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United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Topic 2: The Fundamental Human Right to Healthcare

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There are currently approximately 4.6 billion people who lack access to essential healthcare.[1] The inability to access essential healthcare services can stem from a variety of reasons, including discrimination based on gender, race, religion or economic status; inadequate infrastructure; and poor quality of care. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognized the right of every individual to an adequate standard of living, which includes medical care.[2] Just 18 years later, in 1966, article 12 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* recognized the right of individuals to access the highest attainable standard of care for mental and physical health.[3] This sentiment was reiterated in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*: article 24 emphasizes that, "States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.."[4]

Financial hardships are a major contributor to the inability of individuals to access healthcare. Over 2.1 billion individuals worldwide experience financial hardship in accessing healthcare including 1.6 billion people who are pushed further into poverty due to health expenses.[1] In 2012, the UN General Assembly declared that universal health coverage is the key to solving the healthcare dilemma.[5] Additionally, geographic barriers pose a great challenge to accessing adequate healthcare, with many rural communities lacking facilities, medical providers or ways to access those resources. Another factor to consider is discriminatory practices towards individuals or groups based on religious affiliation, gender, age, ethnicity or immigration status.

As you research this topic and your country's perspective you may want to keep the following questions in mind:

1. https://www.who.int/news/item/06-12-2025-most-countries-make-progress-towards-universal-health-coverage-but-major-challenges-remain-who-world-bank-report-finds
2. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights
3. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights
4. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child
5. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10022327/

- In what ways does Universal Health Coverage address the current issues and how does it fall short?
- What are the primary barriers to healthcare access in your country, and which populations are most affected?
- How can governments address shortages of medical professionals, facilities, and essential medicines?
- In what ways does your country take actions to address vulnerable populations (children, immigrants, elderly, etc.) obtaining access to adequate healthcare?

As you research this topic and write your position papers please keep a few things in mind: firstly remember that you are representing your countries beliefs (and they might not be similar to your own)! Additionally, we are strongly against plagiarism so make sure to include any sources you gained information from. Thirdly, while AI has a lot of amazing uses, writing your position paper is not one of them. As an FYI, papers flagged for improper AI usage will not be eligible to win awards! If you have any questions, comments or concerns as you research and write your paper please feel free to reach out to rsulliv2@mail.yu.edu. I'm looking forward to an incredible conference, *#YUNMUNXXXVII!!!*

Sincerely,

Rivka Sullivan

Chair, United Nations Human Rights Council

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