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WHO: Topic 1- Realizing the Health Rights of Indigenous People

YUNMUN XXXIV

The United Nations designated August 9th as the International Day of Indigenous People. This day is a cause for celebration and a call to acknowledge the efforts and rights of the indigenous community while shedding light on the health challenges they face. Just like any other population, indigenous people are consistently facing debilitating health issues, yet they are wrongfully underserved.¹ They are dedicated to continuing their own cultures, societies, and languages. This population deserves equitable healthcare and representation.²

The indigenous population is steadily growing with “...over 476 million indigenous peoples living in more than 90 countries across the world, accounting for 6.2 percent of the global population. Of those, there are more than 5,000 distinct groups.”³ This number is staggering, and with population growth comes an increased need for assistance. Currently, it is estimated that the indigenous peoples’ life expectancy is 20 years shorter than that of the average person from a different population. This is due to various factors, including an increase in diabetes, discrimination, declining mental health, climate change, and more. Poverty and inequality also significantly prevent indigenous people from accessing proper healthcare. For some, healthcare isn’t even a top priority because they lack adequate housing or access to education. When they are forcibly displaced from their homes in forced migration, overcoming this major challenge becomes their primary focus.⁴

The World Health Organization recognizes the importance of equitable healthcare for the indigenous peoples. In trying to rectify the numerous issues that they face, the WHO has proposed a Global Action Plan with the hopes of resolving these challenges. The WHO has also committed to the inclusions of the indigenous peoples “ to ensure their free, prior, and informed consent,

¹ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/realizing-the-health-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/>

² <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/indigenous-peoples>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/indigenous-peoples>

⁴ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/realizing-the-health-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/>

throughout the development process.”⁵ In 2023, “WHO adopted a new resolution to address the health challenges faced by indigenous peoples’ worldwide.”⁶ This resolution covers topics including allocating money and plans to improve their healthcare system, paying close attention to their education and family planning, and exploring innovative ways to incorporate and integrate safer medicine.⁷

As you research this topic, consider the following:

- Is your country in support of the resolution, or does it oppose it?
- Is the proposed resolution thorough and conducive to all the changes that need to be made?
 - Are there an excessive amount of proposed ideas or are there too few?
 - What are fast and effective ways to provide immediate healthcare relief?
- Should countries feel a responsibility to help the indigenous population?
 - If your country is also lacking proper healthcare, should you rely on other countries to provide medical aid? If so, should these countries expect something in return?
 - If your country is developed, do you bear a responsibility to support the Indigenous population with financial resources and medical equipment?

Use these questions as a guideline to begin your research, but make sure not to limit yourself. You should be well researched on this topic and prepared for debate. Please remember that YUNMUN has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism and that all papers will be checked through Turn-It-In. Please also remember to represent the views of your country, not your own. I look forward to reading your position papers and meeting you soon! Counting down the days to an epic conference. As always, feel free to reach out to me sratner1@mail.yu.edu with any questions or concerns.

All the Best,
Sela Ratner
Chair, WHO

⁵ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/realizing-the-health-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/>

⁶ <https://who.foundation/latest-updates/realizing-the-health-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/>

⁷ https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA76/A76_ACONF1-en.pdf

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