high infant mortality rates due to malnutrition and lack of access to water and sanitation. All of these factors contribute to global and national public health (WHO, 2009).

Communicable public health risks are currently contained through strict quarantine policies, travel bans, school closures and mandatory health check ups, and many governments have enacted internal policy to address NCDs. Many public health risks including outbreaks, disproportionately affect developing countries and rural areas, where medical infrastructure is not properly developed, and medical resources are scarce. Limited access to lifesaving treatments, cures or vaccines results in increased communication of the disease and higher mortality rates. The effects of these issues are also felt strongly by impoverished demographics who lack access to affordable healthcare.

#### UN Involvement

* April 7th 1948- UN establishes the *World Health Organization*
* 1950 WHO begins programme advising nations on antibiotics
* 1988- *The Global Polio Eradication Initiative*
* 1995- *The strategy for reducing the toll of tuberculosis (TB)* islaunched

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* 2001 - *The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria* is launched

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* 2012 - WHO member states set targets to decrease heart disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic lung disease and other NCDs
* 2014 - WHO launches unprecedented response to outbreak, deploying thousands of medical professionals and aid
* 2015- adoption of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), specifically article 3 [“Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Wellbeing for All at All Ages”](https://www.who.int/sdg/targets/en/)
* 2019- UN adopts draft resolution *Global health and foreign policy: an inclusive approach to strengthening health systems” (document A/74/L.26)* to encourage member states to move towards universal access healthcare

#### Key Terms

* Epidemic
* Pandemic
* Outbreak
* Public health
* Virus
* Universal Health Care
* Containment

#### Guiding Questions

1. What public health risks has your country faced before? How were they addressed?
2. What public health risks is your country currently facing?
3. How can global communities work together to reduce the spread of diseases internationally?
4. How can the global community limit the impact of public health risks on people and economies?
5. What healthcare infrastructure does your country have in place? Does your country need aid to improve their healthcare systems?
6. How can the global community, or your country itself, prevent a public health crisis from arising?

#### Suggested Resources

1. <https://www.who.int/>
2. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/people/health.html>
3. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/threats-and-outbreaks/by-disease-and-country>

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*Coronavirus: Which countries have confirmed cases?* (2020). Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/countries-confirmed-cases-coronavirus-200125070959786.html (Accessed: 25 February 2020).

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### Agenda 2: Eliminating the Use of Judicial Corporal Punishment in UN Member States

#### Background Information

Corporal punishment is the infliction of physical pain or bodily harm as punishement. Judicial corporal punishment specifies that this punishment is systemic and mandated by the state, it is not the indivisual choice of a school or home (Thought Co, 2019; Britannica, 2020) Judicial corporal punishment is specifically a response to criminal behaviour (Britannica, 2020).

Corporal punishment includes, but is not limited to flogging, beating, lashing, whipping etc. The banner of corporal punishemnt can also include the issue of capital punishment (the death penalty), as well as torture. Many Western countries do not condone judicial corporal punishment in it’s traditional sense, although some still use capital punishment. States that strictly observe Islamic Sharia law still allow whippings, amputations and other forms of corporal punishment (Law, 2020; Guardian 2002). The United Nations has recommended the abolition of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment under article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Law, 2020).

Judicial corporal punishment has been posed as a solution to mass incarceration and prison overcrowding in some developed countries (Arafa and Burns, 2016). For Islamic countries that observe Sharia Law, it can be considered and integral aspects of religious and national ideology. Physical corporal punishment in schools is currently outlawed by 128 countries, it is legal in some circumstances in Australia, South Korea, the USA (where it is legal in 19 states) (ThoughtCo, 2019). Globally, 51 countries have banned corporal punishment in all forms (UN Tribune,

#### United Nations Involvement

* Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
  + Article 5: *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*
* 1955 - adopts “Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners”
* 1975 - Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
* 1984 - UN adopts Convention Against Torture And Other Cruel, Inhuman Or Degrading Treatment Or Punishment
* 1998- Rome statute of The International Criminal Court
  + Article 7 - The systematic or widespread practice of torture and “[o]ther inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health” constitute crimes against humanity.
* .2005- Interim report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
* Both the Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture have called for the abolition of judicial corporal punishment

#### Suggested resources

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet4rev.1en.pdf>

<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/43f30fb40.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-27307249>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-corporal-punishment-4689963>

#### Guiding questions

1. Does your country use judicial corporal punishment? Why?
2. Did your country use judicial corporal punishment in the past? What has changed?
3. Does your country believe that the UN has the right to influence internal corporal punishment legislation?
4. Has your country signed and ratified any agreements against corporal punishment?
5. Does your country have the death penalty?
6. Does your country use torture?
7. How can the global community eliminate corporal and capital punishment from judicial systems?

#### Key terms to research

* Capital punishment
* Legislation
* Judicial system
* Corporal punishment
* Flogging, whipping, caning
* Sharia law
* Degrading
* Torture

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