



BRUINMUN

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NOVICE UNESCO





Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to BruinMUN 2019 and Novice UNESCO! My name is Ariyana Chowdhury, and I am looking forward to being your chair during the conference and seeing you debate and engage with the chosen topics. I am currently a senior at UCLA, and I am majoring in Political Science and double minoring in both Philosophy and Film, Television, and Digital Media. I was born in Bangladesh, but I have lived in over seven countries and have traveled to over 35 over the course of my life. As a result of my international upbringing, I am incredibly interested in conversations pertaining to issues with an international dimension. I've been involved with MUN in some capacity since my freshman year of high school. In particular, I have been a part of Model United Nations at UCLA since my freshman year. Apart from MUN, I am engaged in other clubs and activities around campus such as UCLA Radio, Cheese Club, and Bruins Beyond Borders. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy exploring LA, finding cute brunch places, watching all sorts of movies and tv shows, and spending time with friends.

This year, Novice UNESCO will explore topics with both a broad reach and impact. Debating the preservation of cultural practices, languages, and traditional knowledge, looking at preservation practices, and assessing the threats associated with the destruction of world heritage sites will ideally inspire you as delegates to explore issues that are incredibly relevant and pertinent. As you embody the positions held by the members of Novice UNESCO, I urge you to explore the cultural and societal norms that exist across the globe. To put yourselves into the shoes of those belonging to other cultures and to look towards sustaining the traditions and monuments of our history and past.

I am incredibly excited to go on this journey with you and to see the ideas you formulate over the course of BruinMUN. I look forward to seeing the enthusiastic defense of nations and their stances. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out via email.

See you at BruinMUN!

Best,

Ariyana Chowdhury | Chair

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Committee Background

It can be said without a doubt that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a storied institution with ambitious goals and a significant impact on the global stage. UNESCO's vision came into being when the world sought to heal the wounds inflicted by the second World War. The scars left behind by racism, xenophobia, and the presence of general violence and vitriol required attention and maintenance. Beyond that, the world needed contingency plans and a forum where preventative measures in regard to war and the desecration of culture could be discussed. The establishment of UNESCO was proposed and outlined in 1945 on the 16th of November. The Constitution of UNESCO was quickly ratified, allowing for the official creation of the organization in 1946. Soon after, the first General Conference of UNESCO was hosted in Paris from November 19th to the 10th of December, 1946. At this point in history, 30 nations were represented. Other nations gradually became members as shifts in tension, power, and relations took place. Now, approximately seven decades later, UNESCO welcomes 193-member states and 11 associate members to participate and move forward the goals of the organization.¹ It is important to note that UNESCO membership is rather fluid, a number of countries have withdrawn from and rejoined the organization over the last few decades. Most recently, UNESCO has seen the departure of both the United States and Israel. It remains to be seen whether or not either nation will return.

Since its inception, UNESCO has dedicated itself to achieving goals associated with five major themes. These themes include: education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and the topic of communication and information.² As a body, UNESCO has inaugurated countless aims in order to propel the world towards a more positive and conflict-free future. UNESCO is dedicated to fostering collaboration between nations in order to achieve goals of development and peace. The Organization exists because the arrangements of national governments are not enough to preserve the lasting and sincere support of peoples and cultures. Instead, peace can only exist if it is built upon communication, cooperation and mutual understanding.³ As a result, UNESCO develops tools to assist people to live as global citizens free of intolerance, hate, and prejudice.⁴

¹ Briney, Amanda. "What Are the Goals of UNESCO?" ThoughtCo. ThoughtCo, May 25, 2019. <https://www.thoughtco.com/unesco-history-and-overview-1435440>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.



This approach works to defeat all forms of intolerance, rejection or denial of scientific facts and threats to freedom of expression that challenge peace and fundamental human rights.⁵ All in all, the world without UNESCO would be bleak, the presence of such an organization breeds hope for a future where peace and prosperity are viable.

⁵ Ibid.



Topic A: Preservation of Cultural Practices, Languages, and Traditional Knowledge

I. Key Terms

- a. Culture: The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.⁶ Culture often constitutes the characteristic features of everyday existence that are shared by a certain people in a place or time.⁷
- b. Cultural Practices: Cultural practices tend to be patterns of social interactions and behaviors. Cultural practices are often actions and behaviors that manifest or represent a certain culture. For example, traditions associated with birthdays, such as singing, can be considered a cultural practice as the song sung is often different depending on the culture celebrating the birthday.
- c. Language: A system of conventional spoken, manual, or written symbols which allow the members of social groups and participants of culture to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions.⁸ There are many functions of language, they are as follows: communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release.⁹
- d. Moribund (or Endangered) Language: An endangered or moribund language is a language that is likely to become extinct in the near future.¹⁰ A large number of languages across the globe are being used less in favor of other languages that are more common.¹¹ For example, Spanish is becoming more dominant across Mexico. This means that more individuals within the nation are speaking Spanish. This means that other, less-common languages are no longer being learned by new generations of children or by new adult speakers.¹²

⁶ "Culture." Merriam-Webster. Accessed July 07, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Robins, Robert Henry, and David Crystal. "Language." Encyclopædia Britannica. January 10, 2019. Accessed July 07, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/language>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "What Is an Endangered Language?" Linguistic Society of America. Accessed July 7, 2019. <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/what-endangered-language>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.



