United Nations Security Council

Formulating a Procedure for Quarantining Countries that Pose a Public Health Risk to the Rest of the World

Research Report

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Issue: *Formulating a Procedure for Quarantining Countries that Pose a Public Health Risk to the Rest of the World*

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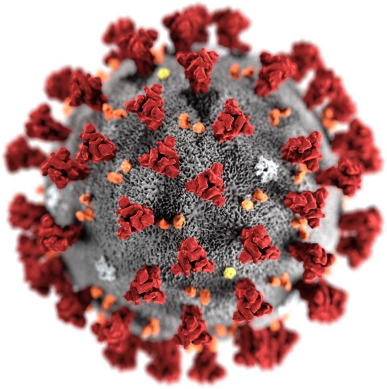

Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is the disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. From the day it emerged in December 2019, it has resulted in a significant number of fatalities throughout the world, posing an extraordinary threat to public health, food production, economy, and social order. Although it has been more than a year since the virus changed the way we live for good and the use of vaccines such as Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson has been authorized, several countries are still fighting to ease the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic and are unable to provide their citizens with the health care they deserve. Without the formation of an international protocol regarding the countries which are struggling to tackle COVID-19 and are in quarantine, the far-reaching negative impact of the virus cannot be diminished.

Specifically, this issue focuses on a seemingly apparent solution to contagious diseases: travel restrictions to areas that have a high concentration of infected individuals. During the 2003 SARS epidemic, the World Health Organisation (WHO) called to uphold their recommendations on combatting an infectious disease[1]. This, in turn, calls to "review travel history in affected areas", "refuse entry of unaffected persons to affected areas" and "implement exit screening and/or restrictions on persons from affected areas.", though it also allowed for designated ground crossings, where travel was to be allowed under strict requirements for preventing the spread of the disease.[2] Although the WHO does not make legally binding decisions, their opinion on the matter is relevant.

Here, the conflict arises of reduced freedom versus increased safety. The WHO chooses a stance that highly prioritises containment over other factors. Whether or not that is desirable can be debated upon, but one must not deny that there are other factors at play. One such factor is economic damage, for example. The Council must set boundaries for when infectious diseases become too harmful, when it becomes justifiable to take the seemingly extreme measure of quarantining a Member State, while taking into account both sovereignty and international security, two essential aspects of the UN.

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[1] https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/health-topics/sars/wha56-29-agenda-item-14-16-sars.pdf?sfvrsn=16254555_8
[2] https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241580496

Definition of Key Terms

COVID-19:
Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.[3]

Pandemic:
An epidemic occurring over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people.[4]

Quarantine:
The period for which a person (or animal) is kept in isolation to prevent the spread of a contagious disease.[5]

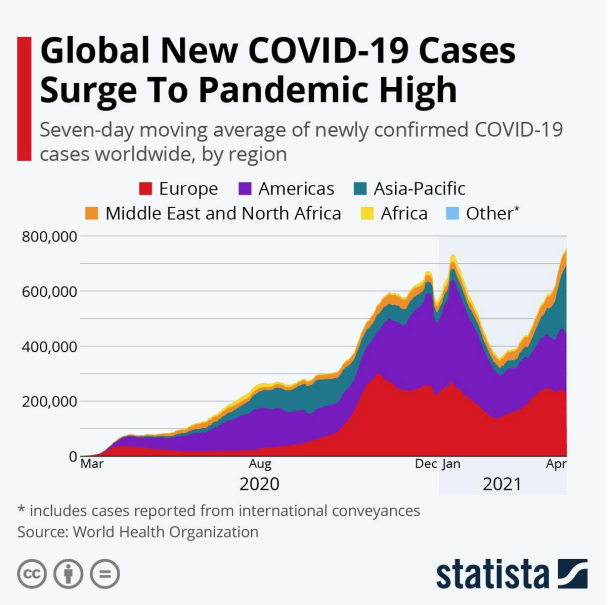
Least Developed Countries (LDCs):
Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are low-income countries facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets.[6]

General Overview

COVID-19 was firstly discovered in Wuhan, China in December 2019. A lockdown in Wuhan and the neighbouring territories were unable to contain the disease, resulting in the virus rapidly spreading throughout mainland China and around the world. On January 30, 2020, a Public Health Emergency was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO), and on March 11, 2020, the outbreak was declared as a pandemic. Since 2021, many variants of the virus have appeared and influenced numerous states, with the Alpha, Beta, and Delta ones being the most lethal. Over 244 million cases and 4.95 million deaths have been recorded as of October 26, 2021, making the COVID-19 pandemic one of the worst pandemics throughout history.

