

Background Guide

Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Combating Misinformation



JACKRABBIT MUN VIII

L.B. POLY - MAY 23th, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chair Letters.....	3
Topic Synopsis.....	6
Committee Description.....	7
Background.....	9
United Nations Involvement.....	14
Bloc Positions.....	15
Questions to Consider	18
Works Cited.....	19



CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Hello delegates!

My name is Avery Sigur, and I'll be your co-chair for this Jackrabbit MUN committee. I'm a sophomore here at Poly, and this is my first year doing Model United Nations. Although I am rather new, I got the hang of debate fairly quickly. Being able to channel my strong opinions into formal arguments and defenses is one of my favorite parts about MUN.

No matter the topic, I always find myself coming up with something to contribute to the discussion. Something I admire about debate is how every delegate infuses purpose into every speech, bringing nuance to the committee and resolutions.

Outside of MUN, I play on the Varsity Girls' Lacrosse team and fulfill my role as secretary of the Future Medical Professionals of America club here at Poly. When I have free time outside of my hefty workload you can find me listening to my chaotic mix of music tastes, playing Fortnite and Minecraft with friends, and watching TV shows/movies. I'm so excited to see what all of you have to bring to this topic, and look forward to being your chair!

Sincerely,

Avery Sigur

ARFSD: Combating Misinformation | Co-Head Chair

siguravery@gmail.com



CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Hello delegates!

Sincerely,

Gia Stoffers

ARFSD: Combating Misinformation | Co-Head Chair



POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, May 17th**.
- Delegates **must** submit position papers to be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers can be submitted through a Google form:
 - <https://forms.gle/H3ruhahP2SQUEPs38>
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
 - United States
 - First Last
 - School Name
 - ARFSD
- Papers should be emailed as a PDF file
 - Paper content should also be copied and pasted into the body of the email so it can still be graded in the event of any technical difficulties
 - Please name the file and subject line of the email [Committee_Country]
 - Ex. **ARFSD_Algeria**
- Papers should be 1-2 pages in length with an additional Works Cited page in MLA format
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
 - Background & UN Involvement
 - Position of your Country
 - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email one of your chairs.



TOPIC SYNOPSIS

The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was first held in 2015 another branch of the United Nations' regional forums on sustainable development, which, like all such branches, is required to follow-up, review, and catalyze actions with the aim of creating societies that are safe, healthy, and peaceful for all.

One of the primary goals of ARFSD is to uphold and help implement the goals of Agenda 2063, the African Union's 50-year framework that aims to uplift Africa into a global superpower by sustainably improving and increasing infrastructure and industrialization. This long-term plan for Africa seeks to aim the continent's trajectory on an upwards climb, adapting to specific regional needs and a globalized society that continues to evolve. Such goals include a high standard of living, with low rates of unemployment, ending poverty, and providing everyone with food, water and shelter, increasing education and technological advancement, modernizing agriculture, and securing peace and justice.

Ultimately, the goal of this conference lies in achieving a united, safe, and sustainable Africa, preserving national, regional, and continental identities while simultaneously adapting to a quickly changing world. Shaping Africa into a modern identity while remaining confident in its traditions and people, ARFSD remains essential in the future of the continent.



COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

In the modern age, combating misinformation is a massive issue worldwide, and whether it's misleading news articles, propaganda, or conspiracy theories, all are amplified by global access to the internet. Through ignorance or purposeful deceit, misinformation now spreads faster than ever before, with consequences that span all sectors from politics to health to the environment. All countries must remain vigilant and on the lookout for misinformation, and Africa is posed with a set of challenges regarding misinformation both commonly held and unique to the continent.

One of the biggest challenges is in the journalism industry, which is often suppressed or influenced by government or privatized corporations in order to sway the news in their favor. Upholding journalistic integrity is not uncommonly placed in direct opposition to the safety and livelihood of the journalists, as was the case in 2023 when Congolese journalist Stanis Bujakera Tshiamala was sentenced to prison for his report on a political assassination.

Additionally, there is the issue of artificial intelligence, which can be inconsistent, especially in news stories that are rapidly developing, or areas where discussion is polarized. Lacking the fact-checking and editing processes of traditional media, AI information is notably unreliable, with Yale Insights reporting that AI models were unable to detect misinformation and propaganda upwards of 24% of the time.

