



Forum:	3 rd Committee of the General Assembly
Issue:	Controlling the spread of infectious diseases on a global scale
Student Officer:	Nahum Negash
Position:	Main Chair

Description of the issue:

Infectious diseases have been a plaguing cause disrupting the standards of living in terms of the wellbeing of our society on the one hand, and, more severely, claiming the lives of innocent people on the other hand. The world's population experienced global scale viruses as early as the 6th century and is living through one right now, which is known as the COVID-19 pandemic.

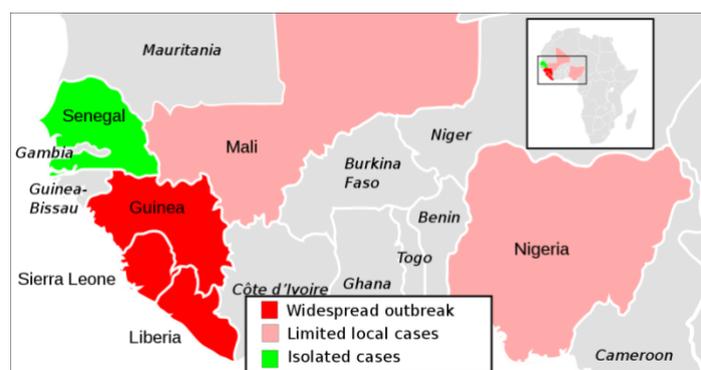
The spread of viruses is being accelerated by various aspects such as, but not limited to, the ongoing and broadening globalization or poverty. Therefore it is the UN's duty to secure health as well as livelihood through means that control and, further, prevent any more infectious diseases from spreading globally.

Background information:

As already mentioned, wide spreading infectious diseases have been prevalent for centuries. The Plague of Justinian (6th century) was the first recorded instance for the so-called bubonic plague. The epidemic, which rapidly turned into a pandemic, claimed the lives of an estimated 25-50 million people. This happened due to the immense trading in the Byzantine Empire as well as the Sassanian Empire.

The second bubonic plague pandemic, also named the infamous Black Death, hit Europe in 1347 and killed a third of the European population. To this day, it is still remembered as the deadliest pandemic in human history.

The West African Ebola epidemic of 2014 was feared all over the world, due to the fact that once infected with the virus, death was often imminent, since Ebola was hardly curable. Even though the virus was carried to other countries the cases remained limited. E.g. in the US nine people were infected with Ebola, two of which died. In West Africa however, a total of 28,646





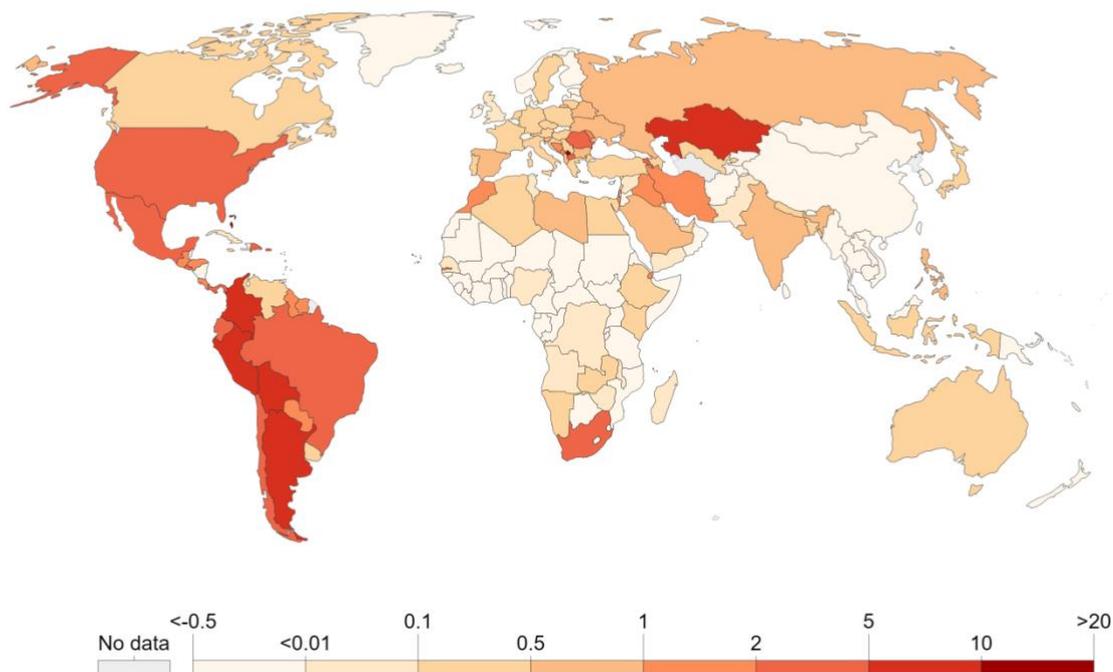
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cases and 11,310 deaths were reported. This can be linked to the fact that LEDCs lack proper healthcare, which is a detrimental cause in such scenarios.