[3] https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1
[4] https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199976720.001.0001/acref-9780199976720-e-1373
[5] https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100357817
[6] https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category.html

Although the influence of it varies from nation to nation, the virus has certainly had



extensive and long-term consequences such as increased poverty and inequalities, damaged global economy, suspension of legislative activities, and food insecurity. Recognizing such consequences is critical in order for countries to establish fruitful policies and protect the health of their people.

Economy

The global economy was shaken by the pandemic, severely damaging the economies of the United States of America, Europe, and Latin America. In April 2021, a consensus report by American intelligence agencies concluded, "Efforts to contain and manage the virus have reinforced nationalist trends globally, as some states turned inward to protect their citizens and sometimes cast blame on marginalized groups." Controversial strategies disrupted international trade as well.

Countries with substantial economies such as the United States of America and China are expected to immunize the majority of their people, successfully reducing the number of cases. However, there is a lot of ambiguity about the future since how long the pandemic will last is uncertain.

COVID-19 has already delayed the development of the global economy. A longer-lasting pandemic, business bankruptcies, financial obstacles, or even societal upheaval may further spoil the recovery process.

Although per capita income growth between emerging markets and developing economies is anticipated to be 4.9% by the end of this year, there is a high possibility of it staying flat in low-income countries.

According to the World Bank, around 689 million people currently live in extreme poverty. Vulnerable populations —women, children, and unskilled and informal workers— have been hit the hardest by these negative consequences of the pandemic.

Financial obstacles diminish the chance of countries to obtain vaccines and develop their health care and education structures in the fight against COVID-19, resulting in an increase in the number of cases in Less Developed Countries (LDCs).

Politics

COVID-19 has inflamed partisanship and polarisation around the world as bitter arguments have begun to explode over whom to scapegoat and whom to help first. It has had an international and domestic impact on politics, affecting the governing and political systems of multiple countries, causing legislative activity to be suspended, politicians to be isolated or killed, and elections to be rescheduled due to fears of the virus spreading. The pandemic has sparked larger discussions on political themes including the benefits of democracy and autocracy, governments' response to crises, the politics of prevalent beliefs, and the suitability of current international cooperation structures. Furthermore, the pandemic has posed various complications to democracy in certain areas of the world, causing it to be weakened and harmed. During the pandemic, views of government responsiveness and performance evolved, leading to a shift in citizens' trust in institutions. While some restrictions on liberty have been justified by medical advice, others have been interpreted as drives toward power consolidation and a weapon against political freedom, particularly in authoritarian countries.

The United Nations Secretary-General launched the "UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19" in June 2020. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNSC) has been chastised for its delayed reaction, particularly in relation to the UN's worldwide ceasefire, which attempts to provide humanitarian access to the world's most vulnerable individuals in war zones.

Education

The pandemic has had a significant impact on educational systems across the world. The majority of governments have temporarily halted education practices in facilities, resulting in many people opting for online learning. As of September 2020, roughly 1.077 billion students have been affected due to school cancellations in reaction to the virus. Despite this, it is still unknown how and when students' educational and residential situations will return to normal.

Access to Food

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the world's agricultural and food systems. The number of people living in hunger is expected to increase by the end of 2021. This is largely due to a lack of food availability, which is directly correlated with lower wages, missed remittances, and, in certain situations, higher food prices. In nations with preexisting extreme food insecurity, this issue is rapidly becoming one of food production rather than mere access to food.

International Response

Travel Restrictions

Many countries have introduced restrictions, entry bans, and quarantines for the living who live in or have recently visited severely impacted areas as a result of the pandemic.

Other countries have implemented worldwide travel restrictions which apply to all foreign territories or have prohibited their residents from travelling. Although these policies have slowed down the rate of transmission of the virus, they have only had a minor impact on the total number of individuals infected since they were enacted after the virus had spread throughout communities.

