

**YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025**

*Topic Descriptions*

Committee: General Assembly

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## Topic #1: Infectious Disease Prevention & Management

### Introduction & Background

**International health diplomacy** is not a novel concept — it was first introduced in 1851 when several European nations gathered together in France for the first International Sanitary Conference to discuss how to deal with cholera, yellow fever, and plague. With the invention of railroads, disease spread rapidly, **causing pandemics**, and nations had to devise a way to keep their populations safe. In the years to come, several other global governmental organizations were founded: the 1902 Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the 1907 Office International de l'Hygiene Publique, the 1923 Health Organization of the League of Nations, and the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in 1948 with the creation of the UN.

**Pandemics** are defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and typically affects a significant proportion of the population.” Pandemics have happened throughout history, including the Black Death, the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918, the Swine Flu Pandemic of 2009, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. As time progresses, countries strive to become better equipped to face unexpected disease outbreaks by considering **disease surveillance, preparedness and response, and the strengthening of existing public health facilities.**

### Current Status

As the concerns of disease on the global scale continue to rise, organizations such as the **WHO** continue to push out **vaccinations and other immunizations** to lower the rates of illnesses. Significant progress has been made in the past decades to prevent the spread of disease, but that endeavor is persistent as pandemics such as COVID-19 continue to arise. WHO member states currently have a vaccination rate of 60% to fight COVID-19. An estimated 19.8 million people died from COVID-19 in 2021 alone, which immediately sparked reform and reconstruction within **medical aid** organizations. Recently, the WHO has increased funding for fortunate nations that have long histories of diseases such as Tuberculosis and HIV. This funding has been primarily focused in Africa, where on average, 1.14 out of every 2,000 people have contracted HIV.

Other nations that are currently bombarded with war, such as Syria and Yemen, are also aided on a greater scale by WHO. In the eyes of a nation filled with war, disease is not the number one priority, where on the other hand, nations such as France or Great Britain can recognize disease as a major issue that needs to be alleviated immediately. Large **jumps in disease prevention** have been made in 2010, when 2.1 million people contracted HIV. Since then, that number has nearly decreased 50% to 1.3 million in 2022. But not all of the problems are solved. Due to all of these factors disease has become a popular topic in the past years and creates sparks for debate across the globe.

### Themes to Consider

Themes that should be addressed include **research/innovation, vaccinations, global and social cooperation, and ethical concerns.** Organizations have tried to decrease the number of diseases on a larger scale, but no prevention has been perfected, which is why we call this conference to create resolutions that can be made to further aid the global issue of

**disease control and prevention.** Resolutions to **increase vaccination output** or construct a new system to create vaccinations on a larger scale are immediate-impact resolutions that could diminish the high rates of mortality regarding disease. Delegates should prioritize resolutions that could spark debate and have a great impact on modern healthcare, especially in less fortunate nations.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can countries work together effectively to prevent future pandemic outbreaks/contain existing outbreaks?
2. What are some economic challenges that come with health governance and how can countries overcome them?
3. How can countries increase vaccination output/manufacturing while still maintaining ethical practices?

### Resources

1. "Adult Obesity | Obesity Prevention Source | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health." *HSPH.Harvard.edu*,  
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-rates-worldwide/>.

Description: Basic information about rising obesity rates around the world - divided per continent/region

2. Das, Tara. "“Basically a house of experts: the production of World Health Organization information.”" *NCBI*, December 2010,  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3052798/>.

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: Introduction of the WHO and goals they already have set in place.

3. Facult, Maurer. "The Globalization of Public Health: The First 100 Years of International Health Diplomacy." *Digital Repository @ Maurer Law*, 2001,  
<https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1597&context=facpub>.

Description: History of health governance and disease prevention.

4. "The global agreement on pandemics in a nutshell." *Consilium.europa.eu*,  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/towards-an-international-treaty-on-pandemics>.

Description: Information about an agreement for global health by the WHO that is in the making

5. Objectives of the WHO. "HIV – New HIV infections (per 1000 uninfected population)." *World Health Organization (WHO)*,  
[https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/new-hiv-infections-\(per-1000-uninfected-population\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/new-hiv-infections-(per-1000-uninfected-population)).

Description: This source is directly from the WHO website and it shows the rates of HIV infections in different regions across the world.

6. Zhang, Xiao-xi, et al. "Infectious disease control: from health security strengthening to health systems improvement at global level." *NCBI*, 5 September 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10478312/>.

