



OHCHR

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TUMUN VII





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Letter from the Chair

Dear delegates,

Welcome to Tufts University Model United Nations Conference VII and the committee on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). My name is Katie Spiropoulos and I will be your 2023 President of the General Assembly and chair of this committee. I am a Freshman majoring in International Relations and Theater Performance Studies, with a minor in Music. I am from Oklahoma City, OK and outside of MUN, at Tufts, I write for the Tufts Daily, play club field hockey, and do theater. I also love listening to music, baking, and exploring Boston!

Especially since this is my first TUMUN, I am so excited to share this experience with all of you. We will have such a meaningful and effective committee and I cannot wait to see everyone discuss and debate these topics. You all have the chance to discuss some very critical and relevant issues in this committee and while Model UN at its core is a simulation, your voices are the ones of tomorrow, and what you do in this committee matters. This committee will be discussing women's healthcare, rights, and protection and I hope that you all take the opportunity to make your voices heard, while also creating a respectful and professional environment. In the end, we all want change and the only way to achieve the change we need is by discussing difficult issues and brainstorming realistic solutions.

For your preparation for TUMUN, each delegate will need to write a short position paper covering the two topics. While format is not super important, your paper should be in 12 point font, double spaced, one inch margins, and preferably Times New Roman or Georgia font. It should also contain a header with each topic, delegate name, country name, and committee name. Your paper should be no shorter than 2 pages and no longer than 4 and must include background on each topic as well as your country's individual opinions and priorities. Please include proper citations in Chicago style for all of your sources and make sure you do NOT cite the background guide. Do some outside research and try to have a little fun discovering your nation's interests, worries, and past actions on the topics! Also, feel free to access any sources included in this document. Additionally, outline strategies and solutions for both topics that you're going to use in committee in order to best represent your country's best interest. Only one paper is



required but do make sure you discuss both of our committee's topics, while also making clear which is more significant to your nation's position. Please email your papers to me at katherine.spiropoulos@tufts.edu by Feb. 28!

With that, I am so excited to read/hear your position papers, draft resolutions, and speeches, and cannot wait to see all the sides of your creativity, knowledge, and passion thrive in committee. Please feel free to email me if you have any questions!

Best,

Katie Spiropoulos

Email: katherine.spiropoulos@tufts.edu



Introduction to the Committee:

The United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNHRC) was created in December 1993 to protect and ensure all human rights are included under international law. The UNHRC continues to seek protections for human rights throughout all aspects of the UN, while also chairing the Human Rights Council. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights has enumerated specific guaranteed rights, but continues to develop through the OHCHR. Through this sect of the UN, nations have the ability to propose and discuss policy that both amends existing international laws as well as introduces new codes and declarations. A few aspects of the OHCHR's role include working and assisting governments in fulfilling their human rights obligations, providing a discussion forum for today's human rights violations, and acting as the principal focal point for human rights research, education, and activities in conjunction with its wide range of international partners.

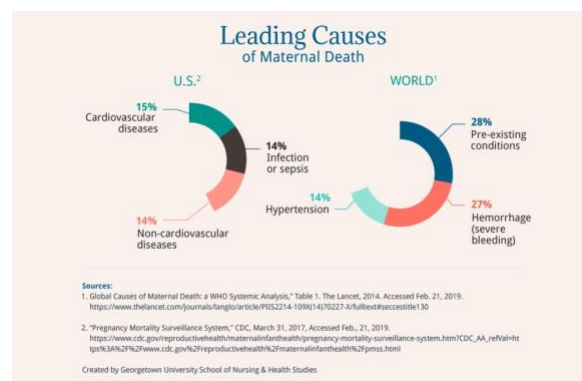
The formal OHCHR commission is made up of 47 member states that represent the different regions of the world and are elected by the UN's general assembly. This committee session of the OHCHR will also include 32 additional states that will observe and discuss either in petition for membership or educational purposes. All nations will have the same voting and speaking privileges within the committee.

