

UNAR 2024 Chair Letter

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Committee Overview

Use of AI In Drug Development

Climate Crisis in Libya

Conserving Venice as a World Heritage Site

Decline of Academic Freedom Globally

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION:

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions are not to be written until the date of the conference itself. Additionally, it is highly suggested that every delegate write at least one position paper on a topic, as doing so will be necessary to be considered for an award. Position papers must be emailed to the chairs through personal emails two days prior to the start of the committee, or can be turned in at the start of the committee as well.

All delegates are expected to come to the first day of the conference with a working knowledge of all or most of the topics, as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. As United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it is imperative that delegates keep in mind that their purpose is to promote world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and cultures around the world without infringing upon national sovereignty. Above all, remember that Model UN is not a competition, so get to researching and try to have fun!

ABOUT US:

Olivia Koegel

Manaar Abdelgadir

Hello Delegates! My name is Olivia and I am a senior at Hilton High School. This will be my third year of participating in Model UN and my first conference as a chair! Outside of MUN I am a varsity athlete in swimming and flag football, I play the baritone, along with being a part of many clubs at school and volunteer throughout the community. I am ecstatic for a successful committee with all of you! Please email me with any questions, comments, or concerns!

Hi Delegates! My name is Manaar and I am a Junior at Pittsford Sutherland High School. This will be my first time chairing and my third year doing Model UN and I could not be more excited! Outside of MUN I play tennis and I love to read. I look forward to a fun and successful committee with you all, and feel free to email me with any questions!

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Topic 1: Use of AI in Drug Development

Company startups are attempting to harness AI in order to produce more effective drugs faster. They are moving away from an artisanal craft to a process which uses more automated precision, fueled by AI's ability to learn and adapt. It is a process that still needs humans to collect the data, often in a lab. Data, positive or negative, is collected and fed to AI software in order to improve future design.

Advances in AI approaches have impacted many aspects of drug development, enabling the analysis of more complex and larger quantities of data. Some of the results of these analyses are promising, as they attempt to address challenges in drug development..

However, the use of AI has its quirks. AI has been used to identify a target and design a drug candidate which is now in a clinical trial, but there have been no drugs approved by the FDA that are solely based on AI development. The process of developing a drug approved for humans is also very expensive and time consuming. The average cost approaches \$2 billion and takes about 14 years. In addition, the process sees a failure rate of approximately 90%. For AI to be accurate, it must have a large pool of data fed to it. Thus it is important to acknowledge the potentially inaccurate solutions that AI might produce

The UN develops AI technologies that contribute to achieving sustainable development as they want to create more effective, useful, and affordable drugs. They acknowledge rapid changes raise major issues and address this matter with ethics and urges countries to safeguard human rights, protect personal data and continue to monitor AI for risks as it is a need in order to produce more effective drugs faster.

How can the UN assure AI remains a safe practice? What actions can be made in order to make the use of AI in drug development more rational? How can the practice of AI and data sizes be improved with more interest from countries?

“AI, Dogma, and Drug Development”

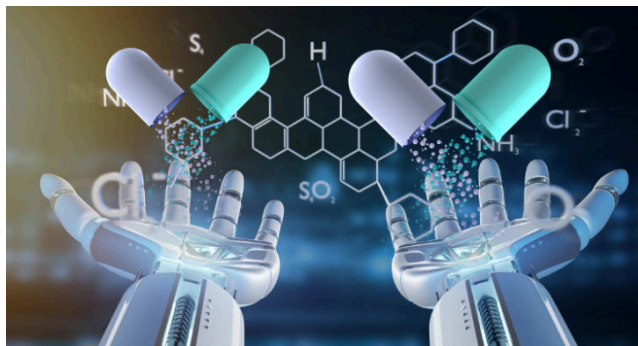
<https://www.insideprecisionmedicine.com/news-and-features/ai-dogma-and-drug-development/>

“How A.I. Is Revolutionizing Drug Development”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/17/business/ai-drugs-development-terray.html>

“Artificial Intelligence: Rapid technological advancements in AI are transforming disciplines, economies, and industries, and challenging ideas about what it means to be human.”

<https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence>



Topic 2: Climate Crisis in Libya

Libya's land is 95% desert, making it one of the world's most water-scarce countries. Within the last 5 years, its annual precipitation rate has fallen from 400 milliliters to 200 milliliters (less than a quarter of a gallon). The Nafusa mountains are home to around 7.1% of Libya's population. Because of the increased water stress, local villagers and their livestock have been gradually moving out of the mountains and surrounding plains.

As they were once an isolated nation, Libyans have preserved their traditional folk customs. This includes depending on farming for food and labor production. However, due to the climate crisis, Libya's domestic food production accounts for just 25% of their demand, which finds them relying more on food imports. Libyan culture also places strong emphasis on family and tribal bonds. Yet, the recent climate changes have forced families to move away from their homes, and some families have had to split up.



The water crisis is not just about crops dying, but also the demographic of families moving towards the capital and coastal towns. Olive trees which were inherited through families have dried up and died. Livestock is also dying. The cost of living has doubled. The only source of water is through tanker trucks that come through villages to water stations. But water still remains limited. Tensions worsen as people begin to overcrowd places that still have water. Women and children oftentimes must travel far on foot in order to reach water, which takes away from their education, economic participation and safety.

