

Topic 1: The Digital Divide

The Digital Divide is defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development as “the gap between individuals and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access and use technologies”.

Technology has become an essential part of the modern-day world, from controlling an entire country’s infrastructure to allowing citizens from all around the world to communicate with each other. There has been an increase in technological use throughout most countries, but some countries lack access to develop similar technological infrastructures. Major issues include the high price for technological devices, lack of awareness, and the lack of infrastructure to support access to technology. To completely address the issue of the digital divide, the General Assembly must address the causes of the digital divide, how to improve access to technology to low GDP countries, and the benefits of ending the digital divide.

Having access to proper technologies will aid in providing low-cost education to citizens around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is quickly demonstrating why online education should be a vital part of teaching and learning. Many believe that technology can enhance individual learning by removing educational boundaries that teachers may face. It enables online education, distance learning, and access to up-to-date information. Each student interprets information differently which can cause barriers to adequate education. Technology can enable more opportunities for educational growth.

Increasing global access to technology will assist in the goal to overcome poverty, achieve sustainable job security, and build better lives for all. According to the International Telecommunications Union, in 2019, out of the 7.75 billion people in the world, 53.6% used the internet- 47% of those in the developing world, and 86.6% of those in the developed world.

More than just accessibility, individuals need to know how to make use of the information and communication tools once they exist within a region and learn to interact with the global community. Many have noted how digital technology has made it possible to overcome some of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but several also stressed the importance of doing more to close the digital divide--particularly in remote and rural areas, and among women, youth, the elderly and disabled.

Access to technology is critical when it comes to economic development, innovation, and improving the quality of life for civilians. In this modern age, the digital, biological, and physical systems are being fused together with the goal of catering to the needs of every individual on the globe. Regardless of progress in different nations, every single one is experiencing a second, third or Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) which has brought about a new era of economic disruption and societal change. In order to accommodate and facilitate this fast-paced change, nations (and

businesses) need to adopt updated economic models and provide political support, meaning countries' governments need to accommodate for improvements in technology and provide a foundation which fosters social and economic improvements caused by technological advancements.

There has to be stronger broadband, Wi-Fi, and cellular access to connect so many people, which is where the nation's government plays a vital role. Said political support opens the possibility of making infrastructure and access to basic necessities more convenient, since technology makes it easier for people to connect and transport ideas and materials. Through technological advancements, it will be easier to create and maintain necessary road systems, water piping systems, sewage systems, and safe shelter developments. New technologies show great potential in the fight against issues like malnutrition, water scarcity, and access to other basic necessities.

The increased access to medical technology has greatly affected the healthcare industry. Doctors can now offer more detailed treatment thanks to improved technology. A variety of people suffering from long-term illnesses have seen their quality of life improve as a result of improved therapies. Better medicine has also helped eliminate the uncertainty of what was once life-threatening illnesses. However, not every country has access to groundbreaking medicine and technology like others. In 2019, an estimated 5.2 million children under the age of five died from preventable and treatable causes. If there was access to these medical technologies, it is estimated around 90% of these kids would have survived.

Discussion Questions:

1. To what extent can the government censor the people and rights of technology users?
2. How can the GA help and aid countries in creating/implementing/funding access?
3. How can the GA increase accountability of countries who limit the access of technology to their citizens?

Topic 2: Climate Crisis

Climate change as described by the UN is a “change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”

The climate crisis is a prominent global issue which has had a profound effect on each person and whose impact will continue to increase in magnitude if action is not taken immediately. The climate crisis embodies a series of issues currently affecting our climate including water scarcity, displacement of people due to rising sea levels, food scarcity and world hunger, the global waste crisis, and more. Climate change is one of the largest humanitarian crises the world faces as a whole, which each country, large or small, contributes to and is affected by. Currently, not enough is being done to address climate crises, allowing the issues that constitute it to progress rapidly and become more widespread. For this reason, the General Assembly must address the causes of climate crises, the consequences of climate crises, and a plan to combat the climate crises.

There has been a huge issue regarding freshwater scarcity. Clean water is essential for human survival, yet 1.1 billion people lack access to water today. Every continent in the world harbors some form of food insecurity regardless of their economic or geographical status. By 2025, researchers predict that two-thirds of the world’s population will face some form of water shortages. This is a global crisis which can lead to a multitude of problems, including a lack of sanitation, the spread of disease, economic decline, and food shortages due to the inability to support crops and animals, death, and ecological devastation. One action currently being taken to counter water scarcity in certain parts of the world is the use of integrated water resources and management of water supplies by governmental organizations. It is essential for the General Assembly to find methods to search for ways to reduce the waste of freshwater, prolong our current water supply, and plan methods to deal with a potential crisis.

Food insecurity affects approximately 8.9% of the world’s population. Chronic hunger is the inability of a person to eat/gain access to food, putting them in a long term caloric and/or nutrient deficient state. Despite the falling rates of extreme poverty, many people are still left without economic means to access proper nutrition. Food insecurity has a number of other effects, specifically on children including developmental problems, mental health deterioration, and physical health deterioration. The General Assembly must address this issue by determining the reasons why the global unequal distribution of food exists and how it may be combatted economically and efficiently.

The General Assembly must also look at the rising sea levels. As humans continue to pour greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the oceans soak up more than 90% of that heat. This has caused oceans to heat and swell, leading to rising sea levels. They have risen 6-8 inches since 1993. Melting glaciers and ice sheets contribute to this rising sea level. This has caused coastal habitats to

be consumed or destroyed, along with severe ground erosion and flooding. It has also contaminated agricultural soil with salt and forced people to migrate to more livable areas. Storm surges become more destructive with higher sea levels, which causes irreparable damage to some communities.

The global waste crisis has quickly become one of the largest threats to environmental health and human health. The World Bank warns that global waste will increase up to 70 percent on current levels by 2050 unless urgent actions are undertaken. The inept disposal of solid waste in developed and underdeveloped countries alike has accumulated in rapid environmental degradation and hindered the quality of life for many. Urban expansion and industrialization is moving too fast for a proper waste disposal system to match the pollution it produces. This has resulted in the dangerous burning of waste and disposing waste in freshwater. This jeopardizes human health in terms of clean air, water, and food. Lower income communities are also disproportionately affected, as most waste dumps as found in urban areas. One important thing to note is how to improve waste disposal at a rate that doesn't hinder economic developments but also keeps it at a manageable level.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can GA address countries who choose to ignore the call for action against the climate crises?
2. How can the GA provide initiative to the first world and countries who are less affected by these issues to actively participate in the fight against climate crises?
3. Should certain climate crises take priorities over others or should they all be addressed with equality? What criteria will be used to decide this (e.g. will countries with larger populations be given priority)?
4. How can we hold corporations accountable for waste dumping without negatively impacting the economy?
5. How can we address the more immediate effects of climate change such as natural disasters and migration efforts?