Committee Guide

WHA 2024

Envision · Engage · Empower

2024

Navigating a New Age

Raising Awareness of Mental Health Problems and Developing Recommendations

OLMUN 2024

23rd International Session

Contents

1. Personal Introduction

Dear Delegates,

It is with great enthusiasm that we welcome you to OLMUN 2024. We are looking forward to chairing the World Health Assembly with you as our amazing delegates in this year's OLMUN conference. In order to prepare for the conference, this committee guide will give a quick first overview of our topic "Raising Awareness of Mental Health Problems and Developing Recommendations"

and give you some ideas for furthering your research.

But before we get into all that, we want to start by briefly introducing ourselves:

1.1. Jule Otto

Hey everyone, my name is Jule, and I am 17 years old. I'm super excited to be seeing all of you soon in Oldenburg. It will be my third time at OLMUN and the first time I will be chairing at an official conference.

In my free time I like to write. I started with my school's student paper a few years ago and now I write for a local magazine sometimes to make a little money. I love cooking and baking too but somehow there is always something going wrong lately when I do it. When it comes to cooking, I love experimenting with new recipes. I'm not quite sure if they're actually good though, but I don't really care either because they're just fine for my taste buds. I also like to spend my time outdoors and long walks with my dog just listening to music or a good podcast have become my way of stress relief.

It will be so great to get to know all of you personally, see you soon :)

1.2. Anes Mujkic

Hey, my name is Anes and I'm 16 years old.

I am interested in chess, even though I'm bad at it, and in various things like video games, E-Sports, horror movies, football, and, of course, music, since I've been playing the (acoustic) guitar for around nine years by now and have produced music for almost 3½ years.

This year's conference will be my third attendance at OLMUN, and my first time being a Chair.

OLMUN is a great and exciting experience for first timers as well as people like me that have already attended OLMUN before. The debate is also a nice place to gain confidence, especially when holding a speech or finding like-minded Delegates.

See y'all in June!

1.3. Tom Siebels

Moin! My name is Tom and I am 26 years old. As a delegate, my first OLMUN is actually now more than 10 years in the past, since I was a delegate in 2012, 2013 and 2014. After already getting to chair the HRC for the OLMUN 2021 and 2022, and more recently the GA1st in 2023, I am particularly excited to chair this year's WHA with a topic that's particularly close to my heart.

Since I graduated from school, I was lucky to have the opportunity to study and work in the US and Uganda for a year each, and after studying at the Leuphana University in Lüneburg am now working in political Berlin. Besides studying, I was always involved in a bunch of academic events at Leuphana, research projects on Open Social Innovation and various forms of student representation or initiatives, like the Student Parliament.

In what will probably be my last OLMUN, above anything else, getting to know all of you guys with your diverse motivations, backgrounds and opinions will be the most exciting part of this year's conference.

2. Usage of This Guide

First things first, thank you for being a part of our committee this year! This guide should serve as a helper and starting point for your preparation. After reading the guide, you will know:

• Who will be chairing the committee,
• Where, when and why the committee was created,
• What this year's topic is,
• How to start your research,
• What to prepare and hand in prior to the conference.

Enjoy reading the guide!

3. About the WHA

The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the decision making body of the World Health Organization (WHO) and is composed of the health ministers by all 194 member states of the United Nations (UN), except for Liechtenstein, the Cook Islands and Niue. It is the highest health policy-setting body.

The WHA was formed in 1948 along with the WHO and has since gathered at least once a year in the Palace of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.

Its main function is to determine the policies of the WHO, as well as supervise financial policies and reviewing and approving the proposed programme budget.

In 2023, the committee held its seventy-sixth session about the 75th anniversary of the WHO, with Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare in India, as the Chairperson.

4. Raising Awareness of Mental Health Problems and Developing Recommendations

4.1. The UN's Position Regarding Mental Health

In September 2015, mental health was first included in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this historic step, the United Nations (UN) acknowledged the burden of mental illness and defined mental health as a priority for global development for the next 15 years.