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: How to improve health systems and global health government cooperation.

## Topic #2: Management and Integration of Displaced Peoples

### Introduction & Background

“Displaced Peoples” is a term used to describe populations **forced or coerced** into leaving their home nation **due to war or other external factors**. As global conflicts have become more prominent, millions have been displaced in nations foreign to them. The term “displaced peoples” was first coined around World War II, when millions of Jewish Europeans were forced out of Eastern Europe and migrated to other countries around the world. Similar diction was used regarding lower-class citizens of Ireland forced to flee during the potato famine in 1845, or for the over 3 million Koreans forced to migrate during the Korean War in the 1950s. In these, and many other cases, both the countries to which people had left and the countries to which they migrated were left with few practical policies to maximize proper adjustment and living conditions. This raises the current issue of managing and integrating groups of these displaced peoples into society and properly dealing with their new realities.

### Current Status

The number of displaced peoples — including internally displaced, refugees, and asylum seekers — has increased at an alarming rate. More than 110 million people are categorized as displaced peoples by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as of mid-2023. This number is well over double what was recorded 10 years ago. This trend has been perpetuated by conflicts such as the recent Sudanese fighting, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Russian-Ukraine War, ongoing instability in Burkina Faso, and others. Natural disasters have also heavily contributed to this staggering number, namely the Türkiye-Syria earthquakes displacing more than 3 million people, in addition to the many floods, droughts, and storms around the world.

### Themes to Consider

The topic of displaced peoples is a complex issue involving many different lenses and perspectives, requiring international cooperation and focused directives. One of the main contributors to displacement that needs to be addressed is the **conflict and instability** present in many countries. So far, the UN has demanded ceasefires, such as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and has also provided emergency relief with 12 million displaced people receiving medical care.

Another major contributor is the ever-present cases of **national disasters**. With the help of climate change, natural disasters have become more prevalent in all regions around the world. An example of the UN at work to alleviate environmentally-driven displacement is the \$1B flash appeal by the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordinations to aid the victims of the Türkiye-Syria earthquakes.

Addressing the issue of displacement will require **international cooperation** from both countries **needing and providing aid**. Issues such as wars and natural disasters are not isolated on the world stage. They often involve many different nations and therefore require dynamic solutions that appeal to all parties. **Funding** will also have to be procured with international collaboration in order to provide effective prevention and relief measures.

## Discussion Questions

1. How can your nation provide the proper food, shelter, and other resources for refugees without diminishing the current citizens' rights?
2. What international standards can be set to ensure the proper assimilation of such displaced peoples into a new society?
3. How feasible is it to address the root causes of migration in a way that satisfies all parties involved?

## Resources

1. "2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement." *IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*, [www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid202](http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid202).

Description: This website details the causes, regionalities, and numbers related to displaced peoples today.

2. "Flash Appeal: Türkiye Earthquake (February - May 2023) [EN/TR] - Türkiye." *ReliefWeb*, 16 Feb. 2023, [reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/flash-appeal-turkiye-earthquake-february-may-2023-entr](http://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/flash-appeal-turkiye-earthquake-february-may-2023-entr).

Description: Detailed synopsis on the condition of Turkey and Syria shortly after the earthquakes, along with an appeal for gain funding.

3. "Migrants, refugees, or displaced persons?" <https://www.unesco.org>, 23 Sept. 2021, [www.unesco.org/en/articles/migrants-refugees-or-displaced-persons](http://www.unesco.org/en/articles/migrants-refugees-or-displaced-persons). Accessed 18 May 2024.

Description: Simple definitions and differences between the terms: migrants, refugees, and displaced persons.

4. UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. "[ UNHCR." *UNHCR*, [www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics](http://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics).

Description: Here are detailed graphs and statistics representing the current state of displaced peoples in today's world, posted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

5. Dan, Juan,. "Migrant Crisis: A History of Displacement." *WSJ*, 2015, [graphics.wsj.com/migrant-crisis-a-history-of-displacement/](http://graphics.wsj.com/migrant-crisis-a-history-of-displacement/).

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: An anthology of photos and details of various historical and current situations involving displaced peoples, published by the Wall Street Journal.

6. United Nations. "Refugees." *United Nations*, 2021, [www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees](http://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees).

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: An official website of the United Nations in which various detailed links and videos describing current situations of displacement are found.

