



Boston University Academy Model United Nations Conference IX
Saturday, January 30th to Sunday, January 31st, 2021
Boston University Academy
Boston, MA

***Biological Weapons and Drone
Regulation***

***General Assembly: Disarmament
and International Security
Committee (DISEC)***

Background Guide

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Committee Staff

Giovi Hersch, chair

Anne Jackson, vice-chair

Sudarshan Ramanan, Secretary-General

John Lee, Secretary-General

Jonas Rajagopal, Secretary-General



Welcome Letter

Hello Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this years BUAMUN conference. My name is Giovi Hersch and I am currently a senior at Boston University Academy. I will be serving as chair of this year's DISEC Committee, along with my vice-chair Anne Jackson. We will be sumulting the Disarmament and International Security Committee.

This is my third year in Model UN, and my second on the dias: BUAMUN 2020, I was a vice-chair; and this year, at BUAMUN 2021, I am a chair. My Vice chair, Anne is a junior at BUA, and this will be her second year chairing a conference.

I hope you are all as excited for this conference as I am! This year, we will be discussing two topics of global significance: the issue of biological weapons and drone regulation. My advice, as far as preparation goes, is to research about the situation, your country, allies, and any previous steps your country might have taken to address the situation. I look forward to seeing all that each of you has to offer, and hope you give your very best at this conference. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Best wishes,

Giovi Hersch

Anne Jackson

admin@buamun.org

Position Paper Information

Delegates must write two formal position papers in this committee, one for the issue of biological weapons and another for drone regulation. To be eligible for awards, please email your position papers to me no later than January 31st. To receive comments on your position papers, please email them to me no later than January 29th. Chairs will review position papers, and well written and researched papers are eligible for the committee's Best Position Paper Award, as well as influencing other award determinations. If you use external sources such as websites, you must cite them with a footnote. External sources include sources provided in this background guide.

Position papers are 1-2 pages in length, double-spaced, and should follow a three-part scheme: 1) Introduction to the topic, 2) Actions the delegate's country has already taken to address the topic, and 3) The delegate's proposed action on the topic. Position papers should follow the following conventions on headers:

Delegate:

School:

Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

Position:

Topic: Biological Weapons and Drone Regulations

If you have any questions regarding your position paper or any information included in the background guide, please contact your chair through email.

Committee Structure

Established in 1946 to after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the Disarmament and Security Commission serves as the central forum for discussing solutions to international security and disarmament issues that threaten international peace. It considers all issues within the scope of the UN charter: “the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; and promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.”¹

However, unlike the security council, DISEC does not have the authority to make decisions regarding UN Peacekeepers or infringe on member states’ sovereignty. Instead, it works primarily on matters concerning disarmament in coordination with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.²

Topic Background

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

Biological weapons deliver toxins and microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, insects, and fungi, with the intent to infect disease among people, animals, and agriculture.³ Attacks can result in the destruction of crops, or the incapacitation or death of large numbers of people. Most biological agents work through direct exposure, either through contaminated food or drink or through aerosolized distribution. For example, spores from the anthrax bacteria found in herd animals only sicken those who ingest, inhale, or touch the spores. Other biological toxins, such as botulism and ricin, also work this way. Biological agents can also be contagious, and spread from one person to another. Smallpox and the influenza virus are examples of this agent. Weaponizing this type of agent could have potentially drastic effects. The 1918-1919 Spanish flu pandemic, which occurred without human interference, killed 20-50 million people worldwide.⁴

There are now drugs designed to help build immunity to or counter the effects of many biological agents, yet the drugs are not foolproof. Viruses can mutate, either naturally or artificially, and incapacitate large numbers of people in spite of any drug. Because of this, attacks of this nature have the potential to be deadly to great amounts of people.



Topic Background

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

In 2001, tablespoons of anthrax spores were sent through the US mail to journalists and members of the US Congress, accompanying notes reading “Death to America! Death to Israel!” The letters were initially presumed to be the work of al Qaeda, due to the close proximity between when the first letters were sent and the al Qaeda attacks in New York and Washington, D.C.. Seven years later, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation declared that a US Army scientist who had developed an anthrax vaccine had carried out the attack.⁵

The anthrax attack illustrated several other important factors of weaponizing biological and toxin agents. First, even when the agent is not contagious, many people can be affected. In the anthrax attack, one victim was a neighbor of the target, who had mistakenly received one of the contaminated letters. It was discovered that powder remnants on the envelopes could cross-contaminate other materials. Second, the existence of effective antibiotics and vaccines is insufficient to protect target populations. Vaccines must be distributed prior to attacks, and antibiotics must be properly administered prior to infection. In 2001, only military personnel were given the vaccine to anthrax, and the antibiotics were not always properly administered, resulting in “a 45% fatality rate (5 deaths of 11 infected).”⁶

Topic Background

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

Third, biological attacks result in national and individual efforts to stockpile vaccines and antibiotics. Had the anthrax attack been more widespread, this would have made it difficult to distribute remedies to those who needed them. However, stockpiles should only be released when warranted because bacteria become resistant to antibiotics.

