



Harvard World Model

United Nations 2024

Tentative Topic Summaries

Topic summaries will have proper citation and formatting once we have finalized background guides.

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Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

Quantum computing is at the forefront of global discussions surrounding international security. In a 2022 National Security Memorandum published by the Biden Administration, it was said that sufficiently powerful quantum computers could, “jeopardize civilian and military communications, undermine supervisory and control systems for critical infrastructure, and defeat security protocols for most Internet-based financial transactions.” These threats are all due to quantum computing’s potential to upend the current security landscape by rendering previous encryption technologies obsolete. Encryption systems that act as the backbone to civilizations’ underlying systems that would take traditional computers hundreds of thousands of years to crack might take a quantum computer merely years, months, days, or even minutes.

There is no international security without robust encryption technology. Similarly, there is no international security if quantum computing capacity eclipses the current complexity of the encryption technology that acts as the backbone of the world’s global security systems.

Besides enabling potential bad actors to breach global financial markets, sensitive military or political communications, or control systems for important infrastructure sectors, quantum computing also has concerning implications for disarmament. While disarmament refers broadly to the limitation of all weaponry for the sake of mitigating the threats that they pose to human life, the DISEC committee gives the highest precedent to reducing the proliferation of nuclear arms throughout the world, with biological weapons and chemical weapons coming in as close second and third in terms of reduction priority. However, nuclear disarmament efforts are futile if a cryptographically relevant quantum computer were to fall into the wrong hands as it could potentially allow them to bypass a foreign entity’s nuclear security systems and gain access to sensitive nuclear codes, effectively giving them nuclear power.

Like any emerging technology, quantum computing’s benefits and threats to humanity must be carefully weighed, and regulation should follow these deliberations. As delegates participating in WorldMUN’s DISEC committee, it is your job to craft a thoughtful solution that meticulously factors in various important considerations.

It is my hope that by the end of the conference, all of you will have passed policy resolutions that will guide the DISEC Committee toward its ultimate goals of obtaining world peace and reducing suffering while taking into consideration the complex geopolitical and economic factors present within the topic of Quantum Computing and Encryption.

Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

In the 21st century, the rapid advancement of technology has transformed the way societies function, communicate, and access information. The digital revolution has brought numerous benefits, but it has also unveiled a pressing issue known as the "digital divide." This divide is exacerbated by the persistence of illiteracy, creating a complex challenge that requires immediate attention.

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, access to information, communication, and opportunities is largely dependent on digital literacy and access to technology. However, the persistent issue of illiteracy further exacerbates the digital divide, creating a stark contrast between those who are equipped to navigate the digital realm and those left behind.

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

The number of refugees currently stands at a peak of over 110 million due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations. 21st-century challenges, including climate change, extreme natural disasters, and socioeconomic factors, have contributed to the increase in refugees and exacerbated their displacement. Currently, the Refugee Agency within the United States collaborates with member states and humanitarian organizations to support refugees across 132 countries. Initiatives are aimed at distributing resources and promoting workforce opportunities for refugees through social protection practices and inclusive market systems. Nevertheless, specific regional and international regulations to address the political and economic rights of refugees are lacking.

Economic and Financial Committee (ECOFIN)

The phenomenon of an aging population is a worldwide occurrence with deep-seated implications for the human rights of all individuals. Forecasts suggest that by 2050, the population of those 65 and older will swell to 1.5 billion, meaning one in every six people globally will be in this age group. This trend of increased longevity, while a testament to advancements in human development and healthcare, has also highlighted significant deficiencies in protection measures, as well as in policies and programs tailored to the needs of the elderly. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed, and in many cases exacerbated, these critical gaps in human rights protections for the elderly, including issues like age-based discrimination, insufficient social and health care services, limited autonomy and involvement in decision-making processes, and protection from violence, neglect, and abuse. Despite these challenges, older individuals often remain overlooked in the international legal sphere. Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive, universally recognized standards to guide the creation of laws

safeguarding their rights. Consequently, the international legal framework is fragmented and inadequate in addressing specific protection needs for the elderly to fully exercise their human rights.

Legal Committee

In the past few years, the rise of various cryptocurrencies and digital currencies have animated extensive discussions on how economies might respond and adapt to these new technologies. These conversations have relevance at a global scale, as consumers and businesses continue to move towards a digitized space. In an increasingly digital age, states are exploring how concepts like the blockchain and peer to peer transactions can be incorporated into a state-backed model for currency governance. For example, the rollout of the digital renminbi, or e-CNY, by the People's Republic of China represents the first tangible example of such a currency, which has spurred serious consideration of a digitalized future for other currencies across the world.

