



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

Preventing the Spread of Infectious Diseases



From the Chairs:

Hello, delegates! My name is Akhilesh Kuppili, and I will be your head chair for the Middle School World Health Organization (WHO) committee. I'm currently a sophomore at Portola High with 3 years of MUN experience. Outside of MUN, I compete in Science Olympiad, play soccer on my school team (and formerly for a club), and play the cello in my school's orchestra. I also love listening to all kinds of music. During my time in MUN, I've been able to strengthen my research, writing, and speaking skills while connecting with so many amazing people. I can't wait to meet all of you on conference day and see the creative solutions you come up with. Until then, good luck and see you soon!

– Akhilesh Kuppili, Head Chair

Hello, delegates! My name is Asher Bajwa, a sophomore at Portola High School, and I'll be your vice chair for MS WHO. I've been doing MUN for around 2 and a half years and have grown considerably from it. MUN really challenges and improves your public speaking and impromptu skills, forcing you to adapt and mature. I spend a lot of my free time hanging out with



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

my friends, learning the guitar, or playing Lacrosse. This should be a no-stress conference. All of you have a long way to go in developing your skillset and expanding your MUN experience. Take this as an opportunity to try new things during your conference. Relax, socialize, and have fun with it. I'm sure you all will do great!

– Asher Bajwa, Vice Chair

Hello, delegates! My name is Lauren Poei, and I am a sophomore at Portola High School. I'll be your tech for MS WHO. I have attended one MUN conference so far this year and have learned a lot about how MUN conferences are structured and work. After that first conference, MUN taught me important social skills and helped me to step out of my comfort zone. Outside of MUN, I do fencing, dance, piano, and love hanging out with my friends. I am very excited to be a part of this conference and look forward to meeting all of you!

– Lauren Poei, Tech



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

Committee Overview

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency within the United Nations, dealing with major global health issues. Established in 1948, the body has 194 member states and works alongside various countries to combat the spread of diseases such as malaria, COVID-19, while setting the standard for health services and initiatives around the world. Our committee will discuss the need and methods of preventing the spread of these illnesses through global cooperation. We hope to see viable solutions that are creative and realistic, and that focus on international cooperation and the protection of future generations. Use this Background Guide as a topic synopsis to guide your preparation for the conference.

Position Paper Requirements

- 2 pages maximum (single-spaced)
 - Background
 - UN Involvement
 - Country Policy
 - Possible Solutions
- Works Cited (not included in the 2-page limit)
- Times New Roman 12-point font
- 1-inch borders with header:
 - **Committee:**
 - **Topic:**
 - **Country:**
- DO NOT include your name/school name on the position paper

Position Paper Submission

Position Papers will be due **February 14, 2026, @ 11:59 PM** on this [Google Form](#). You will need to submit it in PDF or Google Doc format, with an accessible link set to “anyone with the link can view.” While position papers are optional for middle school, note that late papers will not be eligible for Research awards. If you have any questions, please email portolamodelun@gmail.com.



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

Background

The discovery of infectious diseases predates recorded history, but ever since humans became aware of them, these illnesses have remained among the leading causes of death worldwide. From malaria to tuberculosis to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, infectious diseases have claimed countless lives and devastated families. Often, their impact is underestimated or inadequately addressed until after the harm has occurred. To effectively prevent and control these diseases, it is important to understand how they spread, identify susceptible hosts, and consider the conditions that enable transmission.

Infectious diseases often spread through physical contact and poor hygiene. Usually, individuals 65 and older are more vulnerable to these illnesses and are at risk of experiencing greater health consequences than younger generations. As of November 2024, cumulative confirmed deaths caused by COVID-19 exceeded 7 million worldwide, including roughly 5.6 million deaths among older adults. Furthermore, confirmed cases exceeded 776 million. However, many infections likely went unreported, suggesting the number to be considerably higher. Pandemics such as COVID-19 serve as a prime testament to the need for an urgent and efficient response system to tackle disease.

Human lives are not the only area of concern when it comes to the consequences of infectious diseases. Through effective prevention of these illnesses, health systems, economies, and social orders will remain protected and balanced. The outbreak of Coronavirus reflected significant weaknesses in global health infrastructure and coordination, meaning that new strategies are needed.