In the SDGs the UN set itself the goal of "promoting mental health and well-being and reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030".

In the words of the World Health Organization (WHO), Mental Health is described as a state of mental being, in which an individual is enabled to cope with stresses of life, realize their abilities, as well as learn and work well and contribute to one's community. It is influenced by individual, social, and structural factors. In other words, mental health describes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act and it helps us relate to others, handle stress and make both every day and long-term choices.

Mental health problems encompass conditions, which may affect one's mood, thinking and behavior; these conditions can vary widely in their impact on one's life. One in eight people globally lives with a mental health condition, with women and young people impacted the most. Many face stigma and discrimination.

The most common mental health problems include anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and schizophrenia. However, there are many more disorders and other conditions.

Studies estimate that at least 10% of the world's population is affected1 and that 20% of children and adolescents suffer from some type of mental disorder. In fact, mental disorders account for 30% of non-fatal diseases worldwide and 10% of overall diseases, including death and disability.3 Suicide, which is frequently caused by mental disorders, also exacts an enormous toll on society: In India, it has overtaken complications from pregnancy and childbirth as the leading cause of death among women aged 15 to 49.

Additionally, there is a two-way relationship that exists between mental disorders and unhealthy behaviors such as poor diet and physical inactivity. These, in turn, are contributing factors to cancer, cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes, and a range of other costly and potentially dangerous conditions.

Mental disorders also increase the likelihood of drug and alcohol abuse and, most tragically, they are a significant factor in suicides. Mental health problems can additionally impact in one's social life by disrupting family dynamics or straining social networks. This can be worsened further by stigma, which can lead to discrimination, exclusion and ultimately reluctance to seek help.

Because of these correlations, improvement in a population's mental health will lead to improvement in its physical health and will help enhance overall social and economic welfare.

Despite the magnitude of mental illnesses, relatively few people around the world have access to quality mental health services. On the most recent World Mental Health Day in October 2023, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that three in four people suffering from a mental health condition receive inadequate treatment.

Most mental disorders, but especially anxiety and depression, two of the most common mental disorders, respond well to a variety of treatments. If a society accepts that it has an obligation to alleviate death and suffering when it is within its power to do so, a strong argument can be made that adequate mental health treatment should be considered a fundamental human right and a moral imperative.

While individuals can be genetically predisposed to mental health problems, the UN-appointed independent rights expert also noted that the persecution of individuals because of their gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, class position, migration status or disability negatively affect mental health "as a result of discrimination, social exclusion, marginalization, criminalisation and exploitation". Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a global crisis for mental health, fueling short- and long-term stresses and under-

mining the mental health of millions. Estimates put the rise in both anxiety and depressive disorders at more than 25% during the first year of the pandemic. At the same time, mental health services have been severely disrupted and the treatment gap for mental health conditions has widened.

4.2. Past Action by the UN

The UN tries to tackle global mental health issues through a variety of streams.

On one hand, the WHO and other UN bodies raise public awareness and draw attention to the issue. For example, the UN recognizes the World Mental Health Day and actively uses it to raise awareness about mental health issues worldwide. The day encourages open dialogue, education and the understanding of preventive mental health interventions.
The WHO cooperates with partners to launch the campaign "Making Mental Health & Well-Being for All a Global Priority"; it connects people with mental health conditions, advocates, governments, stakeholders, employers and employees etc. globally to recognize progress in mental health and to prioritize mental well-being.

On the other hand, the UN sets out to both create its own policies and support programs, but also to create international standards and guide its member states in the creation of suitable policies.
For example, you can find the report "Out of the Shadows: Making Mental Health a Global Development Priority" by the World Bank and the WHO and 'Mental health, human rights and legislation: Guidance and practice', co-published by the World Health Organization and the United Nations in our helpful links section.
In these, you can find problem analyses and different suggestions made by the UN for global as well as country-specific and regional measures.

