



BELFAST ASSEMBLY 2022
CULTURE AND SOCIETY COMMISSION
ADOPTED RESOLUTION

Resolved: The Congress of Nations and States will encourage Nations and States to deliver health education and access to health treatment through in person and virtual education programs during pandemics and other medical crises.

Further Resolved: The Congress of Nations and States will also encourage and support building collaborative relationships between Nations and States in order to provide support to Nations during pandemics and other medical crises.



BELFAST ASSEMBLY 2022 BACKGROUND REPORT

CULTURE AND SOCIETY COMMISSION

The world has been burdened by the spread of the Covid-19 in the last couple of years. Every person across the globe has gone through the effects of the pandemic, directly or indirectly. With that said, the degree of impact of the pandemic, whether it is economically, medically, emotionally or socially, is not the same for all. The Commission of Culture and Society of the Congress of Nations and States reached out to various communities across the world agonized by the notorious Covid-19 pandemic. In order for the Commission to better understand the gruesome effects of the pandemic, CNS participants were asked to fill out a survey sent out by the Commission.

The Commission was successful in receiving numerous responses from the CNS Submission Participants wherein the Participants communicated their hardships during the Covid-19 pandemic, the conditions of the medical services, the educational outreach programs, if any and the role of the State.

The Commission was exuberant to see some positive feedback from the participants. In a particular response, the participant stated that to strain the Covid-19, his community had taken health measures and educated the public. While answering the same question, another participant said that *“The response was good and the majority of the community adhered to implementing the health instructions and conditions to combat Covid_19 , as people were eager to take the vaccine if it was available.”*

Similarly, a participant stated *“The response is to apply all the instructions issued by the Ministry of health in the [our area] to combat diseases and epidemics if they occur community members also apply all health conditions in the market and shops, to combat diseases and epidemics as well as at the level of individuals working in the community”* when they were asked to enlighten the Commission about the various actions their community had taken against other health crisis and pandemics. Further, the participants proudly illustrated the benefits they attained via the use of their traditional knowledge or practices like *“They used herbs to steam and in-haul*

the steam to clear the lungs.” or “Islamic folk medicine” or “Herbal steaming” which helped them to fight against the deadly Covid-19 pandemic.

Some participants made it clear that the State did play a vital role in stopping the spread of Covid 19, for example: “*health restriction*”, “*state of emergency*”, “*special wards for the pandemic in the hospitals*” and “*provided vaccines free of charge*.”

At the same time, what compelled the Commission to highlight this issue is the participants' excruciating responses. Responding to how the human rights of the community were affected during the pandemic, a participant wrote “*The government issued permits that exempted people from movement restrictions to allow certain essential activities, but it failed to make the permits accessible to remote [redacted]communities in practice. This left individuals who work on nearby farms unable to travel and earn a living. The pandemic has also led to food insecurity in many Indigenous communities. Already vulnerable to losing their traditional lands and resources to land grabs and illegal extractive industries, Indigenous people who rely on the land for food have faced increased insecurity during COVID-19 lockdowns. In addition, food and water assistance deliveries have been sparse and delayed amid the pandemic. For example, lack of access to health services is a major barrier for Indigenous communities across the region, and the pandemic has worsened the situation. After traveling long distances to reach health facilities, [communities]have reported facing discrimination and stigma when seeking care. This problem has continued during the pandemic, and governments across the region have failed to provide potentially life-saving information on COVID-19 in Indigenous languages.*” making the Commission want to be the voice of the unheard.

Participants denounced the medical facilities due to “*lack of information*”, “*countless number of deaths due to unknown medication*” and not being “*included in the medical care by the government*.”

Similarly, another participant elaborated about the challenges that were faced by the communities beyond the health issues. “*Beyond the health challenge, indigenous communities were particularly affected during the months of strict quarantine, by the mandatory preventive isolation measures and restrictions on mobility implemented by the National Government to curb the spread of COVID-19. Subsistence crops, whose surpluses were traded or exchanged among the indigenous communities themselves, were greatly affected by the isolation measures. In many areas of [our area]and farmer communities require actions to strengthen the recovery of crops and other activities that support the survival and self-sustainability of these vulnerable communities. With the pandemic, the whole dynamic has changed. Social leaders could not go out to the field, nor make people’s needs and situation visible, but the population calls them to ask for help.*”

Finally, the Commission received a substantial number of responses indicating “*NO*” when the participants were asked whether their communities were included or involved in the Covid-19 vaccine roll out.

From the responses received from the CNS participants who chose to voluntarily participate in this survey, it can be clearly seen that the communities as a whole have stood strong to combat

the deadly spread of the Covid-19 and their traditional knowledge systems have helped them in unimaginable ways. The States too can be seen to have taken some basic steps to stop the spread of the pandemic. However, it appears based on the responses that the states need to do more to help the human rights of communities during times when medical crises occur.

The Commission respectfully asks the Assembly to adopt the Resolution.

Commissioners:

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