

example of a  
**CertiLingua® project documentation**

**Model United Nations, Paris 2008**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 MUNs

“PAMUN 2008“, a well-sounding acronym, but what does this abbreviation stand for? MUN in general stands for „**Model United Nations**“, authentic simulations of the “real” United Nations General Assembly and its Committees.

These conferences consist of real committees, real countries, real global problems and real rules of procedure but instead of official delegates, students act as representatives of the specific countries. The conferences are of course held completely in English.

Starting in the USA in the 1920s as “Model League of Nations”, today various MUN conferences exist on a national and international level throughout the world. Examples in Germany include Berlin (BERMUN), Oldenburg (OLMUN), but MUNs are also carried out on other continents.

The biggest and most important ones are called NMUN and THIMUN. Since 1946 students can participate at **National Model United Nations**, each year attracting over 5.000 students to New York City. The European equivalent is THIMUN, taking place annually in The Hague. There, more than 3800 students debate in several committees for five days, already for the 40<sup>th</sup> time in 2008.

A newer MUN, but also with international reputation is PAMUN, carried out in the capital of France, Paris.

## 1.2 PAMUN

Paris Model United Nations was founded as a one-day conference for schools from the Paris area. Since then it has drastically grown and gained international importance.

In 2008, PAMUN took place for the 8th time, a conference located authentically in the halls of the UNESCO headquarters, overlooking the Eiffel tower.

Worth pointing out is the fact that, in contrast to THIMUN which is organised by a NGO, the whole PAMUN conference is planned, organised and conducted exclusively by students of the American School of Paris (ASP), lead by this year's Secretary General Yoonji Woo.

“*Dependence, Independence, and Interdependence*”: From December 5 to 7, 2008, over 800 students from 56 schools on three continents dealt with this year's motto in the following eight committees:

## **Committee Topics**

Security Council–Question of Lebanon

- Review the question of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in all their aspects

Human Rights Committee 1–Human Rights situation in Myanmar

- Drafting a Convention on Human Rights and Sports

Human Rights Committee 2–Combating illegal trade of human organs

- Measures to enhance and facilitate the rights of people with disabilities

Environment Committee

- Measures to prevent water from becoming a source of conflict
- Use of GMOs as a means to combat poverty and starvation

Disarmament Committee–Measures to enhance maritime security by fighting piracy in the high seas

- Draft of an International Arms Trade Treaty

ECOSOC

(Economic and Social Council)

- Measures to mitigate the “brain drain“ from developing to developed nations
- Bridging the democratic deficit: Proposals to reform the IMF voting procedure

Political Committee–Drafting a common position on dealing with hostage situations

- Question of stabilizing the political situation in Iraq

Special Conference–Drafting an African Common Market (ACM) treaty

### **1.3 XXX Gymnasium and PAMUN**

Due to the enormous popularity of this conference only very few new schools have the possibility to participate each year. For this reason the XXX Gymnasium was very proud to be accepted to this year's conference.

After six delegates had been chosen among the students of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> grade, a workshop was set up in order to organize and prepare ourselves for the conference (see also chapter 2.1). Especially as a bilingual school the aims and challenges were to contribute to the debates and to prove being on one level with the majority of students from British, American or International Schools.

According to some regulations, for example the size of our delegation, we decided to represent the country of Cameroon for the conference. This decision was mainly based on the fact that many of the topics directly affected this country and we were interested in the committees Cameroon participated in.

## **2 Before the conference**

### **2.1 Preparation**

For a conference like PAMUN it is of utmost importance to be well prepared in order to participate efficiently and successfully in the debates.

Consequently, our delegates met once a week for several months in a workshop together with our supervising teacher XXX to prepare and present own results of our research to the others. Additionally, research on the specific topics was carried out between the meetings at home.

The two topics I had to deal with as delegate in the ECOSOC Committee (and which will be explained in chapter 3.2) are global and well-known problems so that my thematic research was mainly internet-based. But as one topic was quite technical and the other one very wide-spread and covering several subtopics, my preparation implied the reading and excerpting of a vast amount of sources, far more than the research tips and links proposed on the PAMUN website.