Halfway to the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs, the available evidence suggests that we are not on track to meet even these important but modest goals.
Despite taking the first step of creating mental health targets, the UN has only been measuring one mental health outcome indicator, the suicide mortality rate, and official monitoring statistics show that global suicide rates have decreased by only 3% from 2015 to 2019 (the most recent year for which data is available) – far too slowly to meet the one third reduction target.

4.3. Further Options for the UN

There are many ideas the United Nations could further invest in and implement:

a) **Global Campaigns and Advocacy:** The UN could launch more international campaigns to underline the importance of mental health. Those campaigns should involve governments, NGOs, and other public figures in order to reach a broad audience.

b) **Education and Training:** Besides more promotional campaigns, the UN could develop comprehensive educational programs about mental health and mental conditions for schools, universities, workplaces, communities, and other institutions. These programs could include coping strategies and a focus on reducing stigma. Teachers, community leaders and health-care professionals could be trained to recognize early signs of mental conditions to provide necessary support.[1]

c) **Social Media, Online Platforms and Youth Engagement:** The UN could create content around mental health, advertise it on social media and other online platforms and therefore reach a young audience, which could educate adolescents about possible early signs and where to get help.[2] However, especially children and young people should also be educated about it directly in school and other state institutions.[3]

d) **Collaboration with NGOs and Civil Society:** Cooperation with non-governmental organizations on the matter could contribute to better data collection and to targeting specific audiences, as NGOs tend to focus on local regions.[4]

e) **Further Integration into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The UN could further emphasize the importance of mental health in the SDGs by adding it as an additional separate goal or creating objective, more thorough indicators for its measurement. Even though it might only seem like a formality, this point might contribute to collectivist countries recognizing individual mental conditions as a problem worth addressing.

f) **Funding:** Unfortunately, the realities of the world mean that there is not adequate funding for every intervention that would improve our health and happiness. As a result, when

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1   Howard S. Adelman, PhD & Linda Taylor, PhD, "Mental Health in Schools and Public Health"; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1525289/, last access on the 24th of March 2024, around 11:22 a.m.
2   K. Latha et al., "Effective use of social media platforms for promotion of mental health awareness"; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7325786/, last access on the 24th of March 2024, around 11:16 a.m.
3   "Youth Mental Health [#SDGAction43231]"; https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/youth-mental-health, last access on the 24th of March 2024, around 11:36 a.m.
4   "Mental health in wartime: how UNDP-supported NGOs are providing psychological aid to Ukrainians"; https://www.undp.org/ukraine/news/mental-health-wartime-how-undp-supported-ngos-are-providing-psychological-aid-ukrainians, last access on the 24th of March 2024, around 11:41 a.m.

looked at within a framework of resource allocation, the case for robust investment in mental health treatment may initially seem tenuous. However, in addition to the moral case for treating mental disorders, there is also a strong economic argument to be made. Careful analysis shows that treating anxiety and depression is an affordable and cost effective way to promote well-being and prosperity in a given population – and that failure to treat them can significantly increase global costs of mental disorders: It is estimated that by 2030, the costs will be around 6.0 trillion USD - an increase of 240% in comparison to 2010, where the costs were estimated at 2.5 trillion USD.

g) **Focus on Causes, instead of Symptoms:** The WHO has already urged countries around the world to move away from the "narrow traditional 'biomedical paradigm'"[5] and focus on "the social determinants that affect people's health"[6]. These include, but are not limited to, "social, economic, and physical environments, as well as poverty, violence, and discrimination"[7].