- e. Extinct Language: A language that is no longer spoken, or known, by anyone.¹³ It is important to note that an extinct language is not the same as a dead language.
- f. Dead Language: A dead language is distinctly different from an extinct language. Extinct languages are languages that have been replaced either rapidly or gradually by another language. A dead language is more often a language that has evolved or changed. Ancient Greek and Latin are examples of dead languages.
- g. Dialect: A dialect is a regional variety of a language.¹⁴ It is differentiated from other regional varieties based on characteristics of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.¹⁵ Simply put, dialects are derivatives of a particular language. American English, Canadian English, British English, and Australian English are all dialects (or regional varieties) of the English language.
- h. Intergenerational Transmission: The process by which knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits are passed from individuals in one generation to individuals belonging to another generation. For example, parents teaching a language to their children. The three important generations that are pertinent to the topic at hand are as follows: the grandparent's generation, the parent generation, and children.
- i. Traditional Knowledge: Knowledge, know-how, skills and practices that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community. Traditional knowledge often forms part of a cultural or spiritual identity.¹⁶ Traditional knowledge is incredibly important to many indigenous and local communities. Traditional knowledge is commonly shaped by and adapted to suit the local environment and culture.¹⁷ Traditional knowledge is collectively owned and takes many forms including stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language and agricultural practices.¹⁸ The scope of traditional knowledge is incredibly wide.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Dialect." Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Accessed July 10, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dialect>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Traditional Knowledge." Traditional Knowledge. Accessed July 10, 2019. <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/>.

¹⁷ "Traditional Knowledge." UNESCO UIS, June 19, 2019. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/traditional-knowledge>.

¹⁸ Ibid.



- j. Globalization: The development of an increasingly integrated global world and economy.¹⁹ A globalized world often threatens the unique cultures of the world and foreshadows the potential development of a global monoculture.
- k. Global Monoculture: According to some scholars, a global monoculture may come into being as a result of globalization. The term global monoculture refers to the unquestioned dominance of a single culture across the world.²⁰ The presence of a global monoculture implies a lack of cultural diversity which in turn means a threat to cultural practices, languages, and traditional knowledge.
- l. Cultural Diversity: Cultural diversity refers to the presence of different ethnic groups and cultures within a community, region, area, or society. According to UNESCO, the preservation of cultural diversity is of utmost importance.

II. Background

As the world moves forward and develops, as the forces of globalization and more advanced technology becomes more and more prevalent, the cultural diversity of the world is unfortunately impeded and reduced. The sad reality is that a more interconnected world brings with it, the threat of a global monoculture.

In the world today, there are approximately 7,000 languages present.²¹ These languages are spoken when stories are shared between generations. These languages are spoken and transcribed when history is recorded. These represent the rich cultures of the world — the unique lives and realities of different tribes, people, and communities. Language is often something we take for granted. We forget the freedom that language endows humanity with — the freedom to express our feelings, thoughts, and desires. The ability and means by which we connect with other people and learn about the world around us. Each language is unique as it encapsulates the depth and beauty of community and societies that impact its development and progression. For example, there are many words in many languages that are considered to be untranslatable in the context of the

¹⁹ “Globalization.” Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Accessed July 13, 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/globalization>.

²⁰ Keniston, Kenneth. “Cultural Diversity or Global Monoculture The Impacts of the Information Age.” Cultural Diversity or Global Monoculture. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Accessed July 14, 2019. <http://web.mit.edu/kken/Public/papers1/Cultural%20Diversity.htm>.

²¹ Wilford, John Noble. “World’s Languages Dying Off Rapidly.” The New York Times. The New York Times, September 18, 2007. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/18cnd-language.html>.

English language. Unfortunately, of the estimated 7,000 languages currently spoken in the world today, many experts and scholars assert that almost half are in danger of extinction and are likely to go extinct within this century.²² In fact, approximately one language vanishes from existence every fortnight. With each lost language, a whole history is lost. Cultural practices and traditional knowledge inscribed in those languages are forgotten.