Consequently, this move by currencies towards a digital future is likely to make components of existing regulatory approaches at the intra- and international level obsolete. In light of this, what common rules can we envision for the design, regulation, and promulgation of these currencies, particularly at the international level? Our committee discussions will focus on the risks and benefits of digital currency implementation by states, with particular focus surrounding the impacts on the international financial system and the existing sanctions framework. As representatives of a global community, delegates will critically examine how changes to the form and function of currency might impact their state's economy in light of increased regional and global interdependence. For many states, control of currency represents an important component of the state's toolkit in crafting foreign policy, enabling a state to dictate its terms of economic engagement with the world, as well as providing the necessary functions to engage in activist behavior on the international stage—how might these many functions be altered or reinforced by the impending digital future, and what legal frameworks can we design to maximize the benefits of such a shift?

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Water is vital for survival. Water is a human right. The United Environment Programme (UNEP) has declared a global shortage of clean water since the 1980s. The demand for water due to growing populations, industrial use, and agricultural irrigation has been worsened by the effects of climate change, water pollution and the lack of infrastructure. While it is crucial to control and oversee the balance between water availability and usage in both the immediate and distant future, the crux of this matter lies in the significant influence of climate change.

Presently, over “2 billion people will live in water-stressed countries, which is expected to be exacerbated in some regions and at least 1.7 billion people will use a drinking water source contaminated with feces.” Contamination of feces poses the greatest risk to drinking-water safety. As we live in the day of technology, “improved drinking water technologies are more likely than those characterized as unimproved to provide safe drinking water” and prevent contact with human waste. Investments onto water sources need to be made to improve access for all. Adequately developed water resources will keep individuals physically healthy, promote equality of opportunities for the underprivileged, and maintain our world’s ecosystems. Water is “also at the heart of adaptation to climate change, serving as the crucial link between society and the environment.”

As you negotiate with other delegates on potential resolutions, keep in mind the financial and social barriers that prevent nations around the world from adequately improving sanitation and clean drinking water for all citizens. By the end of the conference, I hope to see well-developed solutions tackling our current water crisis and specific implementations and requests from members of the international community. The United Nations Environment Programme is dependent on it.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

In 2013, the international community witnessed an unprecedented escalation of nuclear tensions in Northeast Asia, specifically on the Korean Peninsula, with North Korea conducting a series of nuclear tests and missile launches. These provocative actions by North Korea have raised concerns about the stability and security of the region, as well as the potential for nuclear proliferation. Colloquially referred to as the “2013 Korean Crisis,” this period oversaw increased tensions among key actors such as North Korea, South Korea, the United States, China, Russia, and Japan. Following the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2087, which broadened sanctions against North Korea in response to an unwarranted satellite launch in December 2012, the international community faced the challenge of managing a string of nuclear threats from North Korea. On February 12, 2013, North Korea state media announced it had conducted an underground nuclear test, its third in seven years. About a month later, on March 13, North Korea unilaterally ended the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement, declaring that it “is not restrained by the North-South declaration on non-aggression and warned that the next step was an act of ‘merciless’ military retaliation against its enemies.” On April 2, in response to ongoing tensions and escalating threats, the United States announced plans to deploy U.S. Army Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) advanced ballistic missile defense to Guam in order to protect U.S. allies in the region. The escalating tensions in Northeast Asia, particularly on the Korean Peninsula, have significant implications for regional and global security. These tensions have the potential to initiate drastic crises, including armed conflict, nuclear proliferation, and the destabilization of the entire Northeast Asian region.