The first task in our weekly workshop consisted of the presentation of the personal topics and set of problems in front of the other delegates to get an overview on all subjects of this year's PAMUN, knowledge that proved to be rather futile during the conference except the fact that the presentation of one's topics required a thorough look into the existing material.

Also very important for us was to know what Cameroon's position is concerning these topics in order to really represent the country and not personal interests.

However, it is not easy to find reliable and extensive information on Cameroon's opinions on the internet, a disadvantage we already took into account before choosing to represent this country. To solve this problem we tried to contact the embassy of Cameroon. Finally, the consul general of Cameroon in Essen, Dr. Wagner, agreed to answer all our questions in a 45 minute phone interview. Although Cameroon's position on my topics were conceivable in comparison with some other subjects (how to find out for example how far Cameroon is involved in strengthening the rights of people with disabilities or its ambitions in the political situation of Iraq?), still the consul general reassured and confirmed the position I thought to be most plausible with regard to my findings.

Another key aspect of our preparation consisted of finding possible solutions to our problems and to prepare clauses to present in the committees. I created two sample resolutions (see Annex). Each one contains several preambulatory phrases, for instance recalling previous conferences or resolutions concerning this topic, together with three clauses as solutions to the problem.

The correct specifications of how to write a resolution were also addressed in the workshop as well as other aspects like holding an opening speech, the dress code and

the correct forms of address.

## **2.2 Expectations**

My expectations before the conference were a little ambiguous but also represented the opinions of the whole group:

On the one hand I was absolutely sure beyond all doubt that we were informed to an optimum concerning our topics. Having prepared myself for such a long time and having read hundreds of pages of material, all major arguments and solutions to the problem matching Cameroon's policies were known and ready to be applied in the debates.

Concerning language we were not sure if we could compete with the delegates of the other schools and a majority of native English speakers, especially when it comes down to rhetoric, holding speeches and replying quickly to questions on a very formal speech level. But we were confident that eight years of bilingual education in English and other subjects would be sufficient to bring forth our ideas and clauses to the other delegations.

What I doubted most on was the last aspect: procedure. It was the first time for all of us to participate at a MUN conference and we were thus neither used to the procedural rules in the different committees nor to the organisation of the complete conference.

Determined to do my very best but with this main concern in mind I went to PAMUN, expecting interesting debates and willing to catch up missing knowledge quickly to participate in the committee to a positive result for Cameroon.

## **3 PAMUN 2008**

### **3.1 Diary of events**

#### **3.1.1 Day 1**

The first day began with the registration of the delegation at the headquarters of the UNESCO in Paris early in the morning.

This year's Secretary General, Yoonji Woo, welcomed all students in the opening ceremony. After the keynote speech held by Esther de Lange, a member of the European Parliament, and the exemplification of basic mistakes of procedural rules in a role play, the Secretary General clarified the agenda of the day and officially declared the conference as open.

Following, the first topic in the different committees was discussed in three sessions of 90 minutes each, interrupted by refreshments and a lunch break with a fantastic view on the Eiffel Tower.

After ending the day at 5 pm., a social event took place in the evening in one of the most popular hotspots of Paris, the Duplex near the Arc de Triomphe, offering the opportunity to get to know the other students beside the formal meeting in the committees.

### **3.1.2 Day 2**

The second day of the conference consisted only of negotiations in the committees, divided into four more sessions in which the second topic of the committees was discussed. As a special and thrilling characteristic of PAMUN to enliven the discussions, a crisis situation was announced abruptly in the mid-afternoon which had to be immediately dealt with (see chapter 3.2.4).

Like every day, the press corps distributed a newspaper called "MUNificence", telling all delegates about events of the day and summarizing developments in the committees. As the evening was free, our delegation met with a group of students from our partner School [...] from Great Britain, to get to know each other better.

