

POSITION PAPER



NAME OF THE DELEGATE: UJJWAL KAUSHIK

COMMITTEE: UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

COUNTRY: BELGIUM

AGENDA: CONSEQUENCES OF PANDEMIC

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has resulted in an ongoing pandemic. The first case may be traced back to 17 November 2019. As of 16 June 2020, more than 8.03 million cases have been reported across 188 countries and territories, resulting in more than 436,000 deaths. More than 3.87 million people have recovered.

The lockdowns, isolations, and far-reaching closures to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic have been deteriorating the global economy. The IMF has reported that the precautions that were undertaken globally after the COVID-19 pandemic, dubbed as “The Great Lockdown”, would lead the biggest recession since the Great Depression.

The delegate from Belgium would like to inform that Belgium is the world's worst affected country in terms of the number of deaths per head of population (excluding microstates). For example, on June 1, 2020, it was reported that there had been 819 deaths per one million head of population, compared to 442 in France, 580 in Spain, 575 in the United Kingdom, seven in Japan and three in China: As of 15 June 2020, there have been 60,100 confirmed cases reported by the Belgian authorities, with a total of 9,661 deaths and 16,610 discharged patients. Currently, 397 people in Belgian hospitals are suffering from COVID-19, including 84 in intensive care.

Following the containment measures of the federal government, many Belgian businesses had to shut down temporarily or have reduced staff numbers at work, resulting in 1.25 million

people on temporary unemployment. Belgian companies suffer from the corona crisis, such as producers of fries who reported a drop in demand for potato specialities.

Just as most airlines in the world, the national flag carrier Brussels Airlines suspended all its commercial flights as of 21 March, originally until 19 April but delayed the restart of operations first till May 15, then till June 1st, then gradually from 15 June. With bars, cafes and other businesses closed, Belgian breweries started delivering directly to people self-isolating at home.

With a population of 11.5 million, Belgium is one of the nations that have been hit the hardest by COVID-19, but it began phasing out lockdown measures at the beginning of May, marking out 4, 11 and 18 May, as well as 8 June, as key dates.

After reopening non-food shops last month, the country allowed schools, markets, museums and zoos to partially operate again.

New infections are still being detected in our country, but trends are declining. The virus remains with us, it still takes its toll and we must remain vigilant. This is why we must continue to ban certain activities.

The delegate from Belgium reiterates “How governments act today will shape the post-COVID world for years to come”. This is true not only domestically, where the right policies can foster a resilient, inclusive and sustainable recovery, but also in terms of how countries cooperate to tackle global challenges together. International cooperation, a weak point so far in the policy response, can create confidence and have important positive spillover effects.

Extraordinary policies will be needed to walk the tightrope towards recovery. Restarting economic activity while avoiding a second outbreak requires flexible and agile policy-making. The safety nets and support currently provided for badly hit sectors would need to be adapted to help businesses and workers move to new activities.

The delegate from Belgium agrees that Higher public debt cannot be avoided, but debt-financed spending should be well-targeted to support the most vulnerable and provide the investment needed for a transition to a more resilient and sustainable economy. Governments must seize this opportunity to build a fairer economy, making competition and regulation smarter, modernizing taxes, government spending and social protection. **“Prosperity comes from dialogue and cooperation. This holds true at the national and global level.”**

The delegate calls for stronger international cooperation to help end the pandemic more quickly, speed up the economic recovery, and avoid harming the catch-up process of emerging-market economies and developing countries. It also argues for encouraging more resilient supply chains, including larger holdings of stocks and more diversification of sources locally and internationally.