Misinformation moreover affects the health of the population, such as is the case with AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. The disease that continually proves to be an issue for the continent, with over two-thirds of global AIDS and HIV patients residing in Africa, and tens of millions of Africans having died since the epidemic. Thus, the poor and inaccurate reporting often done on AIDS and HIV in Africa is not only a matter of sorting fact from fiction, but one of life and death.



In this committee, delegates will have to debate the various topics listed and more, attempting to alleviate the woes and ills caused by the spread of misinformation. Covering nearly all sectors of life, the battle against falsification is ever-present and ever-pressing.



BACKGROUND

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-GENERATED MISINFORMATION

Since the release of OpenAI’s ChatGPT to the public in November of 2022, the usage of artificial intelligence in everyday life has surged massively, with over 1 billion people using AI daily worldwide. Search engines such as Google now even automatically include AI-generated summaries alongside searches, additionally increasing its prevalence. While not all AI-generated information is incorrect, and it is useful for gaining quick general knowledge, the problem lies in that inaccuracies in AI information are relatively common.

For one, the phenomenon of AI “hallucinations” as defined by the Generative AI Working Group is fabricated data created by AI that is made to seem authentic. One such instance made global news when in the personal injury case *Mata v. Avianca Inc.*, a New York lawyer was discovered to have used ChatGPT to generate his legal research because his research contained quotes and citations from sources that did not exist. With the prevalence of AI on the rise, cases like these will only become more likely, potentially leading to desensitization and eventual acceptance of AI misinformation as fact.

Furthermore, AI is known to perpetuate racial and gender stereotypes, with Leonardo Nicoletti and Dina Bass’s research for Bloomberg Technology finding that when prompted to create images of people doing various actions and working in several different careers, generative AI overwhelmingly represented people with dark skin committing crimes and women and people of color in the least lucrative careers.



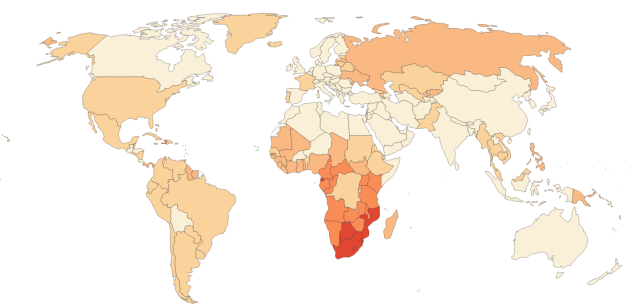
Such issues, while problematic anywhere, could further exacerbate racial tensions in Africa, worsening the situation in regions where political tensions run high or are actively in combat.

MEDICAL MISINFORMATION

Online and especially during health crises, medical information rapidly disseminates across the internet and social media platforms, often via unreliable sources without proper credentials or fact-checking. These “infodemics,” as they have come to be referred to, can cause real-world health effects, with one review from the Bulletin of the World Health Organization finding that the impact of medical misinformation on the public includes but is not limited to: an increased unwillingness to vaccinate and follow disease mitigation measures, misallocation of resources, and overall distrust from the public. With misinformation on commonly accessed social media sites like YouTube containing 20–30% health misinformation, this problem becomes ever more pressing with more and more people online.

Particularly in Africa, where AIDS and HIV have long been a major public health concern and where roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of worldwide cases are located, medical information can be directly responsible for AIDS and HIV-related fatalities. News outlets and humanitarian organizations have long published falsified or misleading headlines and content that have helped exacerbate the AIDS epidemic and cause additional panic around a disease that is already highly stigmatized in many regions of

New cases of HIV/AIDS, 2023
Number of new HIV/AIDS infections per 1,000 people.



Data source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease (2025)