### **3.1.3 Day 3**

The last day of the PAMUN conference consisted solely of a debate in the General Assembly on "measures to secure peace and stability in the former Soviet Republics". Unlike in the committees this debate was resolution-based and two very contrasting resolutions submitted by the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan were discussed and after heated debates the second resolution passed with an overwhelming majority. Understandably, Cameroon adopted a very neutral position on this issue. During the closing ceremony, the major developments and results of the committees were summed up and shortly presented to the students by the chairs which also awarded two delegates of each committee for contributing to the debates and furthering the cause in a remarkable way. Lastly, the PAMUN director Mr. Ourial Reshef held a dramatic speech, mentioning in his concluding remarks the achievements in the committees and pointing out the fact that although PAMUN is "only" a simulation, some of the participating students will certainly be the future delegates of the world.

## **3.2 ECOSOC Committee**

### **3.2.1 Rules of procedure**

As the Cameroonian delegate in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) among 56 other delegates, the first challenge was to get to know and apply the rules of procedure.

The committees are strictly regulated like in the real United Nations conferences:

Two chairs lead the discussion and watch the abidance of all rules.

After the first topic has been announced, caucus time (also called lobbying time) gives all delegates the opportunity to move around and show, change, merge or develop new clauses with delegates from other countries. Except for this time delegates have to remain seated and no discussion is allowed. Instead, communication has to be done through notepapers the admin staff then passes on to the addressees.

Together with at least four co-submitters a clause can be submitted to the chair, afterwards these are discussed clause by clause (a difference to real committees in which discussion is resolution-based). For this purpose the main submitter obtains the floor to read out the clause and explain briefly the content of the clause in a 3-minute speech. Following, so-called "points of information" asked in form of a question to the delegate on the floor by other delegates can clear open questions and at the same time also question or strengthen the submitter's message. However, the questioner has no right to reply to the statement by the delegate on the floor.

In open debate other delegates can obtain the floor and speak in favour or against the clause, again with possible points of information. After moving into closed debate in which the chair decides whether speeches should advocate or object to the proposed clause, the delegates finally have to vote by raising their placards whether to add this clause to the final resolution or not.

Other rules include amendments to clauses as well as various points and motions, for example a point of personal privilege due to audibility or a motion to move directly into voting procedure.

It is apparent that this strictly regulated procedure is necessary to ensure the progress of the discussion but it is very complex, especially for first-time delegates.

### **3.2.2 Topic 1: Brain drain**

After a short ice breaking and an introduction by the chairs the decision was taken to discuss the topic of "Measures to mitigate the brain drain from developing to developed nations" first.

To explain the term, a brain drain can be defined as *"the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another usually for better pay or living conditions"*(<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brain%20drain>)

This process is common among developing nations, such as the former colonies of Africa, the Caribbean, and in socialist economies such as former East Germany and the Soviet Union. Typical sectors affected by brain drain are IT professionals or, especially concerning Africa, health workers like doctors and nurses. Push factors driving

professionals out of less economically developed countries (LEDCs) include a lack of facilities, lack of opportunity, low standard of living, bad medical supply or health services and political instability. At the same time pull factors like higher wages, further education and a gain in experience attract these people to developed nations.

The results of this migration, especially of health professionals, are a loss in revenues for the LEDCs who spent money to educate these people. In addition, less workers work in an already unstable health system which can lead to a total collapse. As developed countries actively search for qualified workforce in LEDCs the problem remains unsolved.

To emphasize the extent of this development, a BBC report states that Africa has lost one third of its skilled professionals in recent decades, costing the continent \$4 billion dollars a year to replace them (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1605242.stm>).

Cameroon is not as strongly affected as other African countries like Angola which suffers from 70% of emigration in the medical sector, still 46% of Cameroon's physicians and 19% of the nurses worked abroad in 2000 (<http://human-resources-health.com/content/6/1/1>).

The first clause to be discussed after caucus time had been submitted by the delegate of Cameroon which "Strongly urges all Member States to end the active recruitment of researchers from developing nations to the benefit of developed nations and therefore proposes the development of a general Code of Conduct" (See Annex). Indeed, agencies from developed nations actively recruit students from universities in LEDCs so the first step to stop brain drain should obviously be a Code of Conduct signed especially by the developed nations refraining from active recruitment in future. Unfortunately, this clause did not pass in the assembly.

