

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHMUN XIX

General Assembly

Committee Background

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which was founded in 1945 in the turbulent years following World War II, is an excellent example of global cooperation. Its primary goal is to promote international understanding and peace via the advancement of knowledge in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication. UNESCO operates through significant groups like the General Conference, the Executive Board, and the Secretariat, working cooperatively to advance its mission. It has a vast network of 193 member states and 11 associate members.

UNESCO has a noticeable impact on many different fields. The Great Wall of China and the Pyramids of Giza are famous structures that are preserved through its flagship World Heritage program, and its emphasis on education for all has considerably increased global literacy rates and access to high-quality education. Global acknowledgment of cultural manifestations has been made possible by the organization's commitment to encouraging cultural diversity. Additionally, UNESCO has played a significant role in promoting journalistic freedom, encouraging international scientific cooperation, and aiding in the development of media infrastructure. Despite obstacles, UNESCO is unwavering in addressing modern problems including the effect of climate change on historic sites, guaranteeing equal access to education, and closing the digital divide.

UNESCO continues to be a crucial forum for diplomatic discussion and action as it navigates shifting global dynamics. UNESCO empowers nations to work together to address common problems, celebrate diversity, and create a more peaceful and linked world by bridging language and cultural barriers. The official website of UNESCO and trustworthy sources offer the most up-to-date and complete information on the organization's activities. These sources also offer important insights into the organization's crucial work.



Topic A: Preserving Education Systems Within Conflict Zones

The right to education is a fundamental human right at the core of UNESCO's mission to foster peace, end poverty, and promote sustainable development, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 are based on the tenet that everyone has the right to an education. These goals seek to provide inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education and encourage lifelong learning possibilities. But when a nation is embroiled in strife, education is also under attack. Schools ought to be a secure setting where kids can learn and be guarded against dangers. Children who don't go to school are more likely to be abused and recruited into the armed forces. Infrastructure-related problems are another issue that conflict-affected nations must deal with. For instance, 437 of the 2,638 educational institutions were damaged or destroyed as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war. Although 3.7 million children in Ukraine have access to online and distance learning, the destruction of the country's energy infrastructure has had an impact on both the effectiveness of this transition and the standard of education.

The lack of specific units committed to reacting to allegations of threatened cultural assets reduces the ability of Member States and international organizations to address reports of theft or destruction of cultural heritage during conflict. Governments and law enforcement agencies place less importance on preserving cultural assets when there is a threat to human life during armed conflict. Thus, the prompt appraisal of damaged cultural material and the timely reaction to it poses serious challenges to the global community. Rapid damage assessment (RDA) is crucial for cultural site protection since it can be used as justification for approaching appropriate authorities for rapid support and resource prioritization. Due to ongoing fighting or the presence of debris, international organizations like ICCROM, ICORP, or RAM that are in charge of early assessments frequently cannot access damaged sites to evaluate hazards and conserve cultural property, especially when specialist police units are not present.

Investments in technologically based monitoring and reporting tools, such as drones for aerial photography and cutting-edge archiving software, can enhance RDA. Aerial satellite imaging can help



relevant authorities in organizing emergency measures and is frequently the only secure way to learn about historical sites in crisis zones. While UNESCO's network of specialists on cultural treasures aids in the interpretation of the satellite imagery gathered, UNOSAT provides technical competence in timely satellite imagery acquisition of regions inaccessible to the international community. In order to gather timely imagery and do technical research on the degree of damage to cultural heritage monuments in Syria, Yemen, Nepal, and Iraq, the UNESCOUNOSAT collaboration was crucial by the year 2016. Streamlining reporting procedures for cultural assets in danger may be helped by the establishment of a national law enforcement body with expertise in countering threats to cultural heritage. Specialized units can help with the development of public policy and the prosecution of crimes against cultural heritage. They also enable more effective information sharing at the local, national, and international levels. Since its establishment in 2002, Argentina's Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage has conducted several successful investigations that have resulted in the restitution of stolen cultural artifacts to their rightful owners.