To prevent global outbreaks of infectious diseases in the future and save the precious lives of many, resilient health systems must be built and retained, vaccinations must be universally accessible, and robust surveillance and early-warning networks for potential diseases must be strengthened.

UN Involvement:

The United Nations and the WHO have been at the forefront of disease protection and prevention for generations. The WHO, which was established in Geneva, 1948, is the main subsidiary of the United Nations responsible for the handling of diseases. They are responsible for leading efforts, especially during times of crisis (COVID-19), to provide vaccines, reputable information, and outbreak monitoring. The International Health Regulations (IHR) are a set of rules for how countries can detect and act upon a health emergency. Other programs with close ties to the WHO include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Joint United Nations Program on Aids (UNAIDS). These organizations work hand in hand with the WHO to promote vaccination, education, and sanitation, all to help in the fight against diseases.

Complementary Roles:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
 - SDG 3: Good Health & Wellbeing - ensures that all people are healthy, correlating directly with the absence of disease



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation - ensuring access to clean drinking water reduces the spread of diseases significantly

Although significant progress towards combating disease has been made, it still remains a global threat—especially in developing regions that may lack clean water or sanitation methods.

International Cooperation, resource management, education, and a strong healthcare system will all be essential to combating this issue permanently.

Regional Groups of Member States:

- African States
 - Due to limited resources and healthcare infrastructure, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cholera, and Malaria spread rapidly and in high numbers. For example, due to the lack of proper sanitation and healthcare systems in Nigeria, the country accounts for 30% of global malaria deaths. In the past, the WHO has worked closely with African health initiatives such as the Malaria Control Program and the African Health Observatory to promote vaccinations and proper sanitation education.
- Asia-Pacific States
 - A couple of decades ago, diseases like Polio ravaged these countries. Since then, countries such as Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Philippines have made strong progress in eradicating this disease as a whole. The WHO works closely here with ASEAN and individual national health ministries to monitor the spread of diseases and administer vaccinations.
- Eastern European States
 - Eastern European countries like Romania, Poland, and Ukraine have a history of working with the WHO and the ECDC. The countries' health ministries work alongside the WHO to track infectious disease outbreaks and manage disease outbreaks among displaced people. With the ongoing war in Ukraine, the WHO has put special effort into mitigating the sanitation decline.
- Latin American/Caribbean States
 - Latin American countries have partnered alongside the PAHO (Regional WHO office) in order to address COVID, dengue fever, and Zika. Other issues being tackled include the need for improved healthcare access, healthcare funding, and malaria. In alignment with numerous countries and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, public healthcare and healthcare funding have become a growing concern. Efforts are underway to create more clinics and hospitals to better respond to such outbreaks.
- Western European
 - Western European countries work directly with the WHO to support global health initiatives. They have strong healthcare systems in place, playing a leading role in



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

the WHO. These nations often forefront the spread of healthcare education and vaccine distribution. Countries include the UK, France, and Germany. However, the recent pandemic placed extreme strain on the network, exposing areas of international strain. This strain includes, but is not limited to, hospital capacity, burial capacity, and first-reponder shortages. This has prompted a recent investment into healthcare at a subregional and national level, with updated emergency procedures in place.

Solution Overview

When discussing solutions, it's important to address long-term goals along with other short-term aspects. Your solution(s) should include reforms on addressing, identifying, and preventing the spread of infectious diseases worldwide. Also, be sure to keep in mind how applicable your solution is to EVERYBODY, not just the country you are assigned to, to ensure that your solution is connected and relevant to the entirety of the UN. We would like you to form alliances with as many countries as possible, as this is a global issue that affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide. In many places, infectious diseases spread due to underlying conditions such as poverty and other vulnerabilities that give rise to environments where transmission is much easier. Collaboration is essential to solving this detrimental issue, and we hope to see solutions focusing on global modifications.

