

UNISMUNC XII



**Committee: United Nations Human
Rights Council**
Topic: Human Genome Editing

Committee Type: GA

December 7, 2026



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Conference Schedule:

<i>Opening Ceremonies</i>	<i>8:00 am - 9:00 am</i>
<i>Committee Session I</i>	<i>9:00 am - 1:00 pm</i>
<i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>1:00 pm - 2:00 pm</i>
<i>Committee Session II</i>	<i>2:00 pm - 5:30 pm</i>
<i>Closing Ceremonies</i>	<i>5:30 pm - 6:15 pm</i>

Conference Policies:

UNISMUNC XII aims to foster debate, giving students the opportunity to explore a range of topics and encouraging collaboration and teamwork among delegates. Be that as it may, UNIS stresses the importance of respectful language as UNISMUNC XII will see delegates debating topics that, at times, may be heated or passionate. MUNEX encourages you to remember to stay respectful and mindful of the other students around you. We are so excited about this conference and trust that no issues will arise. The following expectations and policies are designed so that every delegate gets the most out of UNISMUNC.

Attire:

The Dress Code for UNISMUNC is formal Western business attire, and all delegates are expected to comply with this. Exceptions may be made for character purposes in crisis committees at the chair's discretion. If you have an idea for an outfit for a crisis committee that does not fall into the parameters of traditional Western business attire, please ask your chair for permission before wearing the outfit.

Committee Assignments:

Committee assignments will be made on a first-come, first-served basis based on preference as communicated by the delegation's advisors (or individual delegates in the case of independent delegates), in order of receipt of preference. Before being assigned to a committee, payment must be received. If payment is not submitted in a timely manner, delegations face the risk of not receiving committee assignments of their choice.

Expectations in Committee:

As you engage in debates, we ask that delegates maintain politeness and respect at all times. While we recognize that you are representing your country's views, it is essential to express these perspectives without crossing the line into disrespectful or confrontational behavior.

Please respect one another when delegates are giving speeches. Only one delegate may speak at a time during moderated caucuses. To speak during a moderated caucus, you must raise your placard and wait to be recognized by the chair. During speeches, no ad hominem attacks will be allowed, should they occur, the subject will have the right to reply. Remember to be cognizant of your words and actions, and to listen to everyone's views and positions.

The Committee Chairs and Secretariat members are responsible for determining disruptive behavior.

Examples of disrespectful behavior may include but are not limited to:

- Speaking without being recognized,
- Use of cell phones,
- Note-passing unrelated to the committee,
- Use of technology when not allowed,
- Verbal, physical, or sexual harassment of other delegates.

The pre-writing of any resolution/directive clauses, crisis notes, or speeches is strictly forbidden and will be penalized. This does not include opening remarks. This does not include any writing during the lunch break, as UNISMUNC committees standardly operate with 'working lunches'.

UNISMUNC has a zero-tolerance policy for any plagiarism. This includes position papers, speeches, and resolutions. Improper citation of quotes and references may result in disqualification from awards or further disciplinary action at the discretion of the chairs.

Pricing:

Please see the registration section for more information. Details on committee assignments are below.

Spectators:

Please be aware that UNISMUNC XII does not allow unregistered spectators. Student spectators are strictly prohibited. All advisors and delegates must be registered and pay the required fee(s). Non-compliance with this policy will result in exclusion from future invitations. We expect all

participating delegations to respect this policy. The Secretariat reserves the right to have any unregistered spectators removed from committee chambers and escorted off of the premises if necessary, as they see fit.

Technology:

All crisis committees are strictly no-tech. Neither laptops nor cell phones will be permitted during committee sessions in crisis committees.

General Assembly (GA) committees allow technology exclusively for the purpose of resolution writing. Delegates will be permitted to use their laptops to work on resolutions during unmoderated caucuses and outside of the committee chamber when allowed by the chair. It is, however, not permitted to use technology when a fellow delegate is speaking or during committee chambers during moderated caucuses. This includes your own speeches, so please write any notes by hand or have your opening remarks printed before the conference.

Awards Criteria:

UNISMUNC Chairs, Dises, and, in the case of crisis committees, Crisis Directors will work together to holistically evaluate delegates based on their performance throughout the entire day of debate. This includes:

- speeches given during moderated caucuses,
- performance during unmoderated caucuses (not only making one's voice heard but also including everyone in the discussion),
- writing/presenting resolutions/directions, especially those that pass,
- in crisis committees, as well as the detail and sophistication of crisis arcs.