The following clauses by Luxembourg, Japan and the USA included the creation of employment opportunities by UN funding, the relaxation of restrictions on trade in services, the reconsidering of minimum wages and employee rights in LEDCs and. Even the establishment of a totally new UN body dealing only with brain drain was suggested. Although not all of these clauses were fully supported by Cameroon, the majority of the delegates voted in favour of these clauses. Likewise, clauses submitted by Paraguay and Cuba to build new campuses in order to provide a high standard of education by exchanges among LEDCs and to give subsidies to family members of graduates remaining in the country met a general approval.

Nevertheless, two more clauses by Somalia and the Philippines which proposed the support of the countries' economies by the diasporas and the support of talented students with tuition payments in cooperation with the IMF failed to reach a majority in the committee.

Another clause submitted by Cameroon to create a global database to provide reliable

and comprehensive data and to measure the impact and development of brain drain for a specific country unfortunately wasn't up for debate due to time limitations.

Finally, after having debated on nine clauses and one amendment for a total of almost six hours, the final voting on the complete resolution resulted in a clear majority in favour of the document.

### **3.2.3 Topic 2: IMF voting structure**

After a successful result for the first resolution in the morning of day two, the delegates directly continued to discuss the second topic of the agenda: "Bridging the democratic deficit: Proposals to reform the IMF voting procedure".

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) with its headquarters in Washington, D.C. is a suborganisation of the UN with 185 member countries, uniting almost all UN member states. IMF operations consist of surveillance as well as financial and technical assistance to reach its aims

- to foster global monetary cooperation (secure financial stability, facilitate international trade)
- to promote sustainable economic growth and to assure exchange stability
- to reduce poverty and
- to provide temporary financial assistance to help ease balance of payments adjustment.

The voting structure of the IMF is based on a quota system: When joining, a country is assigned an initial quota based on its size in the world economy, denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDR), the IMF's unit of account. The quota heavily influences the maximum amount of subscription, the voting weight and the access to IMF financing. Total quotas at end-August 2008 were SDR 217.4 billion (about \$341 billion), thus generating most of the IMF's financial resources.

The problem arising is that the voting power depends heavily on quotas as a country has only 250 basic votes and one additional vote for each SDR 100,000 of quota. Obviously, this voting structure strongly favours countries with a large influence in world economy, causing the top 21 member countries (in terms of voting power) to account for more than 70% of total votes and the USA as leading country having a de facto veto right with 17% of all votes. On the other hand, 90% of all member states have less than 30% of the voting power, an undeniable democratic deficit.

Finding a consensus on this topic proved to be much more difficult as the countries with a greater influence didn't want to lose too much of their power and many of the different ideas on how to change the system contradicted one another.

The first clause, evidently submitted by Cuba, intended a one country – one vote principle.

Negligible to mention it didn't pass. But also more realistic approaches like Brazil's clause to distribute votes proportionally according to the population size of a country or a clause submitted by Sudan proposing a double majority system with both weighted votes and a one country – one vote principle failed to reach a majority in the committee.

Clauses by Japan, Liechtenstein and Sri Lanka called for a reorganisation of the voting procedure with an equal distribution between basic votes and purchased votes while at the same time limiting the voting power that may be acquired through investment in the IMF. Although seemingly similar to the double majority system these propositions had the advantage of avoiding getting stuck in the decision making process, convincing the delegates to pass the clauses. The USA also showed understanding and added a clause that prevents veto power and includes natural resources, the contributed amount of money as share of a country's GDP and the population size as new factors for the allocation of quotas.

Interrupted by the upcoming crisis (see chapter 3.2.4), a last clause by Japan was debated at the end of the seventh session. It introduced three separate committees with different voting procedures, each one dealing with one of the three primary aspects of the IMF mandate. After tough discussions this clause also passed.

