

14th GLOBAL SUMMIT

REPUBLIC OF SAN MARINO

15-17 APRIL, 2024

CRISES, EVOLUTION, GROWTH: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEES IN A WORLD OF UNCERTAINTY

DRAFT TEXT TO DESCRIBE THE PILLARS

In recent years, the number of human and natural disasters has grown exponentially. At the same time, we have been observing the increasingly intense consequences of global warming on our world, and the resulting disruption to our societies. This disruption has been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is leading to greater uncertainty: uncertainty about available resources, about geopolitical balances, about the very future of the human species and of biodiversity on our planet.

Consequently, it is timely to reflect on how National Ethics and Bioethics committees can play an active role at the forefront of speaking to and addressing these challenges facing our respective societies. This conference will focus on four key areas of crisis.

Pillar 1: Preparing for crises in times of resource shortages: role of National Ethics Committees

Parallel session: Issues of crisis: pandemic preparedness

The right to food has long been acknowledged as a fundamental human right. Climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, recent conflicts are some of the major drivers that have intensified issues of food insecurity. Many of the same drivers are also causing changes to food production and supply which has already been under intense pressure due to a myriad of issues, including the globalization of food production. This is making it increasingly difficult to ensure food safety. Rethinking our approach to food systems will need to respond to issues of sustainability, equity and healthy living.

Pillar 2: Contributions and challenges of National Ethics Committees in fostering inclusion for persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups

Parallel session: Inclusion, exclusion and 'vulnerability'

The approval of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD) has changed the vision about persons with disabilities, moving from a medical model towards the social model of disability based on the respect of their human rights. It has provided a transformative approach to ethical practice in many areas, including in terms of preparedness for emergencies, access to healthcare and changes to disability research. Evaluating and understanding the relationship between vulnerability and disability, reflecting on the impact of the CPRD, and its application in different settings are critical to understanding future approaches.

Pillar 3: Striving for equity in the face of medical innovations: How can National Ethics Committees help redress the balance?

Parallel session: Equitable access and benefit sharing: prevention, diagnosis and treatment, adapting resources to unforeseen challenges

Catastrophic events caused by natural and human phenomena require critical decision-making processes in which fundamental ethical values come into play. Facing such events requires the involvement of human and technical resources and the availability of functioning systems to prevent, prepare for, and mitigate their effects. Consideration of fundamental ethical principles and local cultural diversity is critical to understanding the issues associated with the introduction of innovative technologies for all elements of medical countermeasures in our response to crises.

Pillar 4: The role of National Ethics Committees in promoting public engagement, dialogue, and trust in public health and welfare

Parallel session: Trust, misinformation and engagement

During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, citizens and decision-makers sought solutions in science. At a time when biological and medical research has succeeded in creating new and adapted vaccines to prevent serious disease, trust towards both public institutions and policy makers has been challenged. The rise in disinformation and misinformation was also well documented during the pandemic, magnified via social media platforms and resulting in an infodemic. Governments, health agencies and public officials will need to rethink future models of both communication and engagement and the principles that must underpin them.