Through its mandate, the OHCHR continues to strive to guarantee all civil and political rights are ensured throughout the covenant without any kind of discrimination. This section of the commission will individually focus on the continuing protection of the essential human right of maternal health as well as the protection of women in the prostitution trade. At the open of session, delegates will have the opportunity to vote for which topic they as a committee would like to focus debate on. The commission will have the ability to discuss protections for the prevention of maternal morbidity as well as the discussion of other maternal health-related rights already included in the Declaration of Human Rights. The



commission will also be able to discuss moves towards the decriminalization of prostitution on a global scale and would debate the legal procedures for doing so. The commission in its power also can amend said declaration and could look into other related rights that need further research and protection. This committee seeks to work together through the body of the UN and the OHCHR to take active steps toward protecting women across the globe. Whether it be through educational, financial, or legal measures, the commission will work to ensure that women are protected both in their health and also regardless of their occupation.

Topic 1: Ensuring and Developing Maternal Healthcare Around the World



Statement of the Problem

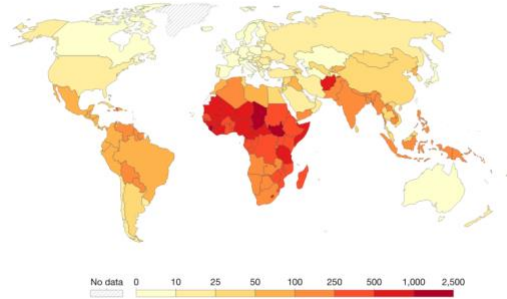
A simple fact is that women are dying every single day. Whether it be from complications during pregnancy or postpartum or lack of access to menstrual products and contraceptives, maternal healthcare is an issue that cannot be ignored. Additionally, regardless of socioeconomic standing or power, maternal healthcare affects all nations to some degree. Even the most developed countries like the United States have an abysmal maternal mortality rate of 17.2 per 100,000 and it is only going up. Access to menstrual products, prenatal care, and proper gynecology checkups are virtually nonexistent in many developing nations, and even the leaders of our world are defined by financial status. Currently, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) cites that the leading causes of death are hemorrhages, cardiovascular problems such as cardiomyopathy, and infections such as sepsis; However countries around the world do not do proper cardiovascular exams or regular checkups for signs of arrhythmia or infection.



Maternal mortality ratio, 2020

The maternal mortality ratio is the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination per 100,000 live births.

OurWorld
in Data



Source: Gapminder (2010); WHO (2019); OECD (2022)

OurWorldInData.org/maternal-mortality - CC BY

While, in 2017 the Maternal Mortality Rate worldwide was on the decline everywhere except for two countries, the Dominican Republic and the United States, globally, the threat to maternal health is still very present. Still, even in countries where the maternal mortality rate has seen a decline, issues surrounding postpartum mental and physical health still exist, as well as proper overall women's health. Currently, the CDC estimates that 1 in 8 women experience symptoms of postpartum depression and most are in need of additional insurance coverage so that these women can receive the care they need to be fully available parents. Additionally, mothers in low-income communities are at a significantly higher risk for maternal mortality as they often do not have access to essentials such as prenatal vitamins, regular OB-GYN appointments,

or clean and safe birthing facilities, not to mention mental health resources. These women are also frequently improperly educated regarding the warning signs of possible prenatal health issues (i.e. how to check for bleeding or high blood pressure), and they also often do not know which foods or substances to avoid or prioritize during pregnancy. Politics often gets in the way in these individual countries but if left up to the OHCHR, more universal, and thus equitable, solutions can be determined.

History/Past UN (OCHR) Actions

In its human rights-based approaches to maternal health and specifically the maternal morbidity crisis, the OHCHR has produced two technical guides to the application of their techniques. In addition to tips for the implementation of human rights-based policies, these documents also introduce programs to reduce maternal mortality generally as well as under-5 child mortality and morbidity. Along with partner agencies like the UNFPA and the WHO among others, the OHCHR has produced Reflection Guides directed at different groups to help them tailor



specific policies and programs centered on a right-based approach to maternal and child health.

Next Courses of Action

While the work done in the past by the OHCHR is essential and noble, it is time for the commission to step up and implement active policies. Given the state of maternal health in the world right now it is no longer enough, it's just dancing around the point and offering outlines of ideas. Instead, nations must come together and find actual solutions that can be implemented across the globe, and the OHCHR is the only group with the connections and resources to make this possible. Through directives and joint resolutions, this committee will be asked to find solutions for things such as the maternal mortality crisis, proper access to contraceptives, and prenatal and postpartum healthcare education. Some issues for the committee to focus on are maternal morbidity, abortion, birth control, other contraceptives, child mortality, health insurance, preeclampsia, hemorrhages, and postpartum depression. The committee is advised to look into agencies such as the WHO and the

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health as well as the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights of Harvard University, to not only form partnerships with the OHCHR, but also for other programs currently being developed.