The UN fears that as water stress increases, the risk of regional conflict will too. Without water there can be no peace, as it can cause overcrowding, starvation and death. Without peace there is no opportunity for an equitable, sustainable use of water for all those who need it. In order to keep peace it must be acted upon swiftly to find solutions and other water sources along with enhancing cooperation in the area.

How can the UN safeguard water resources in order to enhance regional and global cooperation in Libya? What can be done to help children and women who are affected by the crisis? What can be done to enhance cooperation in the area without infringing on national sovereignty?

“Water crisis threaten world peace (report)”

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/water-crises-threaten-world-peace-report-0>

“Once fruitful, Libyan village suffers climate crisis”

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/06/once-fruitful-libyan-village-suffers-climate-crisis>

“What is it like living in Libya these days?”

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/3/29/what-is-it-like-living-in-libya-these-days>

Topic 3: Conserving Venice as a World Heritage Site

Venice, one of the most famous cities in the world, made up of archeological and architectural feats, is a popular destination for tourism and travel. It is known for its bridges, gondola rides, old streets, and its lagoon makes it one of the most unique cities in the world. Due to mass tourism, climate change, and improper maintenance, Venice and its lagoon have been deemed a World Heritage Site in danger of deterioration.

In 2011, a report by an Italian maritime research institute, CNR-ISMAR, found that the sea levels would rise to a point that would put the city in danger, and create an unstable and uninhabitable environment near the lagoons. Oil tankers and large ships exceeding around 25,000 tons have also been a cause of damage to the lagoons. In November 2019, flooding was so extreme that it caused historical and architectural sites to become severely damaged. On the other hand, in 2023, severe droughts plagued the city to such an extent that gondolas and water transports could not travel through canals.



Because of the famed city's architecture and history, it remains one of the most traveled to and toured sites in the world. In 2023 alone, the amount of visitors surmounted to around 5.7 million people, 70% being international tourists, 1 million of them being from the United States. In 2024, hotels and Air B&Bs in Venice are the highest rated and most popular as opposed to hotels in Milan, Florence and Rome, which makes Venice a more attractive city to reside in. Not only does the case of mass tourism affect the fragile ecosystem of the Venetian Lagoon, but also the locals of Venice. It has become a city more accommodating towards tourists and travelers, reducing the attention on the locals' needs and space. Only around 50,000 people are inhabitants in Venice, as many Venetians have been pushed out.

Finding a viable solution has been prolonged due to the Italian government's reluctant efforts to take any measures to assist in the rapid increase of tourism. Projects that have been proposed and put into action have been stalled by many factors such as corruption, delays, and expense issues.

How can the UN continue to effectively preserve World Heritage sites in the face of changing climates, war, mass tourism, and neglect? How can the UN ensure that different countries are doing their part in protecting their respective sites?

“UNESCO recommends adding Venice to list of world heritage sites in danger”

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/unesco-recommends-adding-venice-list-world-heritage-sites-danger-2023-07-31/>

“Venice and its lagoon again escape inclusion on UNESCO list of heritage sites in danger”

<https://apnews.com/article/venice-unesco-world-heritage-downgrade-threat-45a7e0d51069c9f06e79b69bd8bd1ed3>

“Tourism in Venice - statistics & facts”

<https://www.statista.com/topics/5979/tourism-in-venice/#topicOverview>

Topic 4: Decline of Academic Freedom Globally

Academic freedom has been under threat all over the world and has declined by over 50% worldwide according to the Academic Freedom Index (AFI). Students now have less freedom than they did 10 years ago. This can be linked to many reasons, primarily the decline of democracy in countries like China, India and Russia, as well as military coups and instability in countries such as Afghanistan, Cuba and Iran. Students, teachers and professors are all affected by this, as it hinders a person's ability to speak their opinions, debate topics, publish research, and expand their knowledge. Restricting academic freedom further channels fear into students and teachers and breaches their individual right to pursue education.

In 1973, countries such as North Korea, China, India, Russia, Turkmenistan, Myanmar, Eritrea, Cuba, and Afghanistan, accounted for the 43.5% of nations globally that had little to no academic freedom leaving around 1.6 billion people disadvantaged. In 2024, around 27 countries were following a rapid decline in academic freedom, and 3.6 billion people (45.5%) lived in countries that practiced harsh restrictions. In the USA, the severely polarized political scene poses a serious threat to academic freedom. Many colleges and universities have been targeted by bills that were in favor of restricting teaching and learning. This is crucial, as it demonstrates that regardless of the type of government a country follows, academic freedom may still be at risk.

China's CCP has reformed education in schools and maintained a strict control over media, hindering research, exchange of ideas, and public speech. In the USA, decline in academic freedom is due to the individual states' hold on each of their educational policies.

Despite the USA having freedom of speech as a constitutional right, academic freedom is in a different category, as it is a professional right. Censorship of the media affects the autonomy of students and prevents them from reaching their full capabilities. It also leaves the general public in fear as there is no clear limit on how much control certain governments can have over their citizens.

How can the UN hold countries accountable for restricting academics without infringing on national sovereignty? How can the UN ensure the safety of professors and students globally? How can the UN set boundaries to properly distinguish misinformation and propaganda from academic topics?

“Academic Freedom Declines Worldwide”

https://www.emporiagazette.com/free/article_15175c7e-fb44-11ee-90d6-77154e125866.html

“Academic Freedom Declining Globally, Index Finds”

<https://www.barrons.com/news/academic-freedom-declining-globally-index-finds-a7de60c6>

“Is academic freedom in crisis?”

<https://www.aamc.org/news/academic-freedom-crisis>

