SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

2019 TOPICS

Managing Risks and Impact of Future Epidemics
Effects of Chemical Weapons
2019 TOPIC: 
MANAGING RISKS AND IMPACT OF FUTURE EPIDEMICS

Why this is important?
Between January 1918 and December 1920, over 500 million people worldwide were infected with the influenza. Between 50-100 million individuals, roughly 3-5% of the world’s population at that time. The spread of this disease was unprecedented at the time, it spread from Europe, to the Americas, to remote Pacific islands and even to the Arctic. A large factor for the widespread of the disease was the increased travel around the world. With modern transportation soldiers, civilians and businessmen were able to travel throughout the world more easily and affordably.

Topic Summary and Background:
The number and diversity of epidemic events has been increasing over the past 30 years, a trend that is expected to intensify. It is estimated that the world population will reach 11 billion by 2100, and one of the consequences of this population rise would be new challenges in controlling disease outbreaks, scientists say. With the population rising it is also predicted that there will be a boost in new infectious disease and drug resistant bacteria. A recent example of this would be in 2009 when the Swine Flu claimed the lives of thousands of people. We have also had Ebola hemorrhagic fever in 2014 in western Africa as well as the Zika Virus spreading wildly through the Americas in 2016. The Zika Virus was the first mosquito borne virus to cause birth defects in humans. We have been able to beat these outbreaks in a fairly timely fashion due to cooperation between countries and agencies. If countries divide themselves and refuse to work together, these diseases and outbreaks will continue at a faster pace and be more destructive and deadly.

Issues to be addressed in a Resolution:
1. What can be done to ensure disease doesn't travel via international travel?
2. Would vaccinations be a successful tool in the battle?
3. Who will be responsible for helping fund these necessities?
4. What role do the United Nations carry in the fight to keep member nations safe from preventable diseases?
Resources
Health Epidemics Through History

Scariest Disease Outbreaks

Managing Risk and Impact of Future Epidemics

Spanish Flu Spread
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_flu#Spread
2019 TOPIC: EFFECTS OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Why this is important?
It is estimated that 1,300,000 people were affected by poison gases during the First World War. Only 90,000 of them died from their encounter with gas. Chemicals in warfare are not known for their fatality rate— but more for their devastating effects on the lives of those who survive. Soldiers who did not die from their encounter with poison gas in the First World War lost their sight, hearing, suffered massive chemical burns, respiratory problems, and suffered disfigurement that lasted the remainder of their lives. The issue of chemical warfare is not something lost in history. The current unrest in Syria has seen the repeated use of gas attacks on militants and civilians alike. The same effects of the chemicals witnessed in 1915 are still being observed as the conflict continues. This is still a pressing issue that impacts thousands of people around the world.

Topic Summary and Background:
The idea of using chemicals in warfare surfaced during the 19th Century. In fact, the same poison gas that was used during the First World War was actually invented by a United States scientist during the American Civil War in 1862. The use of chemicals as a new implement of warfare was first done in the First World War by the German Army in 1915 at the Second Battle of Ypres. Ever since the introduction of cannons to warfare in the 13th Century, defenders against these weapons knew that they could survive by fortifying their defenses stronger than the cannon’s power. Build walls higher, thicker, wear heavier armor, use more black powder, etc. These were the normal defenses of warfare against heavier armaments from an opponent. However, as was demonstrated in the First World War, chemical warfare is much harder to defend against as there is no way to fortify-- the weapon isn’t a firearm or create a projectile.

Issues to be addressed in a Resolution:
1. What weapons are “chemical?” How shall they be classified?
2. Does the United Nations have a role in regulating the weapons of warring nations?
3. Do chemical weapons have a place in warfare?
4. How could the United Nations monitor use of chemical weapons in warfare?
Resources
National Center for Biotechnology Information

Brief History of Chemical War
https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/magazine/a-brief-history-of-chemical-war

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
https://www.opcw.org/