GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Topic: **“**Preventing Future Pandemics: Enhancing Global Preparedness for Emerging and Re-Emerging infectious Diseases**.”**

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I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

Established in 1945 under the **United Nations Charter**, the **General Assembly (GA)** is the main deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations. It is made up of all 193 UN Member States, and each country has one vote, representing the principle of sovereign equality. The General Assembly provides a global space where countries can discuss and cooperate on international issues such as peace and security, development, human rights, health, and international law.

The General Assembly can also make recommendations to Member States and promote international cooperation in areas such as health and humanitarian issues. Its universal representation allows all Member States to participate in discussions about global challenges, including preventing and preparing for future pandemics.

II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

a. Introduction of the topic

Infectious diseases are illnesses caused by microorganisms, such as viruses and bacteria, that can spread between people, animals, or through the environment. Some diseases may be common and have mild effects, while others can cause serious health problems and spread quickly among many people. When a disease spreads across different countries or continents and affects a large number of people, it can become a pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, showed the importance of being prepared for future health emergencies. The pandemic revealed difficulties in different countries, such as a lack of medical resources, healthcare workers, and hospital capacity, as well as problems with coordination and cooperation. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that the level of preparedness before the pandemic was not sufficient to respond effectively to an emergency of this scale.

For this reason, preventing future pandemics does not only mean finding treatments when a disease appears. It also involves detecting new outbreaks quickly, strengthening health systems, training healthcare workers, having enough resources, and improving cooperation between countries. The lessons learned from COVID-19 can help the world become better prepared to face emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases in the future.

b. Evolution of the topic

The way the world prepares for future pandemics has changed over time. In the past, international efforts focused mainly on controlling specific diseases and stopping them from spreading between countries. As international travel and trade increased, countries needed to work together and create stronger systems to watch for and respond to health threats.

An important change happened in 2005, when the Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted the International Health Regulations (IHR). This agreement gave countries responsibilities to detect and report health risks that could spread across borders. It also helped countries improve their ability to respond to health emergencies.

In 2011, the WHO created the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework. Its goal was to improve preparation for future influenza pandemics through disease monitoring, sharing information and viruses, and improving access to vaccines and other medical resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that there were still important problems in global pandemic preparedness. These included difficulties in cooperation, unequal access to medical resources, and differences in the ability of health systems to respond. Because of these problems, countries began working on stronger international rules and agreements for future pandemics.

In 2024, changes were made to the International Health Regulations. These changes included a new level of alert called a "pandemic emergency." Then, in May 2025, WHO Member States adopted the Pandemic Agreement, which aims to improve the prevention, preparation, and response to future pandemics. It includes areas such as disease monitoring, stronger health systems, international cooperation, research, and fairer access to medical tools.

This evolution shows that pandemic preparedness has changed from mainly focusing on individual diseases to building stronger global cooperation. Today, countries are working to detect health threats earlier, prepare their health systems, and respond together when new infectious diseases appear.

c. Relevant Events

COVID-19,

It lasted from 2019 to 2023. It was one of the largest worldwide pandemics. More than 704 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 were recorded, although the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there were more. During this major pandemic, many countries experienced the rapid overcrowding of hospitals, shortages of intensive care beds, and a lack of personal protective equipment for medical workers. There were also delays in mass testing capacity and in the initial implementation of unified containment protocols.

It started in China and spread throughout the world. It was caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. The most common symptoms were coughing, chills, loss of taste, and tiredness.

During this pandemic, people did not leave their homes for about a whole year. School was done online, as were many other activities. Everyone had to wear face masks at all times and in every place they entered, their temperature was checked and they were given hand sanitizer. Children could not enter many places; usually, adults were the only ones allowed to go to shopping malls and supermarkets.

Technology advanced greatly during this time. Hospitals and medicines also improved so that the world could be better prepared for future pandemics.

The **Black Death**

The most devastating bubonic plague pandemic in human history, causing the deaths of between 75 and 200 million people. It took place from 1346 to 1353 and spread through Europe, Asia, and North Africa. It was caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, which affected black rats and other rodents and was transmitted through parasites that lived on these animals, especially fleas, which transmitted the bacterium to humans through their bites. At that time, medicines were not as advanced, so the treatments prescribed for the Black Death, as well as for other illnesses, were based on diet, air purification, bloodletting, and the administration of drinks made from aromatic herbs and precious stones. The symptoms of this disease appeared 2 or 3 days after transmission. The symptoms included sudden fever, chills, headache and general body aches, weakness, nausea, and vomiting.

