

YUNMUN XXX

UNODC

Topic 2: Regulating the Pharmaceutical Industry

The pharmaceutical industry, sometimes referred to as “Big Pharma,” is causing a number of unexpected negative consequences and it UNODC’s job to help find a solution. The opioid crisis has in many cases been linked to the pharmaceutical industry promoting unnecessary prescriptions of opioid painkillers, and glossing over much of the evidence showing how addictive opioid painkillers can be. Many lesser known health crises have also been connected to pharmaceutical industry actions. In 2003, the UNODC published the “United Nations Convention Against Corruption.”¹ It explored corruption in general, not specific to Big Pharma, however, many relevant and prevalent ideas are stated.

In many countries life saving drugs are not affordable or have had their prices inflated. For example, the Hepatitis C drug Sovaldi sells for \$84,000 for a three-month course of treatment in the United States, while a generic version is available in India for less than \$1,000.² Martin Shkreli raised the price of life saving antiparasitic drug Daraprim to \$750 a pill, from \$13.50, the equivalent of a more than 5000% markup.³ In a 24-year period, Big Pharma companies paid 373 settlements for marketing fraud. The settlements totaled \$35.7 billion.⁴ The global market for pharmaceuticals reached \$1.2 trillion in 2018, up \$100 billion from 2017. Going forward, the global pharmaceutical market will grow by 4-5%, reaching \$1.5 trillion.⁵

There are a few different aspects that UNODC must specifically tackle. In our committee sessions UNODC should consider regulating the legal liability of drug production,⁶ regulating drug patents,⁷ and the physician-pharma relationship.⁸ You are not limited to these topics,

¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf

² <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-drug-price-sofosbuvir-sovaldi-india-us-20160104-story.html>

³

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-crime-shkreli/martin-shkreli-loses-appeal-of-conviction-sentence-idUSKCN1UD1ZW>

⁴ <https://www.drugwatch.com/featured/big-pharma-marketing/>

⁵ <https://www.iqvia.com/institute/reports/the-global-use-of-medicine-in-2019-and-outlook-to-2023>

⁶ <https://media2.mofo.com/documents/101200-ch55.pdf>

⁷ <http://cepr.net/publications/op-eds-columns/drug-patents-are-bad-for-your-health-the-cost-of-mismarketing>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5048228/>

however, we will be focussing our efforts mainly on these three issues. The UNODC has been outspoken on these issues however it is up to this committee to codify new documentation to tackle this unregulated sector.

Now that you understand the huge crisis that we are trying to combat please consider some of the following questions:

- What steps, if any, has your country taken to combat this issue?
- Does your country believe the pharmaceutical industry should be regulated? Why or why not?
- What future attainable goals can your country implement?
- Are there cultural and/or social factors that play a role in your country's opinion on the Big Pharma crisis?

There are lots of available sources to use for your research, please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Best wishes,

Zak Benarroch

Chair, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

YUNMUN XXX