The coronavirus pandemic broke out in Wuhan, a province in China, in late 2019 and found its way to the Western world in early 2020, causing almost every government to impose a lockdown on their country as a means to prevent the virus from spreading any further. As for this virus, there is still no vaccine that can secure immunity against it, which means, once infected with COVID-19, patients can only hope for a mild course of the disease. The severity of the illness seems – among other aspects – to depend on the immune system of a person. People with a weakened immune system are more likely to die from the symptoms the virus is causing. Worldwide, around 23,000,000 people have been infected with COVID-19, with 14,700,000 patients having recovered, and about 779,000 people dead.

Daily confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people, Aug 22, 2020

Limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death means that the number of confirmed deaths may not be an accurate count of the true number of deaths from COVID-19.



Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 22 August, 13:04 (London time) OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

The chart shows that the most affected countries can be found in the Americas, especially in South America. Confirmed cases in that continent surge, due to poor healthcare systems and vast economical inequalities. Also heavily affected by the Coronavirus pandemic is the Republic of Kazakhstan.



As observed during an infectious disease pandemic, communicable diseases are not limited to the borders of a country. The following key factors explain how our modern way of life can contribute to the spread of infectious diseases all around the world:

Globalization:

Urban environments have always acted as the chief breeding places for diseases and epidemics. The development of road and transport infrastructure as well as the ease of intercontinental travel with cruise liners or airplanes has greatly contributed to the transmission of infectious diseases as more and more people find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings making contact with new and heretofore unknown microbial habitats. The “swine flu” epidemic of 2009 with 30 countries being affected within 6 weeks and over 190 countries and other areas reporting cases over the course of a few months is a case in point. Salmonella and E.coli bacteria also spread more easily due to the globalization of food supply.

Climate change:

Experts believe that global warming can be a contributing factor to the transmission of epidemics. In 1993, the United States witnessed the outbreak of the Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, a lung infection caused by viruses found in the saliva. Similarly, increases in temperature and high rainfall rates can be instrumental to such outbreaks since they facilitate the increased fertility of insects and other vectors carrying diseases.

Poverty, migration and war:

The incidence of highly infectious diseases is higher in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) where the population is facing inadequate availability of clean water, cramped housing conditions and poor hygiene situations. Another factor is the relocation of parts of the population who, along with their livestock, enhance the variety of germs and vectors. This aspect is held responsible for the death of two million people a year. Diarrheal diseases are common, with 90% of all deaths attributed to them being children. A further problem is the failure of governments in LEDCs to provide health preventive policies and immunization programs for children. Overall there is a link between poverty and contagious disease.

Microorganisms (hosts) must find a way to be transmitted, in order to ensure their species' survival. Transmission can take place either through sneezing on another person (droplet contact), touching or having sexual contact with an infected person (direct physical contact) or from contaminated



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food or water (fecal-oral transmission), the latter being the main transmission way in LEDCs. Apart from the aforementioned and most likely ways of transmission, transmission can also be achieved through indirect physical contact usually by touching a contaminated surface or soil and through airborne transmission, meaning that the pathogen can survive outside the body and remain in the air for a long period.