Language loss takes place either rapidly, or in stages. Sometimes, a language ceases to exist in a matter of minutes. This often takes place when the last sole speaker of a particular language passes away. With the death of this individual, no native speakers of the language remain. Languages that die at this swift pace tend to be those that were spoken by a small fraction of the human population. As a result, there is often a lack of knowledge about the language. This makes memorializing the extinct language incredibly difficult. Other endangered and vulnerable languages suffer for longer periods of time. Most of the times, languages that die a slower death are those present in bilingual cultures, where indigenous languages are overwhelmed by the dominant language in several places including in school, the marketplace or on television.²³ It is critical to note that education and cultural ephemera such as social media and television play an immense role in the loss of certain languages. This is the case as Western media and education practices are often the most popular and recognized across the world. The global specter of Hollywood means that the English language penetrates households and the consciousness of the youth across the world. As a result, English and languages with similar dominance often become the de facto language used by the youth.

According to research, there are five regions across the world that are hot spots for imminent language extinctions.²⁴ These regions are as follows: Central South America, Eastern Siberia, Oklahoma and Southwest United States, Northern Australia, and North America's upper Pacific coastal zone.²⁵ It is critical to note that all five of these areas are occupied by indigenous



²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Wilford, John Noble. "World's Languages Dying Off Rapidly." The New York Times. The New York Times, September 18, 2007. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/18cnd-language.html>.

²⁵ Ibid.



populations. This is important to take into account as aboriginal populations across the world are often the victims of cultural degradation. Indigenous Peoples rely heavily on the land on which they live, and the natural resources found in and around that land. This land is important as Indigenous Peoples often feel that the land they cultivate is indefinitely linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, and ways of life as well as their spiritual and physical well-being.²⁶ Governments across the world, in a myriad of nations often deny Indigenous Peoples rights to their own land. As a result, Indigenous cultures (comprised of traditional knowledge, language, and various cultural practices) are at stake universally.

Beyond language loss, the changing world also threatens the existence of various forms of traditional knowledge and cultural practices. As the world heads towards scientific discovery and innovation, traditional knowledge is often left behind. This is the case as traditional knowledge is often viewed as being old and outdated — a type of knowledge that has no place in the modern world. This type of thinking ignores the cultural significance of traditional knowledge. This is the case as traditional knowledge often traces human development and the evolution of thought. Traditional knowledge regarding science and medicine is valuable because it allows us to glimpse into the past — giving us sight of what the future holds. Beyond its practicality, traditional knowledge has importance because it is significant to many people. As a result, steps need to be taken in order to ensure that traditional knowledge is not left behind or erased in hopes of achieving future breakthroughs in the fields of science and technology.

III. Recent Developments

a. *Increasing Globalization, Increasing Internet Use and the Prominence of Western Media*

In terms of globalization, reports and data show that globalization has had an immense impact on people and communities across the globe.²⁷ Our world, in a sense, has become smaller as improvements in technology have brought us closer together. Economic interdependence between nations has skyrocketed. The communication between people has

²⁶ “Indigenous Peoples.” The World Bank. Accessed July 14, 2019.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>.

²⁷ “New Globalization Report: Three Mega-Trends Expected to Impact Our Future | UN DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed July 14, 2019.
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/new-globalization-report.html>



expanded exponentially. This has an unfortunate impact on the cultural diversity of the world. For instance, increased business between nations has established dominant languages. Examples of such languages are English, Chinese, and Arabic. Lesser known languages are forgotten in the realm of international dealings due to the fact that they are uncommon and as a result, inconvenient. This means that communities, nations, and people across the world are more motivated to pursue education in languages that serve a purpose in the globalized world.

Increasing internet use and the dominance of Western media is also encouraged by the forces of globalization. In 2016, approximately 3.5 billion people used the internet.²⁸ In 2019, a mere three years later, that number has inflated. Now, approximately 4.4 billion people are utilizing the internet.²⁹ Data also shows that English, followed by Chinese and Spanish, are the most common languages on the internet.³⁰ Languages with fewer speakers often do not find a place of prominence on the internet. For example, shows created by Netflix are often dubbed in subtitles in a number of languages, but chosen languages are those spoken by large populations. Indigenous languages with a few hundred or thousand speakers are unlikely to be exposed to a wide populace on a prominent platform. Lastly, it is important to take into account the dominance and prominence of Hollywood and Western media in general. The size and importance of American and British productions is impactful and needs to be understood in order to grasp the ways in which other cultures are often underrepresented, misrepresented, or simply not represented at all.

b. *Changes in Policy Across the World*

In a number of nations and regions across the world, certain changes have been made to policy regarding language and cultural practices. These policy changes have sought to protect languages and means of traditional knowledge that are cherished and used by aboriginal populations. These policies while different in scope across nations and

²⁸ Gordon, Kyle. "Topic: Internet Usage Worldwide." www.statista.com. Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/>.

