



# Harvard Model Congress

## Boston 2024

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## GUIDE TO WHO

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### INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the World Health Organization! WHO is a specialized agency within the United Nations that works directly on the advancement and progress of international public health. WHO works with 194 member states with the main objective of “the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.” The agency is committed to achieve better health for everyone, everywhere. The group’s main tasks consist of addressing issues of public health, which range from combatting disease, equitable access to healthcare, and even food safety. You, the delegates at HMC Boston 2024, will play the roles of these member states representing their respective governments or institutions during this assembly.

During this global health pandemic, WHO has been instrumental to advising the member states, keeping the public abreast on the spread of the virus, and the coordination of supplies and research & development within the international arena. During our conference, you will represent the opinions of their governments on political economic, and social matters pertaining to public health, bringing each government’s perspective in order to increase access to essential medicines and health products, prepare and prevent further emergencies, and prioritize health and wellbeing in all settings. You are expected to challenge each other on political matters in order to defend the interests of your respective countries, all while keeping global cooperation and the elaboration of a common, coordinated strategy as the primary goal of this conference.

### HISTORY OF WHO

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During a 1945 United Nations conference, several delegates proposed the concept of an international health organization to serve as an agency of the United Nations, and the UN conference soon recognized the need for a global health conference to establish such an organization. At the International Health conference in 1946, delegates from 61 countries around the world, including every member of the United Nations at that point, signed the Constitution of the World Health Organization. Two years later in 1948, the WHO Constitution took effect, marking the founding of the World Health Organization.

The first priorities of WHO were to control malaria, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, and maternal and child health. In 1958, the USSR put forth a plan

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for the eradication of smallpox, which soon became a primary focus of WHO for the following years. Following a massive global campaign, WHO declared in 1980 that smallpox had been eradicated, marking the first (and to date, only) time a human disease has been eradicated.

The following decades saw WHO expand their efforts and launch new initiatives. In 1974, WHO launched the Expanded Programme on Immunization, a vaccination campaign for diseases including diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, poliomyelitis, and tuberculosis. WHO's efforts also included maternal health programs such as the Safe Motherhood Initiative launched in 1987 and lifestyle health programs launched throughout the 1990s.

In the 1980s, growing concern over HIV/AIDS sparked the launch of the Special Programme on AIDS in 1986. Since then, the WHO has played a critical role in prevention and treatment of the disease and has worked with developing countries in particular to provide technical support for scaling up efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

WHO's next major eradication effort was poliomyelitis. Launched in 1988, the effort aimed to eradicate polio by 2000. While the effort failed to reach its goal in time (polio is still prevalent in some areas of the world today), two of the three wild strains of polio have been eradicated. Polio case numbers have declined from an estimated 350,000 in 1988 (the year of the campaign's launch) to a few dozen per year in the present day, and WHO estimates that more than 18 million people have been saved from paralysis due to polio infection while around 1.5 million childhood deaths have been prevented.

In 2009, WHO took a leading role in the response to the H1N1 pandemic, and following the pandemic, WHO shifted its focus from infectious diseases to preventing non-communicable diseases including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

WHO also coordinated the response to the Ebola outbreak in 2014, sending thousands of support staff and technical experts to affected regions, and also served as the headquarters for the global response to the Zika outbreak in 2016.

More recently, WHO has organized global efforts at slowing the COVID-19 pandemic, including convening clinical trials, publishing policy guidance based on existing medical knowledge, coordinating funding efforts, and providing affordable COVID-19 tests to low- and middle-income countries.

In the present day, WHO is focused on COVID-19 vaccine distribution and providing resources to countries that need assistance in combating the disease. While the pandemic is far from over, the WHO has already played a key strategic role so far in bringing the world together to stop a deadly virus.

## WHO AT HMC BOSTON

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### *Committee Overview*

At HMC, at least one delegate, acting as the representative or another significant policymaker, will represent each country/member state. Every delegate is expected to have researched in great depth the positions of his or her country or organization before the conference and is expected to have completed each of the assigned preparation exercises.

All agreements in WHO must be reached by majority. In other words, more than half delegates must agree on a proposal in order for it to be adopted. WHO will issue a communiqué at the close of the conference that must then be ratified by the heads of state of each country. So, your negotiations will aim at constructing a cohesive memorandum that will address the topics under consideration. You will receive these topic briefings as an update to this guide in the coming weeks.