OurWorldInData.org/hiv-aids | CC BY



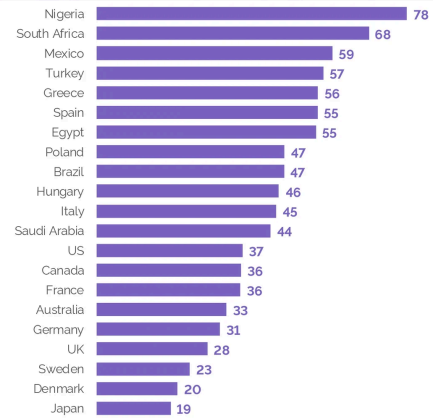
Africa. Such media commonly propagates the idea that the disease is limited to certain regions or directly related to refugees, which can increase stigma and xenophobia, exacerbating issues for people attempting to escape war.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Conspiracy theories, traditionally defined by an event or certain set of circumstances being orchestrated by some powerful force, are common worldwide, with most adults believing in at least one. However, conspiracy theories are not all harmless, and in extreme cases can cause instances of violence, as seen in cases such as the bombing of Oklahoma City in 1995. This is a particularly prevalent issue in Africa, as Nigeria and South Africa are consistently ranked amongst the highest believers in various conspiracy theories, as purported by a 2020 survey from the YouGov-Cambridge Globalism Project. This includes being the top two believers that harmful side effects of vaccines are hidden by the government (55% in Nigeria and 57% in South Africa), that a single secret group exists that controls the world (78% in Nigeria and 68% in South Africa), and that global warming is a hoax (31% in Nigeria and 27% in South Africa). Belief in conspiracy theories such as these and more increases distrust in the government and can disseminate information directly harmful to the public.

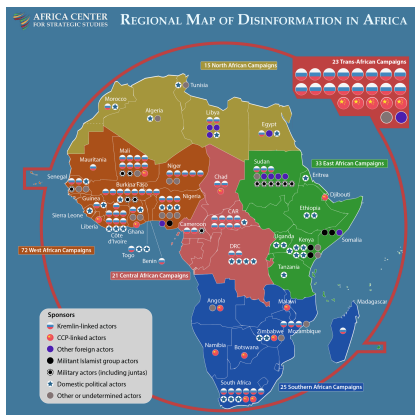
Over half of Spaniards and Greeks think a single secret group of people control world events

Would you say the following statement is true or false? (Answers for 'Regardless of who is officially in charge of governments and other organisations, there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together' shown % of adults in each country who answered either 'definitely true' or 'probably true')



YouGov

30 July - 24 August 2020



POLITICAL CORRUPTION & PROPAGANDA

Political corruption is a widespread issue in African nations, at a local, national, and international level, with



many citizens paying bribes to public officials just to get by. According to the Afrobarometer, a pan-African research network made to survey the public from regions across Africa, 65% of people in Liberia and 60% of people in Sierra Leone who had contact with a police officer reported that they had to pay a bribe to avoid trouble. At a national and international level, this can come in the form of politicians and government officials suppressing and bribing journalists, misallocating funds, and running smear campaigns against other nations, ethnic groups, or religious groups. Foreign state-sponsored disinformation campaigns are relatively common, with the Africa Center for Strategic Studies reporting that Russia, China, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are responsible for 60% of disinformation campaigns in Africa, releasing propaganda and misinformation in order to disrupt democratic processes, increase anti-Western and anti-UN sentiments, and create confusion around the science of climate change.

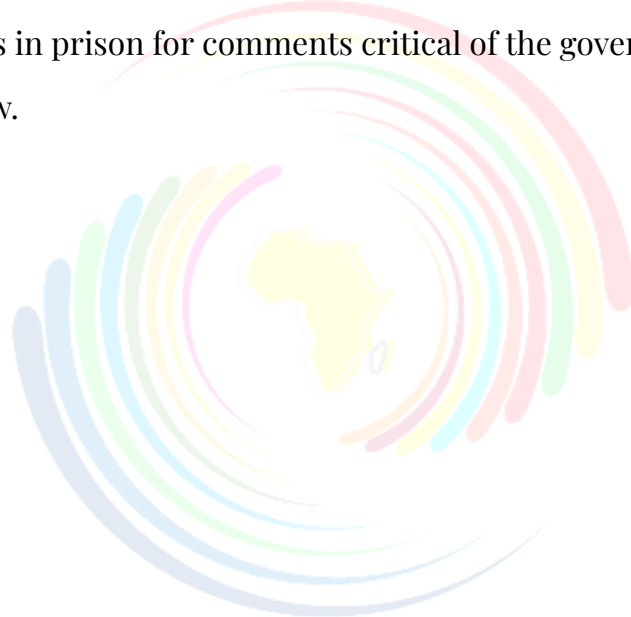
JOURNALIST INTEGRITY & SAFETY

Journalists have long been at the center of misinformation, and whether individuals or media organizations propagate it or actively fight against this issue, journalistic integrity is essential to ensuring information accuracy. Corrupt governments often own or bribe media companies in their respective nations, giving monetary incentives to skew the truth from the public, or repercussions should the media go against them. Such practices are known as “brown envelope” journalism, after the brown envelopes that money is often distributed to the journalists in. However, journalistic integrity is also put under pressure by the poor pay in the industry, with the BBC reporting on several Nigerian journalists who went months without receiving payment. Conditions like this can force people who otherwise would



not have taken a bribe to choose between their integrity or paying for basic necessities, making fair pay for journalists a necessary step towards truthful media.

