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DEPARTMENT: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY

TOPIC:IDENTIFY THE ROLES OF SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC GLOBALLY

***Abstract***

*The COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak that began in late 2019 evolved so rapidly and globally that it was qualified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). On 30th January 2020 World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, soon after on 11th March 2020 it was declared Pandemic i.e. a worldwide spread of a new disease. As of today, COVID-19 is having a foothold in more than 195 countries, with 28,377 mortalities and 617,288 confirmed cases, while at the same time no specific treatment and vaccine have been developed so far.*

To address the pandemic effectively, countries have started considering and offering bilateral and regional cooperation, with a much recent example is a SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund proposed by Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, along with G-20 nations pledging USD 5 trillion. This pandemic is not only ruthlessly claiming the lives of innocent people but has brought the entire world to an economic halt. Kristalina Georgieva, chief of the International Monetary Fund, has given an indication that the world has entered into recession. To address this grave situation, a much stronger response is needed by all the nations to consider it as a global public health challenge in the form of a security threat.

This paper deals with the aspect of international diplomacy in global cooperation and the international organization that is the United Nations specifically a branch known as the “security council” and the roles it plays to tackle the pandemic that is COVID-19. The role of the United Nations Security Council in health governance is important to mention as the recent COVID-19 crisis not only emerged as the global health challenge but also it poses a threat to international peace and security.

The spread of infectious diseases is more prevalent in the globalized world, where members of the world community are interdependent to tackle such pandemic. To overcome this challenge, a robust and comprehensive global health framework is required, which inevitably involves cooperation and coordination amongst states, international organizations, civil societies, and other relevant actors. The primary inter-governmental body in global health coordination and cooperation is the World Health Organisation but the ongoing crisis has made it clear that the world has to look beyond WHO and there is a need for intervention of the UN Security Council as it did before during the Ebola crisis.

Considering the unprecedented extent of the COVID-19 virus across the globe, it arguably constitutes a threat to international peace and security. During the Ebola outbreak, the Security Council adopted resolution 2177 (2014) calling for immediate action and resolution 2439 (2018) condemning attacks by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Looking at the current development of events, all these situations are prevailing in this pandemic. The world needs an accelerated response from the World Health Organization to strengthen its technical leadership and operational support to governments and other partners in that effort. There is a pressing need for quarantine, treatment, and public education, which the WHO is undertaking. However, to make it more effective, an obligatory resolution has to be passed by the United Nations Security Council. There is a possibility that Security Council resolution may help in easing the process of global cooperation, with having equal probability of making the entire process apolitical.

The efforts taken by international health and humanitarian relief workers are praiseworthy, provided their efforts have to be properly channelized, with necessary arrangements, such as medical evacuation capacities and their immediate deployment to the affected countries, must be put in place. As said by then Secretary-General of the United Nation – Ban Ki-moon – in the UNSC resolution 2177, that “The gravity and scale of the situation now require a level of international action unprecedented for an emergency.” The current situation is more grave and of high magnitude affecting almost all the countries of the world. The United Nations launched a major humanitarian appeal to keep COVID-19 from circling back around the globe and to mitigate its impact on fragile countries with a weak health system.

Much has been expected from the United Nations in this trying time, to establish an emergency health mission aimed at stopping the outbreak, treating the infected, ensuring essential services, preserving stability and preventing further outbreaks by passing a resolution. The world needs to race ahead of the outbreak and curb it through the coordinated actions of the United Nations.

The UN Security Council has condemned the “heinous and Cowardly” terrorist attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, where over 25 worshippers were killed and 8 injured during this epidemic. The Security Council said that “The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers, and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice, and urged all states, in accordance with their obligations under International law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of Afghanistan and all other relevant authorities.”

Considering the prevailing pandemic where the whole world is going through such tough times, what has stopped the UN Security Council from adopting a resolution for the aforesaid situations? When it has adopted two resolutions in the past for such situations, can we put an onus on China’s diplomacy? Much recently China has rejected Estonia’s proposal to hold a UNSC meeting to discuss the coronavirus and loss of lives across the world as per media reports. It is believed that COVID-19 emerged from the Wuhan province of China and currently China is the President of the UNSC till March 31. All the countries are silent over China’s role, arguably, because in the worst-case scenario the countries affected have to import medical equipment from China. Looking at all the developments concerning COVID-19, the United Nations Security Council must step in and take control of the situation to repost faith of nations in it.