These are some of the difficulties that nations afflicted by conflict encounter. Therefore, the committee needs to create safety strategies, offer psychosocial support, renovate the infrastructure, and improve educational chances for kids. Lack of appropriate action will cause more students and instructors to lose access to a secure and encouraging learning environment, which will damage educational systems in conflict zones.

Questions to Consider:

- 1.) What restrictions already exist in the legal systems that demand the preservation of cultural heritage?
- 2.) What are the most efficient strategies for overcoming those constraints?
- 3.) Has the value of cultural heritage changed during repair and recovery?
- 4.) What new alliances could be formed and how can collaborations between UNESCO and other relevant actors be strengthened?



Topic B: Using Education as a Tool to Prevent Extremism

Over 170,000 terrorist attacks have been documented by the Global Terrorism Database since 2011, according to the Global Terrorism Index. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) responds to these trends by collaborating with the global community to prevent and combat violent extremism, emphasizing that "no one is born a violent extremist." According to UNESCO, radical organizations train young people to commit acts of terrorism against society as a reaction to socioeconomic challenges like unemployment and poverty. The goal of UNESCO is to stop extremism and radicalization through educating and empowering young people. The tremendous number of lives lost as a result of extremism makes it a worldwide phenomenon. The United Nations (UN) system has not created official definitions for "terrorism" and "violent extremism," partly due to challenges in translating terms across cultural contexts, according to the Secretary General's 2015 report, "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism". To clarify these definitions, there have been attempts to define these terminologies. Extremism is the acceptance of and belief in concepts that are contrary to what most people would believe to be true or reasonable. A person who harbors views or ideals that lead them to use violence to further a political or religious cause is said to be violently extremist. The phrase "a particular strategy adopted to achieve a political goal which is solely the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear" is used to characterize terrorism. Radicalization is the process of normalizing violence as a person or group's acceptable and desired mode of action.

Young people are more susceptible to extremist messaging because of economic hardships and political unrest. There are "push" and "pull" variables that influence violent extremism. Push factors are described as "conditions that are conducive to violent extremist groups." Examples include how a lack of socioeconomic prospects and the existence of discrimination might "push" some young people toward violence. Individual motives and justifications that entice potential recruits are referred to as pull factors. Teenage crises, a sense of mission or a search for identity, and purpose are a few of these. Some of these radical organizations "pull" new members by making it seem like they provide spiritual



solace or a sense of community. The processes of radicalization that might result in extremism are reflected in these patterns. To say that one thing alone is the exclusive source of extremism, however, would be incorrect. In this situation, education's function is to provide a means for young people to build resistance against violent extremism rather than to find these characteristics or tendencies in them. The ability to avoid ideas and viewpoints that justify the use of violence by presenting exclusive worldviews and facts can be considered as resilience to violent extremism. Youth are not the problem; rather, UNESCO challenges communities to view them as contributors to solutions. Thus, developing resilience involves learning through inquiry and checking the accuracy of information provided by extremists. UNESCO is dedicated to empowering youth in order to help stop them from developing an extremist mindset. The UNESCO Operational Term Strategy 2014–2021, a document that aims to make youth a global priority, serves as a guide for this endeavor. UNESCO is dedicated to developing systems that support youth participation in the formulation and execution of policies and programs. Youth who have an education are better able to comprehend these societal forces at play and forge the necessary defenses against them.

Global alliances are essential to the international community's efforts to reduce deadly terrorism. With a focus on GCED for the achievement of SDG 4.7, UNESCO has taken the lead in preventing extremism through education and community-building efforts. UNESCO and its partners have assisted communities in identifying risk indicators among youth populations and modifying resilience-building methods by recognizing the causes of extremism. It is crucial to give basic education and foster the development of critical thinkers who can engage diverse populations in civil dialogue in order to create resilience against violent extremism.

Questions to Consider:

- 1.) What measures may be taken in relation to the causes of violent extremism to guarantee that the push and pull elements are reduced?



- 2.) What methods may Member States use to accomplish SDG 4.7 at the international, regional, and national levels?
- 3.) How can the world community advance GCED?
- 4.) How can Member States and civil society organizations collaborate to advance the GCED?
- 5.) How can UNESCO help Member States overcome the obstacles in the way of the GCED's implementation?



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