²⁹ "World Internet Users Statistics and 2019 World Population Stats." Internet World Stats. Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>.

³⁰ Gordon, Kyle. "Topic: Internet Usage Worldwide." www.statista.com. Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/>.

communities have sought to preserve language and practices that are endangered and as a result are vulnerable and at risk of potential extinction.

Why Indigenous Languages?



knowledge

Unique systems of knowledge and understanding of the world.



peace

Sustainable development, investment, peace building and reconciliation



rights

Fundamental human rights and freedoms for indigenous peoples



inclusion

Social inclusiveness, literacy, poverty reduction and international cooperation



diversity

Cultural values, diversity and heritage

A key example of an impactful change in policy, was the decision made by the Peruvian Congress in 2011 to officially recognize indigenous languages.

Specifically, the Peruvian Congress passed Law 29735 — a law concerning the use, preservation, development, and revitalization of indigenous languages.³¹ Since 2011, this landmark decision has helped to emphasize the fact that language diversity is important because it is inextricably linked to the freedom of expression of an individual and collective community identity.³² Law 29735 has also ensured that an update to Peru's ethnolinguistic map can be carried out. Furthermore, the passing of Law 29735 has forced public administration across Peru to communicate in the 80 indigenous languages spoken across the nation — ensuring that all minorities present are represented.³³

IV. Past International Involvement

a. *Inauguration and Subsequent Annual Observation of International Mother Language Day (IMLD)*

Instituted in the year 2000 by UNESCO, International Mother Language Day aims to celebrate and highlight the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity across the

³¹ “Peru Officially Recognizes Indigenous Languages.” Cultural Survival. Accessed July 14, 2019. <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/peru-officially-recognizes-indigenous-languages>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.



world.³⁴ International Mother Language Day also aims to work towards an international goal of multilingualism. International Mother Language Day is observed every year on the 21st of February. It is important to note that IMLD was an initiative introduced by Bangladesh on the world stage. The celebration of International Mother Language Day on the 21st of February coincides with the historical climax of the Bengali Language Movement. As a part of the Bengali Language Movement, many Bangladeshis fought and died for the right to speak the Bangla language.

IMLD aims to combat the increasing prevalence of globalization by encouraging people to think about the different languages that exist within the world. Languages come with intricate implications and impact every facet of our lives, including the ways in which we identify, the methods by which we communicate and integrate socially, and the means by which we grow and develop.³⁵ In an ideal world, IMLD will consistently encourage the maintenance of the world's cultural diversity.³⁶ This is the case as languages are considered to be significant instruments of preserving and developing our collective heritage.³⁷

b. UNESCO Atlas of the World Languages in Danger

The UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger is a database that is working towards promoting awareness about language endangerment. The UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger targets policy-makers, government officials, communities across the world, and the masses in general in an attempt to foster thought and discussion on the topic of linguistic diversity. The UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger lists about 2,500 languages and provides the name of each language, the countries where the language is spoken, and the degree of endangerment associated with the language.³⁸

³⁴ “International Mother Language Day 21 February.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed July 10, 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguageday/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Atlas of Languages in Danger: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.” Atlas of languages in danger | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Accessed July 10, 2019. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/>.

There are six possible degrees of endangerment that can be linked to a language. They are as follows: safe, vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, and extinct. Safe languages refer to languages spoken by all current generations.³⁹ Safe languages are left out of the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger. Vulnerable languages refer to languages spoken by the majority of children within an area.⁴⁰ Vulnerable languages are often restricted to certain areas, such as the home.⁴¹ Languages that are definitely endangered are languages that are no longer taught to children as their mother tongue or first language.

Severely endangered languages tend to be languages that are spoken by older people and generations. Severely endangered languages are often not spoken by the parent generation and are often unknown in the eyes of children.⁴² Critically endangered languages are languages where the youngest speakers are the grandparent generation. Finally, extinct languages are ones that have no speakers left.



c. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted without argument in 2001 by UNESCO members. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is considered to be an immensely wide-ranging instrument.⁴³ The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity reaffirms each UNESCO members dedication to the idea that intercultural dialogue is the best practice for peace.⁴⁴ It also rejects the notion that a clash

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.” UNESCO. Accessed July 14, 2019. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



of civilizations and cultures is inevitable.⁴⁵ The declaration also asserts that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity.⁴⁶ The Declaration is a critical document as it elucidates the importance associated with protecting cultural practices, languages, and traditional knowledge. Loss of any of these cultural artifacts would be detrimental to society as a whole.