At HMC Boston, WHO will be run using modified parliamentary procedure. Since the WHO passes non-binding proposals by simple majority and passes resolutions of great importance at a 2/3 majority, discussion avoids the politicized debate that often characterizes congressional committee sessions. You must be mindful during the conference of how to find common ground with other representatives so that you may reach a consensus on the issues covered.

The participation of all members is vital to the success of this committee; all delegates bear the responsibility of representing their nations while also crafting a suitable communiqué, an official report to the public on the commitments made during the summit that will receive unanimous support. As a direct representative of your nation's head of state, you are responsible for helping to craft a coherent and consistent message for your nation that balances individual national interests with the needs of your global peers. You are encouraged to consult and work with individual peers at the conference in order to develop agreements and coalitions based on shared interests and motivations.

### *Conference Timeline*

#### Before the Conference

In order to participate in WHO, prospective delegates must first read the committee's briefings and their updates, which contain all the issues to be discussed during the conference. Afterwards, you must educate yourself on the country and role you represent. Take the time to thoroughly research the public health landscape, history, and positions held by your nation and bring that expertise to bear during debate.

#### At the Conference

Every committee session will follow these steps:

##### *Call to Order and Roll Call*

At the beginning of the session, WHO members will introduce themselves (member state, length of membership in years, education, other relevant information) and will introduce their country, before speaking about their achievements as the leaders of their country, in particular their countries' achievements in the context of the issues that we will be discussing. The delegates will succinctly state the issues they consider to be the most critical in the context of the WHO assembly.

##### *Presentations by Member States*

After discussion begins on a particular issue, each delegate will make a 2-minute presentation to the committee regarding his or her position on the relevant issue. Given

the number of member states represented in WHO, this section will have to be done as succinctly and efficiently as possible, and all delegates are expected to take notes about the other delegates' plans and proposals so they will be prepared for the subsequent debate.

### *Debate on Issues*

The ensuing debate will be governed by HMC parliamentary procedure. Please refer to the rules of parliamentary procedure to gain an understanding of the fundamentals of the debate.

### *Consideration of Policy Proposal*

As all of the WHO committee sessions are geared towards the drafting of final resolutions, upon which all the parties have reached a consensus, the proposals will be drafted piece by piece throughout the committee sessions. It is advised that the delegates split into groups with similar and/or conflicting interests in order to resolve differences, create dialogue, and work the details out in the most efficient manner. There will be plenty of time afforded to such caucuses.

### *Vote on Resolutions*

All the members have to strive to reach a consensus and an agreement on a policy proposal. Voting will take place to determine whether or not a consensus has been reached among all parties. A resolution will pass once voting shows that a simple majority have voted for the proposal. Thus, for a proposal to pass, it requires 50% + 1 approval by all member states.

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## PREPARING FOR THE WHO ASSEMBLY

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### *Step One: Understanding the Issue at Stake*

A thorough review of the briefings provided will be your first step in preparing for the conference. We understand that many of the issues discussed can be quite complex, but we will make every effort to make them comprehensible. To make your task easier, try to research any term in the briefing that you do not understand. Once you have a grasp on all the concepts and terminology, try to understand the issue as a whole. Furthermore, the official WHO website, [who.int](http://who.int), has available past resolutions and other resources that delineate its work.

### *Step Two: Researching Your Member State*

What stances has your member state taken, and what policies have been adopted in the public health landscape? As you are representing a particular member state, research your country's views, past voting record on similar resolutions, and its perspectives on the major issues. How has your country previously handled comparable

issues to those that will be discussed at this year's assembly? All of these factors may influence the way in which your member state makes policy. In order to assist your research, read any comments or speeches that have been made by relevant government officials from your member state, and try to read any statements made by these leaders in the past WHO assemblies. Research will allow you to gain a broad view of your country's perspectives and enable you to better represent your country at the conference.

### *Step Three: Preparing your Preliminary Policy Proposal*

Look at each of the assigned topics in light of these guiding questions and write a preliminary policy proposal that shows how the leader you are representing would address each of these issues. You should write a one-page, double-spaced paper for each issue that we will address at the conference.

## CONCLUSION

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You now belong to the circle of the world's most powerful and important public-health decision makers, whose policies will have an impact not just on your particular country, but on the world as a whole (likely for many years to come). In order to make responsible and effective policy, you must come to the conference prepared. Make sure to thoroughly research the topics under debate and your particular perspectives, as any argument you make will be crucial in shaping the world economy. You are in a position to alter the direction of global health policy, so treat the issues with great responsibility and respect. Now, it is time to read the briefings, delve deep into your research, and draft policy proposals. We look forward to meeting you at Harvard Model Congress Boston 2024!