In about four hours of time, eight clauses and three amendments had been discussed. Due to a slight majority the resulting resolution finally passed.

### **3.2.4 Crisis situation**

*“The world is an unpredictable place indeed. Therefore, while issues are provided in advance, unexpected developments in areas of concern to each committee may demand the immediate attention of the delegates. PAMUN is to be known as one of the only conferences in which all delegates are offered the opportunity to confront a crisis situation in their respective committees. Crises are expected to enliven committees and broaden the scope and depth of the delegates’ experience, as they challenge them to face complex situations under pressure as they are unfolding.”* (<http://www.asparis.net/pamun/pamun2008/committees.html>)

This description summarizes the purpose and aims of the crisis situation as a key element of PAMUN very well.

Indeed, just as the debates on the IMF voting structure seemed to slacken, a member of the executive team entered the room and announced that the world was experiencing a crisis.

A status report foresaw the scenario of a world-wide influenza pandemic similar to the SARS epidemic of 2003. All delegates immediately started to caucus on how to secure minimal economic activity and the availability of basic necessities in such a case when

travel and trade are impaired by the fear of a spreading virus.

Without any preparation or material except two pages of background information, work had to take place under tremendous pressure as the Secretary General wanted to see results within only one hour of time.

In this specific situation, lobbying turned out to be of extreme importance. Only with a basic idea in mind, enough co-submitters and supporters had to be found and convinced of the advantages of this solution. Within minutes, clauses had to be created and improved in close cooperation with other delegates in order to form a strong and efficient clause able to withstand criticism.

Many concepts on how to solve the daunting problem were quickly developed and submitted as clauses for discussion to the chair at a stunning speed. Sadly, due to time constraints only five clauses could be discussed.

All clauses met the delegates' approval except for one clause submitted by Mauritania which intended the immediate distribution of the global antiviral drug supply to prioritized population. Due to human rights concerns and the missing possibilities of control by the UN this clause failed.

Both long-term and short-term measures had been developed. For example, the delegate of France proposed new technological concepts like bio-domes providing food supply and the funding of scientific research to improve and hasten vaccine production. Furthermore, according to Liechtenstein, the World Health Organisation (WHO) should establish a stamp of safety distributed by local health inspectors on products with rigid control procedures in order to keep consumer confidence.

Short-term measures included clauses submitted by the Philippines to prepare medical packages for parachuting over suffering nations to avoid contamination or the installation of an International Emergency Fund to gather resources and capital to fund the other projects as proposed by the USA.

Due to time pressure, other clauses calling for example for the establishment of secured trade routes (Cuba) or the enhancement of communication facilities for doctors in LEDCs to notice the spreading of the illness (Cameroon) could not be considered anymore.

The impressive amount of debating five clauses in as little as one hour of time, fastened by several motions to move directly into voting procedure, resulted in a fully-fledged resolution which passed almost unanimously in the final voting.

## 4 Conclusion

PAMUN 2008 was definitively an interesting and thrilling experience for me, both with positive and negative aspects.

Basically, all my expectations came true exactly as predicted. We came to the conference well-prepared and although the native speakers were of course unbeatable in terms of rhetoric, I believe that we were successful in participating in the debates and to merit the right for our school to attain the next PAMUN conference. An honourable mention for our delegate of the Environment Committee in the closing ceremony is already more than we had expected for the first participation.

Some weak points which might be mentioned are for example that sadly some students from the same school isolated themselves during the breaks or that some students didn't take the conference serious enough and came there without even the slightest knowledge of the topics. But generally the positive aspects and the gain in experience outweigh the negative arguments by far.

Personally, I think that I got a good insight into the principles of lobbying, diplomacy and consensus building. I really enjoyed to practice my debating and communication skills in a foreign language and the exchange between students from different cultures taking place outside the committees.

Furthermore, I was very impressed by the extraordinary team work within the committees, especially during the crisis situation in which new ideas and elaborated solutions to the problem were generated from scratch at incredible speed and joined together to form a fully-fledged resolution.

