

**Committee: UNODC**

**Topic: Preventing the Illicit Distribution of Counterfeit Medication**

**Report of the Chairs**

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## **I. Theme of the Conference**

Model United Nations San Antonio (MUNSA) is a conference dedicated to fostering authentic and passionate debate amongst delegates in order to generate solutions to current global issues. The theme of *MUNSA XXIV: Envision* encapsulates our mission to urge delegates to foresee a future in which these problems have been dissolved. With collaboration in mind, delegates from every committee are encouraged to visualize innovative resolutions and a prosperous world to come. Together, we will propel ourselves into an age in which brilliant ideas converge to transform our world and address its most paramount issues.

## **II. Rationale**

Counterfeit medication is a multifaceted issue that affects many nations in terms of public health and economic stability. Public health, a great indicator of a country's prosperity, can be affected by the distribution of counterfeit medication through the uncertainties that arise due to such medication. Consumers, who rely on their medication to remain healthy, are often swindled into buying fake medication that does nothing to improve their health. The economic stability of a nation may also be threatened, as money is funneled into underground organizations dedicated to the production and distribution of counterfeit medication, as opposed to organizations with public health in mind. Many developing nations are heavily impacted by these trades, thus leaving the country vulnerable to disease; however, no nation is completely free of the manipulative schemes that advance trade in counterfeit medication. This committee, with the collaboration of all delegations, hopes to build a healthy, prosperous future for all in which effective and affordable medication is accessible.

## **III. Background of the Topic**

For the purposes of this conference, illicit refers to the illegal distribution and trade of medicine that has not been prescribed by a healthcare professional, and counterfeit medication refers to medicine that is labeled in misleading and sometimes outright false ways, in terms of the product's ingredients, purpose, or efficacy. 1 in 10 medical products circulating in low and middle-income countries is either substandard in quality or falsified. This number includes pills, vaccines, and diagnostic kits.<sup>1</sup> This is not a new issue as it has been around since the mass manufacturing of medicine, and despite UN efforts, the problem doesn't seem to be disappearing anytime soon.

As the trade has been growing greatly these past decades, the CCPCJ (United Nations on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice) adopted resolution 20/6 in 2011 that specifically addressed fraudulent medicine and its trafficking.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this issue hasn't held the UN spotlight in many years, but due to the threat this issue poses, we urge delegates to find solutions in a timely manner.

#### **IV. Contemporary Evidence of the Topic**

No region of the world is particularly safe from fake medicines, although it is more commonly encountered in developing nations where medicine is too expensive for most consumers to buy. There are 3 main deficiencies that factor into diminished access to healthcare in developing nations; these are lack of knowledge, lack of medical practitioners, and lack of resources.<sup>4</sup> In developed nations there is a growing trend toward fake "lifestyle" medications for treating erectile dysfunction and other illnesses.<sup>10</sup> The illicit trade of fake medicine is incredibly hard to track especially when they take the form of antibiotics, therefore counterfeit medication has been sold all over the world.

Numerous governments advise their citizens to not buy medicine online, and even travel companies suggest that travelers not buy medicine while abroad. In February of 2019, WHO issued a global alert about a fake cancer drug made with paracetamol because it has been circulating around Europe. The WHO issued this warning because they are worried that it could

flow into the NHS, a publicly funded healthcare system that provides permanent UK residents with medicines and medical personnel.<sup>2</sup> The WHO also initiated the Global Surveillance and Monitoring System to encourage countries to report incidents of substandard and falsified medical products in a structured and systematic format, which will help develop a more accurate and validated assessment of the problem.<sup>9</sup> Medicines are intended to heal people, but it is evident that fraudulent medicine can only be a force for harm. This committee must work towards not only eradicating fraudulent medication but supplying reliable and affordable healthcare to all to combat the production of said fraudulent medication.

## **V. References and Research Resources**

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10. (n.d.). "Background Information on Counterfeit Drugs." Retrieved Sept 6, 2019 from <https://www.bayer.com/en/background-information-on-counterfeit-drugs.aspx#who>
11. (n.d.). "Recognizing Fakes." Retrieved Sept 6, 2019 from <https://www.bayer.com/en/recognizing-fakes.aspx>

## **VI. Note to the Delegates**

Greetings, delegates. We, the UNODC Chairs, would like to thank you for choosing the UNODC Committee. We hope you find our topics interesting, complex, and opportune for debate. If you have any questions about the topics or anything MUNSA-related, feel free to contact us at the emails below.

**Kyren Stephenson:** [kstephenson2636@stu.neisd.net](mailto:kstephenson2636@stu.neisd.net)

**Aaron Cruz:** [acruz2715@stu.neisd.net](mailto:acruz2715@stu.neisd.net)

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## **VII. Director General Contact Information**

Joseph Ruelas - [jruelas4856@stu.neisd.net](mailto:jruelas4856@stu.neisd.net)

Dana Marion - [dm Marion0455@stu.neisd.net](mailto:dm Marion0455@stu.neisd.net)