V. Bloc Positions

It is important to note that the loss of cultural and linguistic diversity is complex and difficult to generalize across regions and continents. As a result, blocs will be diverse as the issue ranges in severity from nation to nation and from area to area. It is crucial to have knowledge on the indigenous populations native to each country in order to find a bloc that best represents a nation's stance. It is also imperative to remember that the blocs listed below are soft guidelines, and other blocs can be formed based on other criteria (if said criteria is sufficiently compelling and reasonable).

- a. *Nations Experiencing High Rates of Language Extinction, Cultural Loss, and Deterioration of Traditional Knowledge:* Nations with a high concentration of indigenous/local populations are likely to belong to this bloc. Nations incurring substantial loss and damage to a number of their cultural practices, languages, and forms of traditional knowledge should work together to create programs and plans that help to protect minority groups. Many African nations, Australia, and a number of Asian nations are likely to find themselves as members of this bloc. It is important to note that smaller blocs may come into being within this larger category. For example, wealthier nations with similar forms of government and values may find it easier to work with others in an effort to create a more standardized approach.

- b. *Nations Experiencing Mild Rates of Language Extinction, Cultural Loss, and Deterioration of Traditional Knowledge:* For nations experiencing lower rates of language extinction, cultural loss, and deterioration of traditional knowledge short-term action is likely to be less important. Instead, this bloc will ideally be more focused on instituting

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.



preventative measures to ensure that language extinction and other forms of cultural loss can be avoided in the near or distant future. Most European nations belong to this bloc. The majority of nations in this bloc have small or medium-sized indigenous populations.

- c. *Nations Experiencing Low Rates of Language Extinction, Cultural Loss, and Deterioration of Traditional Knowledge:* Nations belonging to this bloc are nations with either well-represented minority populations or low rates of indigenous/local populations. For these nations, the topic at hand does not pose a risk or a problem. As a result, nations belonging to this bloc are likely to have methods of coping with language loss and cultural deterioration that function well within the confines of their society. Nations belonging to this bloc are encouraged to work with nations in other blocs in an attempt to deal with the issue of a loss of cultural diversity.

VI. Concluding Remarks

Considering, exploring, and debating the preservation of cultural practices, languages, and traditional knowledge may seem daunting at first due to the depth and breadth of the topic. However, that initial fear should dissipate quickly upon realizing just how interconnected each facet of the topic is. Looking at the preservation of cultural practices, languages, and traditional knowledge is intuitive because the protection and conservation of one topic automatically protects and conserves the other. For example, maintaining the presence of traditional knowledge is likely to save a language from extinction. This is the case as traditional knowledge is often shared orally in one's native tongue. More so, oral traditions often involve the old teaching the young. This in turn further promotes the intergenerational transfer of said language or dialect. Realizing the connections between each feature of this topic will lend in the creation of resolutions that are comprehensive and multi-faceted. Said resolutions will be able to tackle the issue head on from a myriad of angles.

It is critical to understand that the intricacy of the topic demands resolutions and contingency plans aimed at handling aspects of the problem in the short, medium and long-term. Resolutions must be fully articulated to handle the topic at every stage, otherwise a massive loss of cultural diversity on a global scale is imminent.

- a. *Questions to Consider:*



- i.* What constitutes an effective method of language preservation?
- ii.* How much of a role should the international community play when it comes to the preservation of a language? How can the international community help to revive an endangered language?
- iii.* What is the far-reaching impact of globalization on culture, traditional knowledge, and language?
- iv.* Is attempting to save traditional knowledge about science and medication important? In a world where we are constantly innovating and moving forward, does traditional knowledge about science and medication (for example) serve a purpose? Does it hold communities and societies back?
- v.* How can modern methods of thinking be integrated with and work in conjunction with traditional knowledge?
- vi.* In what cases is saving and preserving cultural practices and traditional knowledge detrimental to a nation's development?
- vii.* How has the development of technology eroded away at the presence of certain languages and forms of traditional knowledge?
- viii.* What forms of education and methods of teaching to cultivate an environment where endangered languages and traditional knowledge are learned and taught?

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Topic B: Protecting World Heritage Sites and Cultural Property in Conflict Areas

I. Key Terms

- a. World Heritage Site: A World Heritage Site refers to either a natural or man-made site, area, or structure that is officially recognized as having immense importance globally. Due to their significance, these sites are granted special protection. The loss of one such World Heritage Site is considered to be an international travesty.
- b. Cultural Heritage: According to the tenets of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, cultural heritage is comprised of cultural monuments, cultural groups of buildings, and cultural sites. The three are outlined more clearly in the following definitions.
- c. Cultural Monuments: Cultural monuments refer to “architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.”⁴⁷
- d. Cultural Groups of Buildings: Cultural groups of buildings refer to “groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.”⁴⁸
- e. Cultural Sites: Cultural sites refer to “works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.”⁴⁹
- f. Natural Heritage: According to the tenets of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, natural heritage is comprised of natural features, geological and physiographical formations, and natural sites. The three are outlined more clearly in the following definitions.

