Welcome to Biofest 2017!

Global Biotech Conference is an international committee convened to discuss and resolve issues related to advances in biotechnology and their impact on international relations.

Venue- Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Date & Time- 4th and 5th March

Registrations- Fill this form to indicate interest in participation. 25 delegates will be chosen and notified via email and phone.

The event

Topics of discussion
a) Biological Weapons in the Modern Era
b) Gene patenting- ethical issues, IPR regulations and international trade

Delegates are advised to be well-researched on the topics of discussion with emphasis on their country.

Format and Schedule
The event will be held over 2 days and the overall format will be similar to that of a Model UN.

Day 1: 9am-2pm

1. The session will start with 1-minute speeches by each delegate on their country's stance on the topic. They will take questions and comments by the Chairs and fellow delegates.
2. During and after the speeches, there will be debate on topics related to the agenda.
3. A situation of an international conflict related to the topics being discussed will be introduced to the delegates.
4. There will be a short formal debate where each country's stand on the conflict is discussed.
5. The committee will adjourn for the day, following which the delegates may have informal discussions on the crisis situation (similar to an unmoderated caucus in a Model UN).

Day 2: 9am-12pm

1. Delegates will present Resolutions to resolve the crisis.
2. Following for and against speeches, each resolution will be voted upon.
3. The session will end with a resolution being passed.

Introduction

Biological Weapons

A biological agent (such as a pathogenic microorganism or a neurotoxin) that can be used as a weapon to cause death or disease (usually on a large scale) is called a biological weapon. The intentional use of biological pathogens for destruction has been around for centuries, with historic evidence dating back to 1200 BC. The ancient Greeks are known to have used bioweapons as tools of self defence against vast enemy populations. A more recent example is the 2001 anthrax attacks (known as Amerithrax) that occurred within the United States. Anthrax spores were sent through mail to several news media offices, killing five people and infecting 17 others.

Bioterrorism is the use of biological weapons by terrorist groups with the intent to cause large-scale suffering. The first known bioterrorist attack in the US was in Oregon in 1984, when followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh attempted to control a local election by infecting salad bars, produce in grocery stores, and other public domains with Salmonella and incapacitating the local population.

Biological weapons pose a grave threat, as they are small and invisible to the naked eye, and highly efficient at killing large populations. Biological agents can theoretically self-replicate and cause epidemics, which are difficult to track and contain. Recent advances in biotechnology mean agents such as viruses, bacteria, and toxins can be modified with more severe effects and easier deployment which increases the chances of biological warfare in the 21st century.

You may use this excerpt from the Background Guide for the The General Assembly First Committee as part of the 2015 National Model United Nations Conference New York (NMUN•NY) to get started on preparing for this topic of discussion.

Gene patenting

A patent is a set of exclusive rights granted by a sovereign state to an inventor or assignee for a limited period of time in exchange for detailed public disclosure of an invention. Patents are a form of intellectual property.

A gene patent is the exclusive rights to a specific sequence of DNA (a gene) given by a government to the individual, organization, or corporation who claims to have first identified the gene. Once granted a gene patent, the holder of the patent dictates how the gene can be used, in both commercial settings, such as clinical genetic testing, and in noncommercial settings, including research, for 20 years from the date of the patent. Gene patents have often resulted in companies having sole ownership of genetic testing for patented genes.

In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that naturally occurring genes and genetic sequences are not patentable, but edited and artificially synthesised sequences are patentable.

You may use this study guide for the Committee for Legalisation of Banned Technologies (CLBT) as part of the 2011 VIT Technical United Conference to get started on preparing for this topic of discussion.

Country List

1. United States of America
2. United Kingdom
3. Canada
4. Russia
5. China
6. France
7. Japan
8. Germany
9. India
10. Israel
11. Iran
12. Iraq
13. Saudi Arabia
14. Australia
15. Sweden
16. Libya
17. Egypt
18. Democratic People's Republic of Korea
19. Pakistan
20. Syria
21. Switzerland
22. Brazil
23. Argentina
24. Monsanto
25. WHO

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