All in all, PAMUN 2008 was an outstanding experience for all six of us, with lots of necessary preparation and challenges, but definitively worth the efforts. I regret not to have the chance to take part at this conference again because beside all the work, it really was a lot of fun and overall, with seven invitations to other MUN conferences for our school I assume we all did a good job.

## **5 Annex**

### **5.1 Own resolutions**

#### **5.1.1 Topic 1: Brain drain**

**FORUM:** ECOSOC

**QUESTION OF:** Measures to Mitigate the “Brain Drain” from Developing to Developed Nations

**SUBMITTED BY:** Delegation of Cameroon

The Economic and Social Committee,

Aware of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of reducing poverty by half child health by two-third and maternal health by three quarters,

Alarmed by the momentary conditions in developing nations,

Acknowledging various local approaches to reduce the impact of brain drain,

1. Strongly urges all Member States to end the active recruitment of researchers from developing nations to the benefit of developed nations and therefore proposes the development of a general Code of Conduct;
2. Calls for developing nations to set up international platforms to provide the opportunities of sharing knowledge of expatriates without relocation and encourages them to join these networks to support the home country;
3. Invites Member States to assist and engage in creating opportunities for developing nations to restrict brain drain by means such as
  - a) attracting more young people to scientific careers
  - b) improving the image of researchers
  - c) offering scholarships for further training
  - d) removing immigration obstacles in developing nations.

## **5.1.2 Topic 2: IMF voting structure**

**FORUM:** ECOSOC

**QUESTION OF:** Proposals to Reform the IMF Voting Structure

**SUBMITTED BY:** Delegation of Cameroon

The Economic and Social Committee,

Reaffirming the charter of the International Monetary Fund, especially Art.

1 regarding the purposes of the IMF

Recognizing the IMF managing director's report on the fund's mediumterm strategy from September 15, 2005,

Recalling the Press Release No. 08/93 of April 29, 2008 on the adoption of quota and voice reforms

1. Welcomes and supports the efforts to strengthen the voting rights of low-income countries to achieve a more democratic voting structure;

2. Approves the conception to increase the importance of basic votes in comparison with Special Drawing Rights (SDR);

a) therefore recommends a multi-stage increase of voting rights from the share of 2.1% of total votes by 2,7% by 2009 and to a final share of 11,3% of the total votes, referring to the initial figures from 1945, by the year 2015;

b) furthermore proposes to double the basic votes and add a component proportionally to a member's population

3. Expresses the hope of thorough and determined continuation and accomplishment of these reforms with the support of all Member States.

## **5.2 Crisis Scenario**

### **Background:**

As the war in Iraq began, a battle of a different kind was intensifying in China, Hong Kong and Singapore. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), a deadly virus, was spreading and picking up pace, with 7,761 infections, 623 deaths and 3,674 recovered patients as of 17 May 2003. This is no longer a Hong Kong, China, Singapore or even Asian emergency, the virus has spread beyond the initial countries and regions and the crisis is going global.

To date, SARS has been discovered in 30 countries, and the disease is beginning to affect countries outside of Asia. Canada has had 140 cases diagnosed, with 23 deaths and 106 recovered, while the United States has 66 cases diagnosed, without any deaths

to date.

Like the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism, SARS is changing the way people live and interact. People are staying indoors and only traveling when they must, food and water are being hoarded, media are disseminating information (both accurate and false), victims are being housed in special temporary facilities or quarantined, rumors are rampant, citizens are panicky, and fear of the unknown is strong.

Many Asian countries are now making significant efforts to contain the outbreak or prevent the virus from penetrating their borders. Through unprecedented global cooperation between scientists, clinicians, laboratory chiefs, public health officials and the coordination of the World Health Organization (WHO), knowledge that would normally take months or years to acquire has been achieved in a matter of weeks. Lessons from this cooperation and coordination, and from the reactions of citizens, enterprises, government and media, can help us react to the diverse risks and opportunities in our ever-changing world.