Key Areas of Focus:

- **Early Detection and Prevention:**
Focus on strengthening surveillance systems and ensuring faster reporting of outbreaks. WHO should support local diagnostic labs and promote real-time data sharing between countries to stop diseases before they spread.
- **Health Education and Misinformation:**
Emphasize the importance of accurate information on vaccines, hygiene, and prevention. Work with local leaders and communities directly rather than depending too heavily on NGOs, which can sometimes face issues with coordination or trust.
- **Innovative Funding:**
Explore creative funding methods, such as a small global travel levy or partnerships with the private sector, to ensure long-term investments in public health infrastructure.
- **New and Adaptive Strategies:**
Move beyond traditional WHO responses. Encourage new, flexible approaches to disease prevention that account for modern challenges like climate change, global travel, and the spread of misinformation online.



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

Questions to Consider

1. What are the most significant underlying vulnerabilities (e.g., poverty, informal housing, inadequate sanitation) that enable infectious diseases to spread, and how can your country address them?
2. What role should national governments play versus international or regional organisations in early-warning systems, surveillance, and outbreak response?
3. How can public health infrastructure and urban planning be better integrated to prevent disease spread in high-density or underserved urban areas?
4. What ethical-legal considerations arise when implementing measures such as quarantine, travel restrictions, or isolation to prevent infectious disease spread?
5. In resource-limited settings, how should countries prioritise investments in prevention (e.g., water/sanitation, housing, vaccination) versus treatment and outbreak response?
6. How can countries ensure that vulnerable populations (migrants, refugees, informal settlement residents, low-income households) are not left behind when designing disease-prevention policies?
7. What strategies can be employed to improve global cooperation to prevent infectious diseases from crossing borders?
8. How do climate change, urbanisation, mobility, and environmental degradation contribute to the risk of emerging infectious diseases, and what preventive actions should be taken?
9. What mechanisms can be put in place to monitor, evaluate, and adapt disease-prevention programmes to ensure effectiveness over time and across different urban and rural contexts?

Works Cited

“THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development.” *Sustainable Development Goals*,

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. Accessed 9 November 2025.



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

“About Global WASH | Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).” *CDC*, 29 July 2025,

<https://www.cdc.gov/global-water-sanitation-hygiene/about/index.html>. Accessed 9

November 2025.

“Constitution of the World Health Organization.” *World Health Organization (WHO)*,

<https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>. Accessed 9 November 2025.

“Countries | World Health Organization.” *World Health Organization (WHO)*,

<https://www.who.int/countries>. Accessed 9 November 2025.

“COVID-19 epidemiological update – 24 December 2024.” *World Health Organization (WHO)*,

24 December 2024,

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update---24-decembe>

r-2024? Accessed 9 November 2025.

Cucinotta, D., & Vanelli, M. (2020). WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic.

pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. <https://doi.org/10.23750/abm.v9i1i1.9397>

“HIV and AIDS - The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.” *Global Fund*, 10

September 2025, <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/hivaids/>. Accessed 9 November 2025.

“Innovative Financing Models for Resilient Critical Mineral Supply Chains.” *Milken Institute*, 9

September 2025,

[https://milkeninstitute.org/content-hub/research-and-reports/reports/innovative-financing-](https://milkeninstitute.org/content-hub/research-and-reports/reports/innovative-financing-models-resilient-critical-mineral-supply-chains)

models-resilient-critical-mineral-supply-chains. Accessed 9 November 2025.

“International health regulations.” *World Health Organization (WHO)*,

https://www.who.int/health-topics/international-health-regulations#tab=tab_1. Accessed

9 November 2025.



PORTOLA MODEL UNITED NATIONS

February 21, 2026 | World Health Organization

Krugman, Allison. "The State of Global Health Funding: August 2025." *Think Global Health*,

<https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/state-global-health-funding-august-2025>.

Accessed 9 November 2025.

"Regional offices." *World Health Organization (WHO)*,

<https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/regional-offices>. Accessed 9 November 2025.

"Results Report 2025 - The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria." *Global*

Fund, <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/results/>. Accessed 9 November 2025.

"Surveillance - Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS)." *World Health*

Organization (WHO),

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/surveillance/early-warning-alert-and-response-system-ewars>. Accessed 9 November 2025.

"The U.S. & The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria." *KFF*, 3 December 2024,

<https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/the-u-s-the-global-fund-to-fight-aids-tuberculosis-and-malaria/>. Accessed 9 November 2025.