Even amongst these conditions, some journalists choose journalistic integrity above all else, and for that they are often punished. In February of 2024, Zimbabwe banned two journalists from covering political functions, and in May of the same year instated an act that criminalized any actions that “willfully injure the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe,” an action that could hurt journalistic integrity for fear of punishments that include 10-20 years in prison and the death penalty. Such cases are not uncommon, as in 2023 in Burundi, journalist Floriane Irangabiye was sentenced to 10 years in prison for comments critical of the government that she made while on a radio show.



UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

In 2024, the United Nations launched a landmark initiative called the Global Principles for Information Integrity, seeking to retain freedom of speech worldwide while combating misinformation and hate speech worldwide. Striking the balance between free speech and limiting harmful speech is a difficult feat, with borderline cases striking up a great deal of controversy. The UN initiative is built off of five principles: Societal Trust and Resilience, Healthy Incentives, Public Empowerment, Independent, Free and Pluralistic Media, and Transparency and Research.

These pillars are meant to be a guide to promoting free and accurate speech, presenting information from differing points of view backed by fact-checked information. Initiatives such as these are meant to improve perceived reliability, build up trustworthy business models, build resilience against misinformation campaigns, and create online policies that allow users to have greater control over their online experiences. Both the right to privacy and the freedom to express one's opinion are essential, and the gray areas found between them present a chance for nations to shape these principles under their own values.

The UN warns against AI actors in particular, with the ethical considerations in developing AI tools remaining essential as the technology surrounding it builds up. Holding companies responsible for presenting accurate information is also imperative to the sustainable development of nations in Africa and worldwide, with advertisements necessitating accurate information for the safety and security of their people.



BLOC POSITIONS

NORTHERN AFRICA

Northern Africa faces challenges in all mentioned regions of misinformation, but additionally with domestic politics in particular. The abuse of racial stereotyping and xenophobia has been used to justify various means of governmental control, such as when the president of Tunisia, Kaïs Saïed, promoted the conspiracy theory that pro-democratic forces had attempted to bring “hoards” of Subsaharan migrants into Tunisia in order to change the demographic landscape of the country. Arguments based on blatant racism such as that are used as tools of control to subjugate marginalized peoples, increase public discord, and push disinformation that has the potential to hurt entire groups of people.

WESTERN AFRICA

Western Africa has long been a specific target of Russian intelligence services, with disinformation campaigns in the region accounting for over 40% of all campaigns in the African continent. These campaigns have specifically worked to destabilize Western influence, especially that of the French, who were the most prevalent colonizers in the area. Such disinformation is spread through programs like the Russian news agency African Initiative, which hosts events and gives out food in order to foster pro-Russian sentiments. Unwanted foreign influence like that of the Russians interferes with the sovereignty and independent judgement of nations, thus, the Western African Bloc specifically must work to target that as an issue in addition to the others that are more widespread across the continent.



EASTERN AFRICA

Disinformation in Eastern Africa poses a critical threat to the region's stability, with misinformation and disinformation disseminating through both traditional media outlets and social media. "Deepfakes," or falsified images of people, in particular prominent political figures, have seen an increasing and concerning usage, generating information in regional languages to further promote their messages. Sudan in particular has been swamped with disinformation from both sides of the nation's armed conflict, with both the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) spreading conflicting information about battles and territories, increasing confusion and panic among civilians.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa faces a misinformation crisis from mostly political sources, with distrust in the government and the West being raised through foreign interference and social media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and WhatsApp. Chinese intelligence is the main source of foreign disinformation, especially in Zimbabwe, where they helped the ruling political party, the ZANU-PF, to suppress opposing political voices through media manipulation. Domestic misinformation campaigns, often using social media as a conduit, have also contributed to a particular distrust in the medical system, such as with the efficacy of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CENTRAL AFRICA