In countries that are remote from the regions hard hit by SARS, considering this crisis as something distant and unlikely to have a direct local effect is easy. Unfortunately this may be a shortsighted approach. The 1918 "Spanish flu" pandemic circled the globe and killed millions. SARS may share certain genetic similarities with the Spanish flu. Between 1918 and 1919, a deadly influenza infected more than a fifth of the world's population, causing an estimated 40 million deaths. An estimated 675,000 Americans died during the pandemic, 10 times as many as died in World War I, which was in its final stages.

To put this information into perspective, the mortality rate of the Spanish flu was 2.5 percent. This is lower than SARS's approximate mortality rate of between 5 percent and 15 percent, depending on country.

Will SARS go on to kill millions or will it be nothing more than a "storm in a teacup"? It is too soon to tell.

Recent clinical, epidemiological, and laboratory evidence suggests that the impact of a pandemic caused by the current H5N1 strain would be similar to that of the 1918-19 pandemic. More than half of the people killed in that pandemic were 18 to 40 years old and largely healthy. If 1918-19 mortality data are extrapolated to the current U.S. population, 1.7 million people could die, half of them between the ages of 18 and 40. Globally, those same estimates yield 180-360 million deaths, more than five times the cumulative number of documented AIDS deaths. In 1918-19, most deaths were caused by a virus-induced response of the victim's immune system -- a cytokine storm -- which led to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). In other words, in the process of fighting the disease, a person's immune system severely damaged the lungs, resulting in death. Victims of H5N1 have also suffered from cytokine storms, and the world is not much better prepared to treat millions of cases of ARDS today than it was 85 years ago. In the 1957-

58 and 1968-69 pandemics, the primary cause of death was secondary bacterial pneumonias that infected lungs weakened by influenza. Although such bacterial infections can often be treated by antibiotics, these drugs would be either unavailable or in short supply for much of the global population during a pandemic.

The arrival of a pandemic influenza would trigger a reaction that would change the world overnight. A vaccine would not be available for a number of months after the pandemic started, and there are very limited stockpiles of antiviral drugs. Plus, only a few privileged areas of the world have access to vaccine production facilities. Foreign trade and travel would be reduced or even ended in an attempt to stop the virus from entering new countries -- even though such efforts would probably fail given the infectiousness of influenza and the volume of illegal crossings that occur at most borders. It is likely that transportation would also be significantly curtailed domestically, as smaller communities sought to keep the disease contained. The world relies on the speedy distribution of products such as food and replacement parts for equipment. Global, regional, and national economies would come to an abrupt halt -- something that has never happened due to HIV, malaria, or TB despite their dramatic impact on the developing world.

The closest the world has come to this scenario in modern times was the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) crisis of 2003. Over a period of five months, about 8,000 people were infected by a novel human coronavirus. About ten percent of them died. The virus apparently spread to humans when infected animals were sold and slaughtered in unsanitary and crowded markets in China's Guangdong Province. Although the transmission rate of SARS paled in comparison to that of influenza, it demonstrated how quickly such an infectious agent can circle the globe, given the ease and frequency of international travel. Once SARS emerged in rural China, it spread to five countries within 24 hours and to 30 countries on six continents within several months.

### **Crisis Scenario:**

The worst case scenario envisioned by experts draws a dreary picture: If an influenza pandemic struck today, borders would close, the global economy would shut down, international vaccine supplies and health-care systems would be overwhelmed, and panic would reign. To limit the fallout, the industrialized world must create a detailed response strategy involving the public and private sectors.

Last month, such a pandemic struck the island of Borneo with devastating results.

Because of its relatively secluded situation, authorities have managed to circumscribe it and prevent its spread.

However, the island is today devastated, with close to a third of the population dead or dying. If the pandemic had broken out elsewhere, it might well have wrecked havoc in the

world. Today, the ECOSOC of the United Nations convenes, conscious of the gravity of the situation and of its responsibility, in order to draw urgent guidelines to deal with such a pandemic. The problem is daunting: How to secure minimal economic activity in the face of such a devastating pandemic? If travel and trade are impaired by fear of the pandemic, how will basic necessities be provided?