Letter From Chair/Director:

Greetings Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to UNISMUNC XII! My name is Miyuki Mase, and I will be the chair for this committee. Our committee will discuss human genome editing, specifically from the human rights and ethics perspective. Last year, my biology class had a unit on genetics, during which my teacher mentioned human genome editing. I thought that it would be an exciting topic for UNISMUNC so I am excited to see your unique ideas and cooperation within delegates. Please come well researched and prepared to make the most out of this conference. As for a position paper, if you wish to submit one please do so by the day before the conference via email.

As for a bit about myself, I am a junior in the IB program, and it is my second year at UNIS. UNIS has been a great place for me to interact with people from all around the world, while also providing me with a community where I can connect with others who share a connection with my Japanese background. I am the ASG of Logistics for our Model UN club and the co-head of Logistics of the Speech and Debate club. I have lived in India and Japan, along with New York, and I am on the school's varsity volleyball team. I enjoy watching a variety of TV shows in my free time, my favorites being Brooklyn 99, Gossip Girl, 2521, and Extraordinary Attorney Woo.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to 28mmase2@unis.org if you have any questions regarding our committee or UNISMUNC in general. See you all in December!

Sincerely,

Miyuki Mase

A Brief Overview of the Committee:

The United Nations Human Rights Council was established in 2006 by the UN General Assembly and is the main body responsible for human rights. The president of the 20th cycle is Sidharto Reza Suryodipro, who has been the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN since 2025. The UNHRC consists of 47 member states, whose members are elected by a majority vote of the 193 states of the UN General Assembly, renewing one-third of the council every year. The council adopts resolutions during its regular sessions with UN officials, experts, called the advisory committee, and other participants. The UNHRC consists of several mechanisms to address and monitor human rights violations worldwide. Examples of these are the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which assess the human rights records of all 193 United Nations member states, the Special Procedures, which consists of individuals or groups not employed by the UN, that monitor and report on specific human rights issues and situations (OHCHR).

Meeting three times a year at Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, the council acts as an international community to prevent human rights crises and address issues such as terrorism, discrimination, migration, and technical cooperation (United Nations). The council can implement resolutions and launch fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry. For example, the council established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic in 2011 to investigate violations of human rights committed during the Syrian Civil War. Through its resolutions, the UNRC contributed to the protection of human rights of the people in Syria by emphasizing the need for accountability and the importance of peace in the region (OHCHR).

Committee Procedure:

Moderated Caucuses are structured discussions where delegates sign themselves up to give short, regulated speeches. The speaking time and topic of discussion are set when the motion is proposed, and delegates take turns to speak.

Unmoderated Caucuses are divided between a regular unmoderated caucus and a gentleman's unmoderated caucus where everybody remains seated. A regular unmod entails a period free of structured, regulated debate, where delegates can mill about the committee and work with their blocs.

Some actions that are carried over from the usual committee procedure:

- Point of Order
- Point of Information
- Appeal to the Chair
- Suspension of Debate
- Adjournment of Debate
- Closure of Debate
- Roll Call Vote
- Set the Speaker's Time

Written Papers:

Resolutions: A piece of writing that outlines possible solutions to a problem and allows the committee to take action. Hopefully towards the end of the committee blocs will work together to write a resolution that can be debated and possibly passed.

Working Papers: The drafts of resolutions, i.e. resolutions before they are voted on by the committee – committee blocs work together to write these, brainstorming and fully outlining detailed solutions to the issues at hand. Then, they are voted on and formally become resolutions.

Topic Background:

Introduction to Human Genome Editing

Genome editing is a method used by scientists on organisms such as plants and animals to remove, add, or replace DNA, which affect factors that include physical traits and disease risks. The method was introduced in the late 1900s, but in 2009 a new genome editing tool called Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) was invented, which is more accurate than other methods. CRISPR technology was originally adapted as a bacterial defense system against viral infection. A guide RNA sequence is created in order to find the invader through complementary base pairing. Because the target recognition sequence is encoded in a RNA rather than a protein, it is considered more accurate than other methods (Prillaman). Human genome editing comes in two forms: somatic genome editing and germline genome editing. Somatic genome editing targets non-reproductive body cells that cannot be inherited by future generations. On the other hand, germline genome editing can alter the genetic characteristic of an embryo and is therefore heritable (Lyu and Spero).