A key player in the containment of infectious diseases is the World Health Organization (WHO). Its duties consist of the following points:

- providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed;
- shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge;
- setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation;
- articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options;
- providing technical support, catalyzing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity;
- and
- monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends.¹

Throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO raised and is still raising awareness of the threat; for instance by placing advertisements all over the Internet, which acts as reminders to behave accordingly (wearing face masks in public, washing hands thoroughly and using hand sanitizers etc.).

The organization itself composes of 194 UN member states, all of which are funding the WHO. Even when all member states are donating their contributions to the organization, international governmental support towards the WHO has leveled off in recent years, failing to keep up with rising needs. Steadily declining contributions mean that the organization cannot meet its expectations of the aforementioned core functions. Also, the US's intent to leave the organization, due to fact that the country pays dues way more disproportionately than any other member state, makes it even harder for the organization to stay in pair with its core functions. That being said, the WHO acts as a crucial part in controlling the spread of infectious diseases but if donations and contributions lessen in quantity, the organization cannot uphold its importance.

¹ <https://www.who.int/about/role/en/>



Glossary:

Epidemic:

The term epidemic describes the spread of a disease affecting a large number of people within a community, population or region.² An example for such a scenario would be the West African Ebola virus epidemic, which heavily affected the aforementioned region back in 2014.

Pandemic:

Whereas an epidemic only affects a community or a whole region, pandemics can be described as large-scale epidemics spreading over multiple countries or continents. The most recent COVID-19 pandemic is being experienced globally, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives.

Microorganisms:

There are different types of microorganisms that interact with the human body. They can be harmless, harmful or beneficial. The harmful microorganisms, also called pathogenic, are the ones able to cause diseases under specific conditions. They can either be bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites or protozoa. The ability of a microorganism to cause a disease is called pathogenicity.

Infection:

An infection occurs when another (micro-) organism enters your body and causes disease. The organisms that cause infections are very diverse and can include viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites.

How to prepare as a delegate:

As the Rules of Procedure of MUNoH already state, you are going to write one/two position papers as well as one resolution about the topics of your committee/council/commission. Due to the fact that you are in the 3rd Committee you need to write two position papers and one resolution. In the event that you are representing one of the P5 nations, make sure that you show a clear view of the respective member state to this issue, especially if you are a first timer. If you are writing a position paper, you should discuss to what extent globalization can be halted in order to contain the spread of global scale viruses as well as the question how can globalization contribute to the alleviation of global scale viruses in your own words and in the way your nation would define it. In the second part of your position paper you should mention steps which have been taken by your country or steps which have been taken by the UN in order to solve the issue and what your country thinks about them. However, you should also mention resolutions and other official documents concerning

² <https://intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/topics/live-well/2020/04/whats-the-difference-between-a-pandemic-an-epidemic-endemic-and-an-outbreak/>



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the topic, involved organizations and people. Furthermore, it is useful to write down a statement by an important politician such as the UN Secretary General or the president of your country in your own words. For the last part of your position paper you need to think about new solutions concerning the topic. What can the world do in order to change the situation? What is your country willing to do and where would your limits be? How can all nations together find a well-fitting definition? You should establish a realistic plan which contains details about the steps you would like to take together with the other UN nations and do not just repeat what was mentioned in former resolutions. The better you write the last part the easier it will be for you to write a proper resolution.

Please make sure that you hand in your work until 7th September 2020.

UN resolutions:

United Nations Security Council Resolution *1308 S/RES/1308* (2000)

United Nations Security Council Resolution *2177 S/RES/2177* (2014)

Sources:

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bubonic_plague#First_pandemic

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<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/new-covid-deaths-per-million>

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24632863-300-how-south-america-became-the-new-centre-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

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