



TOPIC 2:
Addressing the legality of abortion

Committee: **UN Women**

Overview of the topic

The NHS defines abortion as a procedure to end a pregnancy. For the procedure to be labeled as an abortion, the pregnancy must be terminated by either taking medicines or having a surgical procedure. This can also be labeled as an induced abortion. A miscarriage is an abortion that occurs without intervention, therefore it happens naturally. These miscarriages, also known as spontaneous abortions happen in approximately 30% - 40% of all pregnancies. The reasons why women have abortions vary across the world. Reasons include the health of the mother, an inability to afford a child, domestic violence, lack of support from the mother's community, age, wishing to complete education or advance a career, rape, incest, lifestyle, and many more. When done properly, an induced abortion is one of the safest procedures in medicine. The risk of the death of the mother is significantly lower during an abortion than during childbirth. Abortions can be risky when done by unlicensed doctors or done illegally in countries where the procedure is not legal. Public health data has proven that legalizing safe abortions and making them accessible to everyone around the world would reduce maternal deaths.

An abortion can be carried out medically or surgically. Medical abortions are those induced by abortifacient (= pharmaceuticals capable of causing a miscarriage) pharmaceuticals. Medical abortion became an alternative method of abortion in the 1970s and the 1980s, with the availability of prostaglandin analogs and the antiprogesterone mifepristone respectively. Currently, different types of medicaments are used for abortions. Different medicines are often used together. Medical abortions are usually not practiced after the first trimester.

Surgical abortions can be carried out in many different ways. The most common ones are suction aspiration or vacuum aspiration. Other methods include MVA (also known as menstrual extraction), EVA, D&C (dilation and curettage), D&E (dilation and evacuation), D&X (intact dilation and extraction), or hysterotomy.

Safety of Abortion

Potential health risks depend on if an abortion is carried out safely or unsafely. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines unsafe abortions as those performed by unskilled individuals, with hazardous equipment, or in unsanitary facilities. Legal abortions performed in developed countries by certified doctors are among the safest medical procedures in the world. The CDC (Central for Disease Control and Prevention) reported that in 2019 US pregnancy-related mortality was 17.2 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, while the US abortion mortality rate is 0.7 maternal deaths per 100,000 procedures. In the UK the RCOG (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists) stated that women should be informed that abortion is safer than going through with the pregnancy. In the US, abortion has had a lower mortality rate than deaths during plastic surgery. Vacuum aspiration in the first trimester is the safest method of surgical abortion. Especially in countries where abortion is illegal or restricted, women often seek unsafe abortions. Unsafe abortions can lead to severe medical complications, sometimes even death. It is estimated that over 20 million unsafe abortions are performed around the world every year. A vast majority are performed in developing countries, where abortion is not legal. The solution to decreasing the number of unsafe abortions

performed is without a doubt to make abortion legal around the world. For example, the 1996 legalization of abortion in South Africa had an immediate positive impact on the frequency of abortion-related complications, with abortion-related deaths dropping by more than 90%.

Abortion has long been a topic of discussion among politicians all over the world. Over 75 countries allow abortion, with varying gestational limits. The most common gestational period is 12 weeks, but many countries, particularly in Europe, offer legal protections for abortion beyond that limit and/or other broad exceptions. The first nation to legalize abortion was the Soviet Union in 1920. Before, abortions in the USSR were not popular among politicians, but they knew that banning abortions would just force women to undergo unsafe surgeries resulting in injuries and death. There are only a handful of countries, where abortions are banned entirely, for example, Andorra, Malta, Vatican City, or the Philippines. There are currently no international treaties or laws regarding the legality of abortion. This is due to the reason that abortion is a controversial topic in many countries worldwide. We could've absorbed what banning abortion did in the USA this year.

Country views

People's Republic of China - Abortion has been fully legal in China since 1957. Today, China is a major abortion pill manufacturer

United States of America - The Supreme Court made abortion legal in the US in 1973. In 2022, the Supreme Court overturned its ruling and left individual states to dictate their own laws. Some states outlawed abortions, while others kept abortion legal.

Russian Federation - Abortion in Russia is currently legal and has been for over a century, the longest in any country to date.

French Republic - Abortion has been legal in France since 1975. France is an active participator in the persuasion of the legalization of abortions in other countries, especially its colonies.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland - Abortion has been legal in the UK since the Abortion Act in 1967.

Summary

Abortion is an ongoing controversial topic, that should be resolved on an international level. There are many factors why different countries don't allow abortion. Tradition, religion, economic growth, and political situation are all factors in the status of abortion around the world. Why should abortion be legal worldwide? Should religion be taken into account? How to ensure safe abortions in developing countries? All of these topics should be discussed during your session.