Benefits of human genome editing include faster and more accurate diagnosis and targeted treatment. CRISPR-based tools can detect DNA and RNA sequences associated with mutations, making it possible for certain conditions to be detected faster. Furthermore, its ability to fix single-cell mutations responsible for conditions such as sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis can be used to fix genetic diseases. Other benefits include preventing hereditary illnesses and targeted cancer therapy.

However, the risks surrounding genome editing make the usage of it difficult in many situations. Because the change in germline cells is passed on, errors in editing may have a negative effect on future individuals. The extent to which these errors affect an individual is difficult, and it is even more challenging to predict the effect in two or more generations. In addition, the possibility of genome editing being used for non-medical purposes like genetic enhancement, leads to arguments about the ethical concerns of this technology.

Potential Applications and Concerns

Germline genome editing, specifically heritable human genome editing, refers to changes in the DNA in a way that may be heritage across generations. The usage of this technology is attracting attention because of its possibility of preventing the birth of individuals with so-called undesirable traits by deleting or adding certain traits. Parents who have or have the risk of passing down a certain type of genetic disease to their children may want to use human genome editing to prevent this. However, the risks must be considered, as there are many aspects of this technology that are still uncertain. The usage of germline genome editing is under intense debate because of its relation to human reproduction, raising religious, ethical, social, and safety concerns. Although it can be used to cure certain diseases, this technology has the power to change the DNA of a whole bloodline, making it difficult to draw a line between ethical and unethical application. Furthermore, the cost is a major concern that may lead to issues such as unequal access between the wealthy and poor. The existing inequalities between certain countries and groups could increase. The effect of human genome editing on society as a whole is unpredictable, calling for the need of proper and appropriate regulations (WHO).

Editing the somatic cells at the fetal stage can benefit the future child if they have the risk of having tissue-specific or systemic effects that cannot be treated with other methods. Fast cell division and replication can help the corrected cells to spread through the body. There are safety concerns of unintended genetic changes or accidental effect on germline cells, and even after the process is successfully finished, the cells must be monitored to avoid heritable modifications. Although these changes are not expected to be passed down to offsprings, that does not simply make somatic genome editing a safer alternative (WHO).

The Distinction between Therapeutic Use and Human Enhancement

The distinction between treatment and human enhancement appears to be clear, yet it is complicated by the idea of using human genome editing for prevention purposes. Ideally, the idea of drawing a clear line between treatment and enhancement would be the easiest approach

to prevent human rights issues. However, enhancement can be defined as changes that go beyond ethical conventions or applications that oppose medical use, and these medical applications include both treatment and prevention attempts, making medical use a vague term as well. Furthermore, there is debate over whether or not prevention can be included as enhancement or a necessary part of treating genetic diseases. Determining where treatment ends and enhancement begins depends on how concepts such as disease and prevention are defined, and they could differ between societies, religion, and culture, creating difficulty in creating a universal benchmark.

The possibility of using human genome editing for human enhancement raises serious concern over inequality and human rights. If genetic modifications start to alter certain characteristics and traits, wealthier individuals may be able to benefit from this technology, while others cannot. This calls the issue of inequality between the people that have access to genome editing and those that cannot due to financial constraints. In addition, the ability to replace or delete so-called undesirable traits could lead to discrimination against individuals that have a trait that others may want to modify, leading to human rights issues. Regulations to prevent these consequences must be discussed.

Current Situation:

Case Study: He Jiankui's Experiment

In 2018, Chinese scientist He Jiankui announced that he had helped produce genetically edited babies by implanting gene-edited embryos into two women. One of them gave birth to twins, Lulu and Nana, while whether or not the second woman gave birth is unclear. The birth of the twins was an experiment conducted on couples in which males were HIV carriers, and Jiankui was able to immunize the twins by disabling the CCR5 gene that enables the HIV infection. In the 2003 “Ethical Guiding Principles for Research on Embryonic Stem Cell” issued by China’s Ministry of Science and Technology, and the former Ministry of Health, bans research on human embryos after the fourteenth day of existence (Raposo). Jiankui received a three year sentence and a fine of three million yuan, which is approximately \$430,000 USD, for conducting illegal medical practices (Normile).

This specific case caused great debate between scientists regarding use of the new CRISPR-Cas9 technology. Although CRISPR-Cas9 is considered a cheaper and safer alternative to existing genome editing technology, there are still risks associated with mistaken or unintended changes in the DNA, for which the consequences are unpredictable. For example, in this case, the intervention of CCR5 genes increases the risk of infection from the West Nile Virus and severe flu. Furthermore, gene editing was incomplete in one of the babies, according to scientists who analysed Jiankui’s experiment, so there may have been consequences as an outcome of this.