⁴⁷ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.



- g. Natural Features: Natural features consist of “physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view.”⁵⁰
- h. Geological and Physiographical Formations: Geological and physiographical formations refer to “precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.”⁵¹
- i. Natural Sites: Natural sites refer to “natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation, or natural beauty.”⁵²
- j. Cultural Property: According to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), cultural property refers to: “movable or immovable property” that holds “great importance to the cultural heritage” in the eyes of all people.⁵³ Cultural property can refer to “monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above.”⁵⁴ Cultural property can also refer to “buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property” detailed above.⁵⁵ Examples of such buildings include but are not limited to: museums, libraries, and archives. Cultural centers and other areas where individuals congregate to celebrate culture and participate in cultural practices may, at times, also fall under the definition of cultural property.
- k. Conflict Affected and High-Risk Areas (CAHRAs): According to the OECD, areas impacted by conflict are often “identified by the presence of armed conflict, widespread

⁵⁰ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Treaties, States parties, and Commentaries - Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property, 1954 - 1 - Definition of Cultural Property. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8D9D50C4F877EB43C12563CD0051CA1A>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.



violence or other risks of harm to people.”⁵⁶ High-risk areas are slightly different. These might involve or include “areas of political instability or repression, institutional weakness, insecurity, collapse of civil infrastructure and widespread violence.”⁵⁷ CAHRAs are often characterized by “widespread human rights abuses and violations of national or international law.”⁵⁸

1. Armed Conflict: According to the OECD, armed conflict “may take a variety of forms, such as a conflict of international or non-international character, which may involve two or more states, or may consist of wars of liberation, or insurgencies, civil wars,” or other forms of violence.⁵⁹

II. Background

Conflict, the presence of high-risk areas, and the violent displacement of people threatens the heritage, history, and future of the world and we know it. The past serves as a tool to inform decisions about and understanding of the future. In fact, heritage constitutes a source of identity and unity for communities disrupted by rapid change and economic instability.⁶⁰ As a result, the loss of the past fundamentally endangers humanity's ability to move forward and progress in a way that is meaningful.

The direct implications of conflict are clear. In cases of armed conflict, cultural relics and heritage sites are often destroyed as they are caught in the crossfire. Museums located in city centers and monuments of the past are often decimated by gunfire, bombs, and other weapons of war. In terrorist attacks, cultural and natural monuments are often held hostage. Sacrificed by terrorists as a means of inciting fear and outrage: a call for attention on both the local and global stage. During war, other issues often take the center stage. Leaving the protection and preservation of culture as an afterthought. As a result, it is important that robust structures and preventative measures be

⁵⁶ “Conflict Affected and High-Risk Areas (CAHRAs).” Responsible Minerals Initiative. Accessed July 26, 2019. <http://www.responsiblemineralsinitiative.org/emerging-risks/conflict-affected-and-high-risk-areas/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Protecting Our Heritage and Fostering Creativity.” UNESCO, January 15, 2019. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/protecting-our-heritage-and-fostering-creativity>.

outlined and transcribed so that methods of cultural protection can be enacted at even the direst times.

The indirect implication of war and conflict are often less clear. Impending and ongoing wars often facilitate illicit arms trafficking. This trafficking sometimes brings into the fold the exploitation and exporting of illegal cultural properties. Cultural relics are highly valued and as a result often sweeten the deal in illegal trades. A rare painting can often pay for a number of weapons. Furthermore, conflict often leaves archeological sites and sites of cultural



importance vulnerable. This makes it possible for looters and other individuals to exploit archeological sites and sites of cultural and natural importance. For many criminals, looting has served as a lucrative source of income as it is capable of generating significant revenue.

The loss of cultural properties and relics has an immense impact on both the local and global level. First and foremost, the loss of heritage means that certain communities lose their ties to the past. They are unable to access their roots and are therefore unable to learn more about themselves and their families. Historians, educators, and the like lose the ability to cultivate a deeper understanding of the world. Knowledge cannot be weaved and constructed by looking at isolated phenomena, things must be associated with one another to truly understand the way in which things work. The destruction of natural sites throws the world off balance. Changes in ecology have a butterfly effect. The extinction of one tree for example, can endanger all the creatures and animals that used it as a resource. Overall, it is evident that sites of heritage and cultural properties must be protected in order to move the world forward.