World Health Organization (WHO)

The global effects of the tobacco industry have been a controversial topic since the 1600s. Initially, the spread of tobacco was record-breaking. Manufacturing plants and tobacco farms emerged all over the world in order to meet the supply and demand of the increasingly popularized habit. As it became a common pastime for many, societies all over the world were altered to accommodate the demands for breaks, spaces, and social acceptability of smoking. But normalized tobacco imagery in the media would soon fall from glamor as the truth behind tobacco simultaneously spread across the world. Countless articles and professional commentary advising against smoking, exposés on the realities of tobacco workers, lawsuits against tobacco companies for unscrupulous behavior and millions of deaths sweeping nations would soon cast a negative light and infamize the industry. Despite the abundant evidence, many countries still find it challenging to prevent the extensively studied negative effects of smoking from occurring among their constituents. Moreso, it is even more difficult to validate newer studies which reveal insight into the effects of tobacco harvesting and production.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco kills more than 8 million people each year, including 1.3 million non-smokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke. As one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, it is important to understand tobacco beyond smoking by investigating the processes that allow it to reach consumers. Many of the countries affected by inadequate access to food are also big exporters of tobacco. Tobacco farming has been highlighted as another concerning area in the tobacco industry due to its alleged contributions to food insecurity, among other challenges. A look into the economic, health, environmental, political, and social determinants of tobacco farming may better help decision makers understand the complexity of agricultural practices and why they exist. Although fighting tobacco and hunger seems to be a unilateral fight, many countries still vary in their political and economic support towards the cause.

As responsible delegates of the WHO, it is imperative that you create resolutions that cater to this delicate issue at hand. The emerging benefits and threats of tobacco farming must be meticulously weighed to reach a conclusion on the best course of action for nations dependent on, beneficiaries of, or adversaries to the success of the industry. My hope is that by the end of this committee, you will adequately create resolutions that consider multiple variables affecting communities such that the WHO can conscientiously support and implement your proposed solutions.

Boeing Board of Directors

In 2018 and 2019, two flights of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft operated respectively by Lion Air, an Indonesian airline, and Ethiopian Airlines, fatally crashed, resulting in a collective 346 deaths. While

Boeing initially suggested pilot error was at fault, after investigation, notices were quickly sent out regarding flaws in the design of the aircraft, mainly concerning an engine too large and faulty software that overcompensated in correcting this — dubbed the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS). Shortly after, the United States grounded the aircraft, and many regulatory bodies around the world quickly followed suit. This led to a crisis for Boeing, which had long depended on the 737 as one of the most successful product lines. With many pending orders from airlines around the world, the grounding of the 737 MAX made the future of Boeing look grim.

This committee begins shortly after the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 and the subsequent grounding by the United States's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). With the company in crisis after hundreds of people died and doubts and lack of trust in the company's engineering, testing, and design teams, the Board of Directors is now assembled to react to these tragic accidents and the aftermath, and to determine personnel, strategy, and public policy responses within the board, within the executive leadership of the company, and beyond.

Council of the Houses of York and Lancaster

The Wars of the Roses — known at the time as the Civil Wars — were a series of intermittent conflicts fought over the English throne between 1455 and 1487. Pitting two rival factions of the Plantagenet dynasty — the House of Lancaster and the House of York — against each other, these wars altered the English political landscape, reshaped alliances, and generated a profound legacy that continues to shape modern Britain.

Our committee takes place in late 1470, following Henry VI's return to the throne after nearly a decade of Yorkist rule under Edward IV. An extremely weak monarch, Henry presided over an unstable court of uneasy allies. In an attempt to transcend the petty squabbles that surround him, Henry has called together a council of all the major players in the civil wars (the delegates in this committee!), with the ultimate goal of ending the incessant fighting among the English nobility and returning the nation to peace for the first time in decades. Henry has promised safe passage to all the nobles whom he has invited, and they have all accepted his invitation out of respect for the institution of the monarchy, despite the fact that many nobles may not share Henry's interests. The delegates (English nobles) to this committee (council of the warring houses) have therefore come together with the ostensible purpose of ending the Wars of the Roses, but many may have in mind differing goals that advance their self-interest. Let the intrigue commence!

Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union

In the early hours of April 26, 1986, the worst nuclear disaster in human history unfolded. The number four reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant underwent an unthinkable nuclear

meltdown, resulting in the endangerment of countless Soviet citizens. In a single night, the small town of Chernobyl became the center of all Soviet efforts as the world held its breath. The resulting crisis would see the actions of the few determine the fate of millions as the future of the mighty Soviet Union hung in the balance.

In this committee, delegates will act as representatives in the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (CMSU) to manage the Chernobyl crisis in the hours following the meltdown. The CMSU drew talent from all corners of the Soviet Union, providing the executive authorities in the USSR with diverse perspectives on addressing crises. With so many factions and interests at play, can this council come to a consensus, solve the crisis, and save the Soviet Union? History lies in your hands.