Additionally, references and amendments can be made to the UN's Declaration on Human Rights to build on past solutions as well as already enumerated human rights that center around maternal healthcare while working towards solving this problem for good. This committee will need to work together to find sustainable and productive solutions that are not focused regionally but instead access the networks that the wide range of countries in the OHCHR provide. The committee will work together to find solutions through UN relief programs, their governments, or other organizations such as NGOs and charity groups like the Red Cross. As a commission of the United Nations, this committee will have access to UN resources as well as individual country funds and partner organizations. Maternal healthcare is not an issue that can be tackled by one nation alone, but



instead must be a global effort so as to protect those who give life to the world.

Questions to Consider

1. Maternal health is an issue that depends largely on the governmental regime of a country. Consider how different nations may be able to use their resources in conjunction with the UN to improve access and healthcare, as well as evaluate the difficulties that more limited governmental structures pose. How can countries like the US and the UK seek to tackle this issue versus Afghanistan or Korea?
2. Although some countries like Canada and Sweden already have a universal healthcare plan in place, how does health insurance and overall financial access to doctors impact the UN's and OHCHR's ability to reach patients in need? Consider your country's individual situation and how it may help other nations as well.
3. There are many different facets of maternal and female healthcare. What aspects are

most significant to your country and which have either your nation, a partner nation, or the UN/OHCHR already begun to address?



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Topic 2: Discussing the Decriminalization of Prostitution and Consensual Sex Work in order to Protect Against Human Trafficking

Statement of the Problem

Currently, the OHCHR and the UN define prostitution as the business or practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment. Human trafficking, defined as the use of force or coercion in order to obtain labor or sexual acts from people involuntarily, is an ever-evolving crisis around the world. While anyone can be vulnerable to this threat, prostitutes are continuously one of the most likely to be affected by the horror of human trafficking. The criminalization of sex work exposes individuals to higher rates of diseases and unwanted pregnancy, in addition to leaving them more vulnerable to violent crime. Criminalization means that individuals are able to be prosecuted or reprimanded if caught breaking the law, which in this case is actively soliciting in

a state or country where sex work is illegal. Human trafficking and abduction are not the only horrific crimes that sex workers have the highest rates of, but also murder, rape, assault, and abuse. Additionally, due to their more taboo or even illegal profession, prostitutes often cannot seek the help and protection they need from law enforcement or other citizens. Criminalization can also force workers to operate in more dangerous places in order to avoid being caught by the police. This leads to crimes against prostitutes either being ignored or undiscovered, furthering the human trafficking ring and threat. In addition to victims being silenced, their families cannot seek the justice or retribution they deserve. Criminalization also contributes to the imperative issue of overcrowding in prisons. Additionally, overcrowding affects the legal and living conditions of all nations regardless of their penal system's organization.

A large portion of the world chooses to ignore prostitution as a dark corner of the world or sect of society that exists only in gossip and the entertainment business, but in reality, it is a lively and active community. In any given city there is some form of



prostitution some places are just more obvious than others. The red light district in Amsterdam is an example of prostitution on display, but in fact, this neighborhood is no more of an active prostitution zone than the thousands of communities from New York to Beijing to London. Furthermore, the criminalization of sex work further marginalizes the minority groups of society such as people of color and transgender individuals who are already often forced to hide in the shadows.

History

Many countries in states have already begun to take the steps towards legalization and decriminalization of prostitution. In the Netherlands, prostitution has been legal since 2000 and operates on a legalized system of brothels. Through this model individual brothels are recognized similar to companies and individuals are protected under their membership in the brothel, so long as it is recognized under the law. However, even this model of registered municipalities is not perfect as migrant sex workers often can not

register under a legalized brothel. Additionally, this model makes it virtually impossible for individual sex workers to operate so those financially or legally unable to join a brothel are simply left with nowhere to turn. Also while the Dutch system seeks to lower the rates of human trafficking in fact “anti-trafficking rhetoric has increased stigma and discrimination against sex workers, including discrimination by financial institutions, landlords, and public services.”¹ However legalization does bring significantly more protection to those workers able to register. A few issues the Dutch system does improve is that it allows workers to come to law enforcement when in danger without fear of arrest or penalties, as well as makes it safer and easier for prostitutes to seek the medical care they need.