III. Recent Developments

- a. *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Syria and Iraq by The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (2010 - 2017)*



For a number of years between 2010 and 2017, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) waged a war on cultural heritage in both Iraq and Syria. The militants attacked natural monuments, cultural sites, and archaeological sites with bulldozers, explosives, and other weapons of war. These efforts, at worst, destroyed a number of cultural monuments, and at best, they merely damaged or endangered them. In the eyes of UNESCO, the actions undertaken by ISIL constitute a war crime.⁶¹ This is the case as the choice made by the group is viewed as being an ostentatious display of intentional destruction.⁶²

In the case of Syria, all of the six certified cultural heritage sites have been officially labeled as endangered since 2013. As of 2016, these have all been reported as damaged in some way, shape, or form.⁶³ In Aleppo, the most populous Syrian governorate, an approximate 35,722 structures have been damaged as of September 2016.⁶⁴ Other estimates and data show that 30% of the historic Old City in Aleppo has been destroyed.⁶⁵ The cities of Raqqa and Palmyra in Syria have also weathered immense destruction under the hand of ISIL. Many shrines and museums have been lost across cities in Syria.

In Iraq, three out of the four registered heritage sites have been declared as officially in danger.⁶⁶ The damage to heritage sites has been immense and difficult to gauge as some of the damage is not immediately visible. This is the case in places where militants have systematically dug tunnels to search for antiquities to sell on the Internet and black market for a profit.⁶⁷ In 2014, ISIL was responsible for bulldozing the city of Hatra, levelling many sites of cultural importance and significance.⁶⁸ After occupying the city of Mosul, ISIL

⁶¹ Buffenstein, Alyssa. "A Monumental Loss: Here Are the Most Significant Cultural Heritage Sites Destroyed by ISIS." *artnet News*, August 27, 2018. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/isis-cultural-heritage-sites-destroyed-950060>.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*



proceeded to release videos to the public that captured the destruction of monuments and artifacts. Other cities across Iraq have faced a similar fate at the hands of ISIL.

The destruction of cultural and natural heritage in both Syria and Iraq is considered to be especially devastating. This is the case as Syria and Iraq contain the remnants of ancient Mesopotamia and the cultural artifacts left behind by the Muslim and Ottoman Empires. These two nations are viewed as the cradle of our civilization and therefore, are in dire need of protection and aid.⁶⁹

b. Destruction of Natural Heritage Sites in the Congo Basin

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is home to numerous protected areas that sweep over the landscape of the Congo Basin.⁷⁰ Since 1994, all five World Heritage sites of the DRC have been placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger as a result of the impact of the war and civil conflicts in the region.⁷¹ These World Heritage sites areas include the following national parks: Garamba, Kahuzi-Biega, Salonga, and Virunga. The fifth World Heritage site is the Okapi Reserve. In 1999, a global safeguarding campaign was launched in order to protect the habitat of endangered species.⁷² The result of this was several rehabilitation and recovery efforts. However, despite these efforts, the five locations still remain vulnerable and at risk of destruction. The continued conflict and the spread of military action across the nation has only resulted in a greater and more intense weakening of the infrastructure of these natural heritage sites.

It is critical to note that the protection of these reserves and parks is absolutely imperative as these reserves and parks are home to a number of rare and vulnerable flora and fauna.

⁶⁹ Buffenstein, Alyssa. "A Monumental Loss: Here Are the Most Significant Cultural Heritage Sites Destroyed by ISIL." *artnet News*, August 27, 2018. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/isis-cultural-heritage-sites-destroyed-950060>.

⁷⁰ "Yale University." *Protected Areas in the Congo Basin | Global Forest Atlas*. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/congo/forest-governance/protected-areas-congo-basin>.

⁷¹ UNESCO. "World Heritage in Danger." *UNESCO World Heritage Centre*. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>.

⁷² *Ibid.*



These plants and animals have been put at risk as war and human conflict have encroached upon and destroyed their natural habitat. The protection of these parks and reserves must be undertaken in order to maintain an ecological balance across the globe.

IV. Past International Involvement

a. *The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954)*

Signed in 1954 and entered into force in 1956, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was the first international treaty that solely focused on the protection and preservation of cultural property and artifacts in zones of conflict. The treaty serves to recognize the fact that cultural property suffers immensely during times of war and conflict. This is especially due to advancements in the technique of warfare which further increase the chances that cultural property will be destroyed and decimated during times of war.⁷³ The treaty elucidates the notion that damage to cultural property directly results in damage to the cultural heritage of not only that society, but to all mankind.⁷⁴ This is especially the case as UNESCO and the covenants of the treaty put forth the idea that the diverse people of the world contribute individually to culture and cultural heritage. As a result, the loss of even one artifact is tragic and devastating. The treaty calls upon local governments, international bodies, and regional players to help aid in the preservation of cultural property and artifacts. The multiple chapters and articles articulated within the confines of the treaty deal with the registration of cultural property, the definition of cultural property, the identification and control of cultural property, and a myriad of other issues and topics. The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is an early attempt at outlining the need for the protection of cultural property. That being said, many other treaties and measures have