Biological weapons are known as unconventional weapons because they target entire populations or geographic areas, instead of other weapons, and may also be weapons of mass destruction. In other words, their destructive effects may occur so extensively and so quickly that it may not be possible to protect people. If a contagious disease gained momentum, it could cause destruction in ways that would be difficult to contain or mitigate. The first attempt to limit the use of biological weapons occurred in Geneva in 1925, and resulted in a treaty called the “Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases and the Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.” The treaty only outlawed the use of biological weapons, not their development, production, or stockpiling.

The second, and currently most comprehensive attempt to prohibit the development, production, and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons is the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which entered into force in 1975.



Topic Background

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

The Second Review Conference (1986) agreed to implement confidence building measures (CBMs) “to prevent or reduce the occurrence of ambiguities, doubts and suspicions and in order to improve international co-operation in the field of peaceful biological activities.” Under these agreements expanded by the Third Review Conference (1991), the States Parties promise to provide annual reports, using agreed forms, on specific activities relating to BWC, including data on research centers and labs, information of vaccine production facilities, information on national biological defence research and development programmes, declaration of past activities in offensive and/or defensive biological research and development programmes, information of infectious disease outbreaks, publication of results, and information on legislation, regulations, and other measures.⁷

According to the official website for the BWC, from 1987 to 2006, “over half of the States Parties ... made one or more CBM declarations.”⁸ This is not encouraging as under the 1991 agreement, each state must report every year. This lack of information impedes tracking of biological weapons development and use. In 2008, the Center for Nonproliferation Studies compiled information on 29 countries. There were no known biological programs, but China, Egypt, and Iran had probable offensive biological weapons programs.

Topic Background

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

North Korea, Israel, and Syria had research programs and possible production of biological agents. With the exception of Syria and Israel, all of the states with probable and possible offensive bioweapons programs have ratified the BWC and thus promised to never weaponize biological agents.⁹

In 2004, the Security Council passed Resolution 1540, which requires all states to “adopt and enforce appropriate effective laws which prohibit any non-state actor to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use and nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or their means of delivery.” In 2006, the WMD Commission released a report making the following recommendations to states: achieve universal ratification of the BWC by the Seventh Review Conference in 2011, help states adopt national legislation to implement the BWC, make the required annual declarations, and make them public, amend the BWC to enable the UN Secretary-General to appoint World Health Organization experts to monitor disease outbreaks and allegations of offensive biological programs and report possible outcomes to the Security Council, amend the BWC to establish a secretariat to handle organizational and administrative matters related to the treaty, agree to international biosecurity standards for monitoring public health and responding to disease outbreaks, and meet more often than every six years.

Topic Background

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

Progress was made on all of these but the fourth and sixth recommendations. In response to recommendations 2, 3, and 5, an Implementation Support Unit (ISU) was established at the UN Office in Geneva to help states with annual declarations of national legislation. Contrary to the second recommendation, states agreed that declarations would be confidential unless individual states explicitly agreed otherwise.



Topic Background

Topic 2: Drone Regulation

In recent years, the use of drones has increased dramatically. However, this explosion in use is not always for the best. Because drones tend to be under 1 meter in diameter, they are harder to detect than traditional aircraft. As a result, several countries have been using drones for spying or to bomb specific locations or people, among other things. In 2018, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) discussed the increase in drone usage and the need to regulate it.¹⁰ Some in the committee brought up the possibility of using pre-existing treaties and arms deals, for example, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), to regulate drone usage.¹¹ Rachel Stohl, the Managing Director of the Stimson Center, argued that while “the ATT does not explicitly reference drones, [she argues] that the ATT applies to drones.”¹² However, there is currently no international law regarding the usage of drones.

Questions to Consider

Topic 1: The Issue of Biological Weapons

1. Has your state ever had a biological weapons program? What is its current status?
2. Has your state ratified the BWC? If so, when? If not, why not?
3. If your state is party to the BWC, does it submit annual declarations?
4. What is your state's position on mandatory inspections of its biological facilities?
5. Would your state support amending the BWC to enhance the ability of the UN Secretary General to monitor disease outbreaks and biological weapons programs?
6. Is it acceptable for individual states to take matters into their own hands when the Security Council fails to act on tips about biological weapons programs?
7. Does your country cooperate with other states to encourage shared research, technology, or best practices for the peaceful use of biological agents or to prepare for biological outbreaks such as terrorist attacks?
8. What could the GA do to encourage states that have not ratified the Convention to do so?
9. How could the GA help prevent the use of biological weapons and to ensure that states have the ability to respond to biological attacks?

Questions to Consider

Topic 2: Drone Regulation

1. Should the UN put in more guidelines for drone regulation? If so, what?
2. Do you think that drone regulation should primarily exist at the national level or the international level?
3. Do you think it is more useful to regulate the manufacture, import, and export of drones or their uses?

Further Research

Topic 1: Biological Weapons

1. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/bwc>
2. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1326439/>
4. <https://news.stanford.edu/pr/01/bioterror117.html>
5. <https://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/articles/biological-weapons-bioterrorism-and-vaccine>

Topic 2: Drone Regulation

1. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/the-expanding-use-of-armed-uavs-and-the-need-for-international-standards/>
2. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/drones-study>
3. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/discussing-drones-at-the-un-headquarters-2/>

Bibliography

1. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>
2. Ibid.
3. <https://fas.org/programs/bio/bwintro.html>
4. Ibid.
5. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/04/us/04anthrax.html>
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.