The Netherlands, while the most public, is not the only country to go about decriminalization or legalization. After a long fought battle organized by sex workers, New Zealand decriminalized prostitution in 2003. Workers cited human rights as their

¹ “CEDAW Report Netherlands: Unfinished Business - Women’s Rights in the ...,” accessed December 27, 2022,

<https://www.nswp.org/resource/member-publications/cedaw-report-netherlands-unfinished-business-womens-rights-the>.



main motivating factors and were able to agree with lawmakers that the industry should not be forced to operate underground, but rather that it was safer for the country as a whole to allow prostitution to operate clearly in society. Unlike in the Netherlands, no specific organization or location was specified, but rather sex workers are allowed to operate similar to small home businesses without much government intervention. New Zealand, along with New South Wales, Australia decriminalized prostitution in 1995; they aim to operate around the idealized policy that removes penalties for independent contractors as well as businesses. In this case, both regions consider prostitution a legitimate profession that is recognized and allowed access to all health and safety resources like any field. As for legalization in the United States, Nevada is currently the only state with legal prostitution; however, it is still heavily regulated and there are large aspects that fall outside of the narrow guidelines and these aspects are still criminalized.

While the commission has never directly addressed the issue of decriminalization, they have published

guides on both the importance of protection against child prostitution, human trafficking, and a statement on women's anti-discrimination. The OHCHR also remains committed to solving the human trafficking crisis and developed the "Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking" as well as has published multiple documents on instrumental instruments concerning trafficking and tips on how to recognize and prevent all forms of human trafficking and rights violations.

[Next Courses of Action](#)

This committee will focus on the issue of prostitution and the legal discussions of decriminalization versus legalization. Committee members will look at past examples in countries, like the Netherlands, that have gone about decriminalizing prostitution as well as brainstorm other, innovative solutions. The committee is encouraged to explore options outside of traditional legal routes in order to find the best solutions possible. Through the diverse membership of the OHCHR, solutions should be representative of all of the regions of the world as well as countries



with varying degrees of how affected by prostitution they are. Nations of all socioeconomic levels are encouraged to consider the effects of prostitution on the economy and tourism. For example in Thailand, prostitution is illegal but discreetly recognized by the government due to its effect on the country's economy and tourism². The committee will use its wide range of nations to determine if a generalized UN decided solution is needed or if more country specific legal actions are what is necessary.

Whether it be through directives or joint resolutions, the committee will look into cooperative solutions to the dangers of human trafficking, specifically involving prostitutes. There are many courses of action legally and ethically, and the committee will work to find the best solution so as to make the issue of prostitution as safe and equitable as possible for all parties involved.

While some countries are more impacted by the horror of human

trafficking and the presence of prostitution than others, there are no nations in the world or OHCHR that would not benefit from seeking to protect women regardless of their occupation. Like past actions, this committee will put out guiding documents, but will also look for more active solutions that partner with different governments as well as partner agencies. Through this committee progress towards the decline of human trafficking and protection of women and sex workers around the world will be achieved.

Questions to Consider

1. Different nations have individual versions of the criminal justice system. Think about what incarceration or prosecution means for your nation. How does decriminalization versus legalization truly impact the literal consequences for sex workers in your country?
2. Consider how religion and morals factor into your government and

² Aurora Amendral and Photos by Allison Joyce, "How the Pandemic Has Upended the Lives of Thailand's Sex Workers," NPR (NPR, February 3, 2021),

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/02/03/960848011/how-the-pandemic-has-upended-the-lives-of-thailands-sex-workers>.



legal system. Does your nation have separation between church and state or is led more by a universal religion or set of moral rules? How does this impact the opinion or view of prostitution and sex work?

3. Prostitution also has the capability to bring in additional tourism revenue for nations. What are the financial and socioeconomic ties to sex work in your nation and some generally across the globe? How would legalization or decriminalization impact that?



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