Much like Western Africa, the Central African region has had a great deal of foreign influence from Russian intelligence, with campaigns running specifically against the United Nations, in the Central African Republic spreading false information



about the purpose of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Medical misinformation in particular has proved to be particularly deadly: in May of 2026, multiple healthcare workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo were murdered following false rumors of a disease that atrophies male genitals proliferated through communities and social media, causing a panic with no confirmed basis in reality. Such tragedies are avoidable, and a key concern for the region.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can tactics used to combat misinformation additionally be used to create long-term stability in the African continent?
2. Although AI is regularly cited as a detriment to information accuracy, it also stands as a tool to combat it. In what ways could AI be implemented in this way and what are the pros and cons of such an arrangement?
3. How can rural areas, who are often more susceptible to misinformation due to lack of exposure, be included with their specific needs met in your solution(s)?
4. How does international conflict create disinformation and cause citizens to lose faith in their government?
5. In what ways can governmental propaganda be determined, and how or should it be combated by outside forces?
6. Are nations able to hold each other accountable for reporting accurate information without overstepping national sovereignty?



WORKS CITED

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “Mapping a Surge of Disinformation in Africa.”

Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 13 Mar. 2024,

africacenter.org/spotlight/mapping-a-surge-of-disinformation-in-africa/.

“AI in Advertising Risks Fuelling Misinformation Crisis, UN Warns.” *UN News*, 29 Apr.

2026, news.un.org/en/story/2026/04/1167405. Accessed 29 Apr. 2026.

Borges do Nascimento, Israel Júnior et al. “Infodemics and health misinformation: a

systematic review of reviews.” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* vol. 100,9

(2022): 544-561. doi:10.2471/BLT.21.287654

Campante, Filipe, et al. “AI Misinformation and the Value of Trusted News.” *CEPR*, 16

Sept. 2025,

cepr.org/voxeu/columns/ai-misinformation-and-value-trusted-news.

Donati, Jessica, et al. “Fake Rumors, Real Killings: Inside Congo’s Deadly Health

Misinformation Crisis.” *Reuters*, 7 May 2026,

[www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/fake-rumors-real-killings-inside-c](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/fake-rumors-real-killings-inside-congos-deadly-health-misinformation-crisis-2026-05-07/)

[ongos-deadly-health-misinformation-crisis-2026-05-07/](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/fake-rumors-real-killings-inside-congos-deadly-health-misinformation-crisis-2026-05-07/).

Generative AI Working Group. “*How can we counteract generative AI’s hallucinations?*”

Digital, Data, and Design Institute at Harvard. (n.d.)

<https://d3.harvard.edu/how-can-we-counteract-generative-ais-hallucinations>

Kemp, Simon. “DataReportal – Global Digital Insights.” *DataReportal – Global Digital*

Insights, 15 Oct. 2025,

datareportal.com/reports/digital-2026-one-billion-people-using-ai.

Kroesbergen-Kamps, Johanneke. 2022, “Conspiracy Theories in Africa.”



10.4324/9781003120940-12.

Lowicki-Zucca, Massimo et al. "AIDS, conflict and the media in Africa: risks in reporting bad data badly." *Emerging themes in epidemiology* vol. 2 12. 13 Dec. 2005, doi:10.1186/1742-7622-2-12

Nicoletti, Leonardo, & Bass, Dina. "Humans are biased. Generative AI is even worse." Bloomberg Technology + Equality. 14 June 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2023-generative-ai-bias>

"Nigeria's "Brown Envelope" Journalism." *BBC News*, 5 Mar. 2015, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31748257.

Okereke, Melody et al. "COVID-19 Misinformation and Infodemic in Rural Africa." *The American journal of tropical medicine and hygiene* vol. 104,2 453-456. 30 Dec. 2020, doi:10.4269/ajtmh.20-1488

Visser, Rehan. "Africans See Rising Corruption, Even in Daily Life." *Good Authority*, 9 Dec. 2024, goodauthority.org/news/africa-corruption-bribery-afrobarometer-survey/. Accessed 4 May 2026.

Vosloo, Steven. "How AI Can Transform Africa's Learning Crisis into a Development Opportunity." *Unicef.org*, 2025, www.unicef.org/innocenti/stories/how-ai-can-transform-africas-learning-crisis-development-opportunity.

"Where Do People Believe in Conspiracy Theories?" *Yougov.com*, 2021,

yougov.com/en-gb/articles/33746-global-where-believe-conspiracy-theories-tr
[ue](http://yougov.com/en-gb/articles/33746-global-where-believe-conspiracy-theories-tr).