## Topic #3: Sustainable Agriculture

### Introduction & Background

**Sustainable Agriculture** is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as meeting the needs of present and future generations, while also being profitable, promoting environmental health, and social and economic equality. Historically, industrialization of agriculture has caused food prices to drop and production to increase, but the environment has suffered severe consequences. Efforts to reverse and combat such consequences have started, seen through conferences like The Food and Systems Summit or the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. These initiatives have underscored the need for sustainable agricultural practices to ensure environmental health and food security.

### Current Status

Currently, unsustainable agriculture contributes to environmental issues, such as the **loss of biodiversity, habitats, and ecosystems**. Agriculture is currently responsible for about 21% of total global greenhouse emissions. Worldwide, there are efforts to reduce this percentage and contribute to overall sustainability, but challenges arise from limited technology, funding, or political constraints. Differences in farming practices between nations, worsened by factors like limited resources, often contribute to pollution and contamination. Smaller farms often financially struggle, or lack the access to advanced technologies, whereas larger industrialized farms contribute to environmental degradation. Existing farming practices work, but are environmentally harmful and growing less efficient due to **climate change**. Therefore, it is imperative that something changes to promote agricultural sustainability that is resistant to climate change and can meet the goals outlined by the UN.

### Themes to Consider

Agriculture in the present day has a significant **environmental impact**, creating issues in chemical runoff, pesticide usage, and natural habitat loss. However, in many countries, agriculture is a major **socioeconomic pillar** that supports billions of people, not only in terms of resource supply, but **employment**. Implementing sustainable practices is important, but equally important is maintaining the role that agriculture has in the world economy.

**Biodiversity** and the importance of existing natural processes, such as pollination, have important roles in sustainable agriculture, as well. The practice of growing one crop over a large area, known as monocropping, contributes to the loss of biodiversity, yet is a common practice due to economic efficiency. Promoting sustainable crop practices like crop rotation, polyculture, and organic farming as well as reverting back to natural methods of agriculture can enhance environmental resilience and reduce dependency on chemical pesticides. **Climate change** also poses a threat to agricultural sustainability, as weather patterns and events threaten crop yields and practices.

Economic and social **equality** is another vital aspect to the overall framework of successful sustainable agriculture. Policies that promote trade, improve access, ensure equitable profit and increase global connection to this industry are critical to fostering international cooperation and global sustainability. Efforts to provide education on these practices, as well as support, can empower groups to contribute to a more fair and equal

agriculture sector, built with environmental sustainability in mind. Delegates should prioritize resolutions that can promote collaboration, benefit multiple parties, and align with the UN goals for sustainable agriculture, outlined in the definition.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the role of agriculture in your nation? How does your country currently address the issue of sustainable agriculture?
2. How can international efforts be coordinated to increase practices of sustainable agriculture, while taking into account the global human food demand?
3. How can renewable resources be integrated in agriculture? How can agriculture remain economically viable despite the changes that will offset it?

### Resources

1. "Sustainable Food and Agriculture." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations*, [www.fao.org/sustainability/en/](http://www.fao.org/sustainability/en/).

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: Homepage to the basic goals and facts about the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN.

2. "What is Sustainable Agriculture?" *Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education*, 2023. <https://www.sare.org/resources/what-is-sustainable-agriculture/>.

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: Detailed outline of the fundamental goals of sustainable agriculture, providing examples on proven practices.

3. World Wild Life. "Sustainable Agriculture." *World Wildlife Fund*, 2019. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable-agriculture>.

Description: Existing examples of sustainable agriculture practices in use today, along with examples of countries in need of sustainable agriculture.

4. "Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania." *Sustainable Agriculture of Tanzania*, 2023. <https://www.kilimo.org>.

Description: Homepage of existing Tanzanian sustainable agricultural movement, providing real-life and applicable situations and practices.

5. "What Is the Relationship between Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security? -Green Pedal" *Greenpedal.org*, 1 June 2023. <https://greenpedal.org/blog/relationship-between-sustainable-agriculture-and-food-security-2#:~:text=Soil%20degradation%20is%20a%20major,soil%20structure%2C%20and%20decreased%20fertility>.

**(Highly Recommended)** Description: Detailed list of several challenges and problems that face the process of sustainable agriculture, applicable to all nations.



6. Zerssa, Gebeyanesh Worku, et al. "Improving the Sustainability of Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities" *Www.intechopen.com*, 5 Oct. 2023.  
[www.intechopen.com/chapters/88111](http://www.intechopen.com/chapters/88111).

Description: Detailed and extensive scientific report on specific unsustainable practices and potential sustainable applications.