III. CURRENT ISSUES

a. Panorama

Emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases remain a serious threat to global public health, especially in light of globalization, the changing climate, and human proximity to animals, which allow the transfer of pathogens around the world. Emerging diseases are new diseases that emerge unexpectedly or whose rate of incidence is rapidly increasing, whereas re-emerging diseases are old diseases that were once under control but have recently returned in large numbers. The example of the current pandemic of the Coronavirus clearly shows what problems arise from unpreparedness and why it is necessary to be ready for an outbreak beforehand. Improving disease surveillance and early warning systems, building up healthcare and laboratory capacity, providing equal access to medicines, and ensuring international cooperation are some ways of improving global readiness. It is important to address the challenges that are likely to occur ahead of time to decrease the chances of turning a new infectious disease crisis into a global pandemic.

b. Points of View

United States

The United States participates in global health-security activities through the CDC. In particular, it collaborates with various countries in order to enhance their abilities to detect diseases, improve lab capacity and emergency response to them. The U.S. is one of the countries participating in the Global Health Security Agenda aimed at preventing, detecting and reacting to infectious disease outbreaks.

India

India is currently working on its preparedness plans for the future pandemics. In 2024, India developed the National Pandemic Preparedness Plan for Respiratory Viruses as a part of the PRET initiative led by the WHO. The plan involves four pillars: surveillance, laboratory capacity, healthcare preparedness, and multisector coordination.

Germany

Germany plays an active role in international preparedness for pandemics. It hosts the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin, which is focused on improving the early detection of potential threats to public health using data science, pathogen genomics and other modern technologies. Additionally, it financially supports WHO emergency response initiatives.

Brazil

Brazil is significant because it is participating in the international negotiations on preparedness for pandemics. Brazil and UK chair the WHO Intergovernmental Working Group on implementation of the WHO Pandemic Agreement. Discussions on the sharing of pathogen specimens and genomic sequences are included in the intergovernmental work of this group.

China

China is significant to this issue because it is one of the countries participating in the international health security framework. China is a member of the WHO Strategic Partnership for Health Security and Emergency Preparedness, along with other countries like the U.S., India, Germany, Brazil, etc.

IV. UN & EXTERNAL ACTIONS

a. UN

In May 2025, the WHO Pandemic Agreement was agreed upon by WHO Member States, having been developed following the experience gained from COVID-19. The goal of the WHO Pandemic Agreement is to enhance international cooperation in order to help countries prepare for, prevent and respond to any future pandemics. This agreement is designed to cover such issues as disease surveillance, strengthening health systems, research, vaccine and treatment availability, and international cooperation. WHO has been trying to increase the ability of countries to detect the emergence of disease outbreaks. In particular, the organization has sought to increase

the capabilities of surveillance systems and to apply the approach of One Health which implies the examination of links among human, animal, and environmental health. WHO Member States have been developing a Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) mechanism at present. The purpose of this initiative is to promote the timely exchange of pathogen specimens and genetic sequences data along with mechanisms of benefit-sharing. Moreover, WHO has been cooperating with governments in order to strengthen healthcare systems, emergency response capacities, health workforce, research and development, and national preparedness strategies.

b. External actions

Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) is a global alliance that specifically works towards developing vaccines and other medical countermeasures against epidemics and pandemics. One of its objectives includes the "100 Days Mission," which works to reduce the period of vaccine development after identifying a new virus.

World Bank / Pandemic Fund

The World Bank houses the Pandemic Fund, which was founded in 2022. It offers grants to developing nations to improve their labs, disease surveillance, healthcare, and emergency preparedness. This fund is crucial because pandemic preparedness is a matter of significant investment and not just emergency measures once the pandemic starts.

G20

G20 has also integrated pandemic preparedness into its international collaboration agenda. Their initiatives include conversations about financing, health system resilience, access to vaccines, and global health infrastructure.

V. CONCLUSION

While considerable strides have been taken in the prevention and preparation for future pandemics, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases present an ongoing threat to the world. The United Nations, through its World Health Organization, has ensured the improvement of international cooperation through measures such as the WHO Pandemic Agreement, while other organizations such as CEPI, Gavi, the World Bank, and regional health organizations assist in vaccine development, funding, vaccination, and disease monitoring. Differences in the ability to cope with a pandemic due to disparities in healthcare capability and resource availability present a challenge that requires further international cooperation. Going forward, governments and international organizations need to cooperate to enhance early warning, increase access to healthcare resources, invest more in healthcare systems, and create response mechanisms before global pandemics arise.

VI. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the major reasons behind the rising and resurgence of infectious diseases?
2. What places or populations remain at risk of an infectious disease epidemic, and why?
3. How did the coronavirus epidemic expose any shortcomings in pandemic preparedness on an international level?
4. How successful are international frameworks in monitoring and alerting of new infectious disease epidemics?
5. What duties do nations have when sharing the information on a possible epidemic with the international community?
6. What steps must be taken by nations to ensure that everyone has equal access to vaccines, medication, diagnosis, and other medical tools during a pandemic?
7. What actions may governments undertake to make hospitals, laboratories, health care professionals, and other emergency response mechanisms more robust?
8. What strategies must international institutions, including WHO, CEPI, Gavi, and World Bank, take to collaborate with one another and avoid any overlaps?
9. How will the international community be able to reconcile national sovereignty with the requirement for quick international collaboration during a health crisis?
10. What kind of policies, mechanism, and international collaboration could prevent a future epidemic from turning into a pandemic?

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