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DISEC: Topic #2 – Biosecurity and Biowarfare

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Advances in biological science and technology have the potential to transform the world in a broad range of fields – from developing new vaccines and improving agricultural yields to creating medical breakthroughs that save countless lives. Yet, the same tools that drive progress can also be misused, whether intentionally or by accident. As genetic editing, biological synthesis, and data-sharing technologies become more accessible, the risks of misuse are no longer limited to well-funded laboratories, but they can emerge from a wide range of actors and environments.¹

Recent global health crises have revealed just how vulnerable the world remains to biological threats. Whether an outbreak occurs naturally, accidentally, or through deliberate action, its effects can spread rapidly across borders, overwhelming health systems, economies, and societies. The challenge facing the international community is how to reduce the potential for harm while continuing to support scientific innovation that benefits humanity.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), established in 1972, was a historic step in banning the development and stockpiling of biological weapons. However, it has long been criticized for lacking enforcement and verification mechanisms. Some nations argue that stronger monitoring and inspection systems are needed to ensure compliance, while others worry that such measures could infringe on national sovereignty or expose sensitive research. These opposing views have prevented the BWC from becoming fully effective.²

At the same time, the boundary between peaceful research and weapons development has grown increasingly difficult to define. Many scientific projects have “dual-use” potential — the same research that enables the creation of vaccines could also be applied to engineer dangerous

¹ [Biological Weapons | DISEC](#)

² [The History of Biological Warfare | DISEC](#)

pathogens. Countries differ sharply on how to manage this risk: some call for transparency and international oversight, while others emphasize protecting domestic innovation and competitiveness, ultimately risking a world increasingly filled with danger and mistrust.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought these issues to the forefront once again, reigniting debates about global preparedness and responsibility. How much information should nations be expected to share about emerging diseases? Should international bodies have the authority to investigate the origins of outbreaks? These questions continue to divide countries that value open cooperation and those that prioritize sovereignty and security.

Delegates of DISEC must grapple with these tensions – finding ways to encourage scientific progress while preventing misuse, and protecting national interests without compromising global safety.

Some questions to consider: (Keep in mind that these questions are provided to guide your preparation.)

- Should the Biological Weapons Convention be amended to include an enforcement mechanism that prevents both state and non-state actors from developing or acquiring biological weapons?
- How can countries ensure that transparency in biological research does not compromise national security or intellectual property?
- To what extent should international bodies have the authority to investigate potential biological incidents within sovereign states?
- How should the international community address accusations against a particular country regarding biological weapons development or misuse?

A few important reminders:

1. You are representing your assigned country's perspective, not your personal view.
2. Use reputable, verifiable sources for all research and citations.

3. Papers will be checked for originality; plagiarism and artificial intelligence will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at jmehlma5@mail.yu.edu or yunmunDISEC@gmail.com or TheBestYunmunCommitteeEver@gmail.com – I would truly be more than happy to offer guidance, support, and advice as you prepare to discuss this topic!

Best,

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