Vaccines

Various vaccines have been licensed and supplied in a number of countries, and major immunization exercises have been underway since December 2020. Social distance, wearing face masks in public, ventilation and air-filtering, covering one's mouth while sneezing or coughing, hand washing, sanitizing surfaces, and quarantining those who have been exposed or are symptomatic are advised as preventive measures. Currently, most treatments are aimed at alleviating the symptoms, but the international community is working on developing antiviral drugs.

The European Union authorized the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine on December 21, 2020. On December 27, 2020, vaccinations began to be delivered. The Moderna vaccine received approval on January 6, 2021, while the AstraZeneca vaccine received approval on January 29, 2021.

More than 4.6 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccination have been delivered in over 190 countries as of mid-August 2021. The vaccine developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca is known to be the most commonly used in the world.

Anti-vaccination Movements

Fighting scepticism and resistance in the public's response to the COVID-19 vaccination is critical to the public's health.

It is essential for individuals to realize that this is a question of public health, that the research is verifiable, and that the COVID-19 vaccination is supported by 99.9% of the world's medical professionals.

As mentioned above, financial and political obstacles and the spread of misinformation regarding the coronavirus make it hard for communities to take action against COVID-19. Providing every country with equal opportunities is fundamental for a procedure to be formed in order to diminish the virus and the negative influence it has had.

Major Parties Involved

People's Republic of China

The first animal-to-human transfer of the virus took place in Wuhan, China. It marked the start of an epidemic that ended up turning the world upside down, and a political debate on the naming of the virus. President Trump, disregarding the WHO's stance from 2015 on the naming of new human infectious diseases[7], encouraged his followers to call the virus the 'Chinese virus', further stigmatising it. The PRC has also received blame for both letting the virus spread to the rest of the world, and its lack of transparency in the first few, vital, weeks.

United States of America

As one of the world's most populated countries, the USA has seen approximately 44.46 million confirmed COVID-19 cases. Although the country had economic advantages, issues regarding the health care system and societal upheaval stop the American Government from decreasing the number of cases.

[7] https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/163636/WHO_HSE_FOS_15.1_eng.pdf

India
As a country with a population of almost 1.4 billion people, India has seen one of the highest world COVID-19 case counts so far with 33.9 million confirmed cases to date.

Brazil
With 21.58 million confirmed COVID-19 cases as of 11 October, Brazil has seen one of the world's highest cumulative coronavirus case counts to date.

United Kingdom
The UK has seen approximately 8.23 million COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began in early 2020, placing it fourth on the current list of countries with the highest cumulative coronavirus cases.

World Health Organization (WHO)
The World Health Organization (WHO) is a key player in worldwide coordination in the fight against COVID-19. It has sponsored various initiatives, including the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, the UN COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force, and the solidarity trial to investigate potential therapeutic alternatives for the disease. By the end of 2021, the WHO's COVAX vaccine-sharing initiative is planning on giving 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine for free or at a reduced cost and has already started doing so.

Timeline of Events

31 December 2019	A case of "pneumonia of an unknown cause" was reported by China.
9 January 2020	The first confirmed death was announced by the Chinese Government.
10 January 2020	The outbreak was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by WHO.
11 January 2020	The first death from COVID-19 was reported by China.
11 February 2020	The new virus was given the name "COVID-19".
11 March 2020	The situation was declared as a pandemic by WHO.
4 April 2020	1 million confirmed cases were announced by WHO.
14 December 2020	A variant was reported by the United Kingdom.
31 December 2020	The first emergency use verification for a vaccine was published by WHO.
18 May 2021	4.7% of the world's population were confirmed to be fully vaccinated.

Possible Solutions

Long-term, sustainable strategies need to be formed to solve the difficulties facing the health and agri-food industries. Helping the countries in need of vaccines, preventing the spread of misinformation regarding the virus, respecting the measures taken and recommended by WHO, and increasing the number of international virtual meetings could help states establish fruitful policies and address the aforementioned problems. Although these may seem like insignificant changes, they could result in an immediate decrease in the number of cases worldwide and diminish the health risk posed on all citizens.