5. What Perspectives Could Different Countries Take / What Are Relevant Issues for Different Countries?

In MUN, it is important to embody the position of the country you are representing, even if it differs from your personal opinion. This can be particularly challenging on emotionally charged topics like this one. To navigate this, you may consider the following questions during your research:

5.1. Are there Mental Health Concerns that Hold Significant Importance in the Country I am Representing?

Certain countries grapple with specific mental health challenges more than others. For instance, nations in conflict zones are often affected by above-average conditions related to trauma, such as PTSD. In contrast, regions facing issues like gang violence or drug trafficking may experience elevated rates of substance abuse. Conversely, some highly developed countries show elevated suicide rates caused by social pressures.

5   World Health Organization: Mental health, human rights, and legislation: guidance and practise [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240080737], in: Reed, John: The World Health Organization and the UN Unite on Mental Health; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-through-the-looking-glass/202310/world-health-organisation-and-un-unite-on-mental>, last access on the 29th of March 2024, around 1:30 p.m.

6   World Health Organization: Mental health, human rights, and legislation: guidance and practise [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240080737], in: Reed, John: The World Health Organization and the UN Unite on Mental Health; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-through-the-looking-glass/202310/world-health-organisation-and-un-unite-on-mental>, last access on the 29th of March 2024, around 1:30 p.m.

7   World Health Organization: Mental health, human rights, and legislation: guidance and practise [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240080737], in: Reed, John: The World Health Organization and the UN Unite on Mental Health; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-through-the-looking-glass/202310/world-health-organisation-and-un-unite-on-mental>, last access on the 29th of March 2024, around 1:30 p.m.

5.2. How Does my Country Handle Mental Health Right Now?

Get to know the current healthcare system in your country, including the availability and accessibility of mental health services. Research existing mental health programmes, initiatives, and understand their goals, coverage, and effectiveness. Look into any partnerships or collaborations with intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or neighboring countries related to mental health. Additionally, consider public attitudes and cultural perceptions surrounding mental illness within the country.

5.3. What Are My Country's Interests? What Global or Local Change Could it Want?

Consider how your country's policies might benefit other states as well and how it could be adapted to international interests. Additionally, consider the financial aspect of your proposals as well.
If your country is facing challenges in addressing its own issues, it might be more inclined towards seeking assistance from others. Is the issue primarily a lack of resources or financial constraints? And is there a way other countries could provide support?

5.4. Are There Countries that Support my Country's Interests? Are There any With Which my Country Finds Disagreement?

This is not just about the topic itself, but also about the political situation of your country. Are there partnerships established with neighboring countries or those facing similar challenges? They might be the ones you want to talk to during the conference.
Keep in mind that financial and trade considerations have a significant influence in political discourse, even if they are not directly related to the topic. So, be careful not to completely oppose a country's ideas if your country depends on it politically.

6. Helpful Resources

We have collected a few resources that can help you to start off your research. There is no right or wrong way to do this: For some of you, research will be almost more fun than the conference itself, for some it might at first feel like the most boring thing you have done in a long time. Try to get a feeling for the topic and find out why it matters to the government and people of the country you represent in our committee.

You might need to research a country you do not know much about or did not even know existed - therefore, you can see it as an opportunity to widen your horizon and possibly consider other perspectives about the topic at hand.

While we encourage you to scan the internet for written sources, sometimes it can also be a good introduction to just watch YouTube Videos or TED talks on the issue at hand. It is on you to find your way of doing research that yields the results you are looking for and, just as important, lets you enjoy this process and allows you to follow your curiosity and interests.

a) **YouTube Videos**

- Mental Health & Youth: A Rising Concern | SDG Media Zone | United Nations: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kiy-KryZ9kk
- Why Are Mental Health Disorders on the Rise?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG-CUy8w4Ars
- Mental Health for All by Involving All | Vikram Patel | TED Talks: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzm4gpAKrBk

b) **News and other Media Outlets**

- DW: Global mental health issues on the rise: https://www.dw.com/en/mental-health-issues-like-depression-and-anxiety-on-the-rise-globally/a-63371304
- King's College: Bridging the Global Mental Health Gap: https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/spotlight/bridging-the-global-mental-health-gap

c) **UN and WHO Sources**

- World Health Assembly - WHO: https://www.who.int/about/accountability/governance/world-health-assembly
- Overview and more about Mental Health - WHO: https://www.who.int/europe/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_1
- Out of the Shadows: Making Mental Health a Global Development Priority - WHO: https://

documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/270131468187759113/pdf/105052-WP-PUB-LIC-wb-background-paper.pdf

- Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan - WHO: https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/345301/9789240031029-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation: Guidance and Practice - WHO: https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/mental-health-human-rights-and-legislation
- European Framework for action on Mental Health 2021 – 2025 - WHO: https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289057813
- Strengthening mental health promotion programmes - WHO: https://www.who.int/europe/activities/strengthening-mental-health-promotion-programmes
- 2023 General Assembly Resolution: Mental health and psychosocial support: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4014613?ln=en&v=pdf#files
- Report: European Framework for Action on Mental Health – WHO: https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352549/9789289057813-eng.pdf?sequence=1
- Flyer: What can each Member State of the WHA do?: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/campaigns-and-initiatives/world-mental-health-day/2021/mental_health_action_plan_flyer_member_states.pdf?sfvrsn=b420b6f1_7&download=true

7. How to Prepare For the Conference

After you have researched your country thoroughly and have fully understood your nation's opinion on the matter, you should start to prepare a Policy Statement, in which you clearly state your country's view on the topic, as well as a Draft Resolution, which precisely names actions, your country is supporting/wants to implement. Each draft resolution should be at least one page long and concentrate on the Operative Clauses. Policy statements should be more concise and generally should not exceed 250 words. You will find more information on how such documents are written and structured in the OLMUN handbook which is available for free download in the download sections of OLMUN's official website (olmun.org).

To be able to support you in your preparations for this year's conference, we encourage you to send us your policy statement and draft resolution by the 19th of May. We will then look through all your ideas and give you feedback and ideas that you can incorporate in your final stages of conference preparation.

Also, we would love to get to know you a little better in order to plan our committee sessions: Please let us know about your prior MUN-experiences, some of the things that you are look-

ing forward to the most for this year's conference as well as things that might still worry you. You can just include those things in your mail when sending in your policy statements.

While the deadline is not mandatory, we will definitely create a list of delegates who decide to hand in their documents either too late or not at all.

Keep in mind that these delegations then might mysteriously find themselves to be targeted with punishments more frequently than others.

8. Final words

First, we want to put things into perspective. We are looking forward to meeting so many different people and getting to know every single one of you in June! To hear your first speeches, to learn about new points of view, to see the fear in your eyes light up once you discover how creative we actually got with punishment ideas. Honestly, even to watching the first ones of you fall asleep during committee sessions.

This year's OLMUN will depend on what we make of it. But, just as much as this includes putting effort into your research or in creating the best resolutions and policy statements possible, we also want to remind you that OLMUN is about having fun together. It might seem a little hard or scary at first to deliver the opening remarks or debates, but we will make sure that our committee is a place where we can learn together rather than being afraid of the next steps. So yes, be well prepared (and take our deadlines seriously), but also just look forward to the conference with a smile. During the 4 days we have together, we will make sure that all of us feel comfortable and can enjoy the conference at our own pace. For some of you, becoming main submitters might seem like the biggest goal this year. For others, even attending the conference at all already is a big step out of the comfort zone. To us as chairs, both and everything in between are amazing.

So until June, get familiar with the rules and your country, get your outfits ready and look forward to the conference. Please, feel free to reach out to us if you feel overwhelmed with your preparations or need anything from us. We will answer all of your questions, no matter how "stupid" they might seem to you. Reach us via email at: wha@olmun.org.

We're excited to get to know all of you and can't wait for this year's WHA Committee Sessions!

See you soon and all the best,
Jule, Anes & Tom