Case Study: Layla Richards and Gene Therapy

In 2015, scientists successfully used somatic gene therapy on a one-year old girl, Layla Richards, from the United Kingdom. She received gene editing therapy to fight acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), which she was diagnosed with at three months old. CRISPR was not used, instead a technology called Transcription Activator-Like Effector Nucleases (TALENs), after doctors tried chemotherapy, which did not work out. After an emergency ethics committee meeting, which was held to discuss the appropriate treatment for Layla, gave ethical approval and her parents gave consent, medical staff of Great Ormond Street Hospital received permission to conduct a highly experimental therapy that was only tested in mice, which resulted in exceptional improvement in her conditions (BBC). The treatment used on Layla works by adding new genes to healthy donor T-cells. By using TALENs, which act like scissors, specific genes are cut in order to make T-cells become invisible to a powerful leukaemia drug and reprogram them to target leukaemia cells (GOSH) This was significant because patients who have undergone chemotherapy sometimes do not have enough healthy T-cells to be collected and modified.

Layla's case became a milestone in the development of human genome editing technology, demonstrating further potential applications for gene-edited cell therapy. However, it was emphasized that the treatment is still in its experimental period, and that one successful case does not mean it will work on every single patient.

Current International Regulations

International regulations on human genome editing started before modern advancement. In 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, establishing one of the earliest international principles concerning human dignity, human rights, and responsibilities using gene-editing technology. It also recognizes the human genome as a part of human dignity, and that no human being should be discriminated against because of their genetic characteristics. As genome editing technology such as CRISPR started to develop, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a governance framework on human genome editing, regarding advancing technology and the gap in scientific understanding, along with the ethical issues. However, these international frameworks do not consist of universal regulations against the use of genome editing technology. Instead, each country has its own regulation against it, which may result in issues such as inconsistent ethical standards, international inequality, regulatory gaps, and difficulty in international cooperation.

As human genome editing technology continues to develop, the international community faces the problem of balancing scientific development with safety, human rights, and ethical responsibilities. Because currently different countries are taking different approaches, finding a common ground while respecting national sovereignty remains a significant challenge.

Bloc Positions:

Western Bloc

The Western Bloc, along with the United States, Canada, and European countries do not allow heritable genome editing on human embryos, while the restriction for somatic genome editing varies depending on the country. The United States does allow somatic genome editing under current medical regulations, though federal funding cannot be used for research on genetically modified human embryos (MedlinePlus). The United Kingdom and the European Union have similar stances, having strict restrictions on heritable genome editing. Concern towards safety, inequality, and human rights exist as reasons for these constraints.

African and Middle Eastern Bloc

South Africa withdrew its section on heritable human genome editing from its national ethics guidelines because of their concern towards the creation of “designer babies.” South Africa, along with other countries, are cautious of the effects of usage of human genome editing technology, such as safety and cultural, religious considerations. While non-heritable genome editing frameworks exist in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, heritable genome editing is strictly prohibited by law in many countries. Issues regarding research capacity, inequality, access to advanced genome editing technologies remain (Caelers).

Asian Bloc

As seen in the He Jiankui case, China’s regulatory system does not allow researchers to use genetically edited embryos on human bodies, as their Ethical Guidelines for Human Genome Editing addresses the ethical concerns and emphasizes the responsibility of researchers in clinical germline genome editing (Interesse). Furthermore, Japan distinguishes between research on

embryos and actually using them to produce children. The protection of ethical boundaries and safety is crucial for countries, while balancing it without hindering scientific progress.

Latin American Bloc

Many Latin American countries have restrictions on human genome editing, though there are some differences in the strictness of those regulations. Chile has no active clinical programs or approved frameworks for human genome editing, and rather focuses on agricultural genome editing (Sanchez). Mexican on the other hand, has existing frameworks, though has been identified for needing more specific regulations addressing heritable genome editing technology regulations. Ensuring equal access to these technologies is crucial as well.

Questions to Consider:

- Should restrictions be established and agreed by the international community, or be left for each country to decide?
- In what situation should human genome editing be allowed and who should have the right to decide this?
- What is the breaking point between prevention and treatment, or will there always be a grey zone?
- How can we ensure that the human rights of both people that experience genetic editing and the people that have not are protected?
- How can the international community ensure the safety and long-term monitoring of human genome editing without hindering scientific progress?

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