

# IBERIAN MUN Special Conference

## Officer Report 2022

### *Research Report on the role of Member States in protecting civilians from misinformation*

Misinformation is an issue that has been increasing rapidly throughout the years. One of the main sources of misinformation, as argued by some experts, is technology since it facilitates the spread of such. On the other hand, other experts believe in societal and technical solutions to help in the prevention of misinformation. Thus, causing concern in today's society, leading to a study conducted in 2016 that examined interactions between 376 million Facebook users and more than 900 news sources. This study showed that people frequently look for information that supports their opinions. This makes individuals more likely to believe and acting upon false information. For instance, Ethereum's market value was said to have decreased by \$4 billion after false news reports in June 2017 claimed its creator, Vitalik Buterin, had died in a vehicle accident. This only comes to prove the impact and lack of protection from misinformation (Anderson and Rainie). Therefore, it is essential to highlight article 19 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; **this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information** and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Nonetheless, to contextualize, it is important to notice how misinformation can become a major issue, especially due to the current events worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) started a webinar program on the infodemic in June 2020, where experts in the fields of medicine, social science, journalism, and health care explored how misinformation affects their capacity to provide timely, pertinent, and local information. A cross-sector partnership is desperately needed to stop the spread of false information about health, yet at this crucial moment, knowledge is being swamped by rumors, conspiracies, and false information. False information is raging right now, making it dangerous to have the wrong knowledge or none at all. Many governments and health organizations are taking all the

necessary measures, but in the era of digital platforms, real-time crisis communications have become a deadly problem. The WHO emphasized during the webinar that while it is crucial for academics to comprehend the influence of hashtags and social media, we shouldn't put undue pressure on public health professionals to come up with innovative solutions to get around false information (Donovan and Wardle).

In this time of crisis, misinformation became an obstacle where people believed in what the pandemic was posed as. Once again, this was emphasized as a threat, when the war between Russia and Ukraine broke out (Katz). As stated by Mr. Guterres, “The weapons they wield are not just guns and explosives. Misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech are increasingly being used as weapons of war to dehumanize the so-called other, threaten vulnerable communities – as well as peacekeepers themselves – and even give open license to commit atrocities” (“Reliable Information”).

The UN chief suggested six ongoing practical initiatives to enhance tactical communications in peacekeeping, starting with the adoption of "a whole of mission approach" encompassing military and civilian components for networked field communication. Secondly, he advised mission leaders to ensure that decisions and planning completely incorporate strategic communications. Third, missions require direction and instruction, as well as the dissemination of best practices. Fourth, the most effective means must be used to combat lies, false information, and hate speech. Fifth, he demanded ongoing evaluation of the performance of UN communication initiatives. He also urged stronger strategic communications to address sexual abuse and exploitation as well as increase accountability (“Reliable Information”).

Consider the various ways that misinformation has affected our lives in the present in order to complete your resolution on this issue. The WHO website is recommended as a resource for data on this subject, and while formulating the preambulatory provisions for this resolution, delegates are asked to refer to both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Before drafting operational provisions, delegates should first review their delegation's stance and prior

actions taken on this matter. Whether this is not feasible, it is suggested that you look into other delegates perspectives and suggested solutions to see if they are compatible with your delegation. The delegates can also use the United Nations recommendations, such as some of the examples provided in this report, to help develop their own.

### Works Cited

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