⁷³ Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention. Accessed July 26, 2019. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

been taken over the years in order to continue to emphasize that cultural property must be preserved and protected.

b. *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970)*

Prior to the creation and ratification of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, theft and destruction of cultural property was commonplace in museums. The 1970 Convention aims to protect cultural property and world heritage via a number of means. For example, the 1970 Convention calls on all UNESCO member nations to undertake and draft preventative measures. In the context of this Convention, preventive measures include (but are not limited to) the creation of inventories for museums, the use of export certificates when transporting goods, the imposition of sanctions on nations and bodies intent on



illicitly transporting cultural property, and the use of educational campaigns. The 1970 Convention also calls for restitution provisions. This requires that all member states take the proper steps to recover and return any stolen or misappropriated cultural property.⁷⁵ The 1970 Convention also looks towards forming a framework of

international cooperation between the Member States.⁷⁶ Treaties and conventions passed in later years have built upon the 1970 Convention and have expanded upon the ideas communicated.

c. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)*

⁷⁵ “1970 Convention: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.” 1970 Convention | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Accessed July 26, 2019. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.



The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, also known as the World Heritage Convention, is considered to be one of the most pertinent global conservation instruments to the international community.⁷⁷ The foremost goal of the Convention is to identify and protect the world's natural and cultural heritage. This goal exists as said natural and cultural heritage is thought to hold outstanding universal value. The Convention is built on the idea that some places are so important that they deserve protection, not only from a single Member State, but from the international community as a whole.⁷⁸ A number of bodies are associated with the Convention. These bodies exist to facilitate the goals of the Convention.

d. *UNESCO World Heritage List (1978)*

UNESCO's World Heritage List was created in 1978. The purpose of the World Heritage List is to further preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the world. At this moment in time, the World Heritage List includes 1,121 properties.⁷⁹ Of these 1,121 properties, 53 are in danger.⁸⁰ 869 of the properties are considered to be cultural properties, while 213 are considered to be natural properties.⁸¹ 39 are viewed as belonging to both the natural and cultural categories.⁸² It is important to understand that some of these properties exist on the border between either two or multiple nations. This further complicates the ways in which these properties can be preserved and protected.

Each year (or every few years) new properties are added to the World Heritage List. Addition to the World Heritage List is based on a number of criteria. The criteria is revised every so often to ensure that it represents the concept and evolution of the World Heritage

⁷⁷ "World Heritage Convention." IUCN. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://www.iucn.org/theme/world-heritage/about/world-heritage-convention>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. "World Heritage List." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26, 2019. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.



itself.⁸³ Currently, one set of ten criteria exists. This set of ten criteria determines placement on the World Heritage List. The criteria are as follows:

Criteria Number	UNESCO World Heritage List Criteria Description
1	The property either represents or is a “masterpiece of human creative genius.” ⁸⁴
2	The property is able to “exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.” ⁸⁵
3	The property is able to “bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared.” ⁸⁶
4	The property can be identified as “an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.” ⁸⁷
5	The property is viewed as an “outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.” ⁸⁸

⁸³ “The Criteria for Selection.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26, 2019. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.



6	The property is “directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.” ⁸⁹
7	The property is thought to contain “superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.” ⁹⁰
8	The property or sites are viewed as “outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.” ⁹¹
9	The property or sites are considered to be “outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.” ⁹²
10	The property or sites are thought to contain “most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.” ⁹³

V. Bloc Positions

- a. *North American, Australian, and European Bloc*: Nations existing in the Western world have long condemned the destruction of cultural property and world heritage sites. Nations belonging to this bloc tend to have a robust structure instituted within their museums and

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.



other cultural centers. The American Association of Museums and the American Alliance of Museums in the United States are two major organizations that work towards the preservation and protection of cultural heritage. It is important to keep organizations and structures such as these in mind because they serve as good models, despite the fact that the United States is no longer a member of UNESCO. Many nations existing in this bloc, especially those in Europe often use funds generated from tourism in order to further protect sites of cultural importance and significance. That being said, many of these nations push issues regarding the destruction of cultural property to the side, instead choosing to focus on issues that they perceive to be more serious. It is important that nations in the other blocs work with nations in this bloc, as this bloc hosts many nations with the financial ability and the resources to help facilitate acts of cultural preservation, protection, and restoration.

- b. *Middle Eastern and African Bloc*: Nations in the Middle East and Africa host a high number of wars and conflict zones. As a result, many of these nations risk losing sites of cultural and natural heritage. These nations must work towards protecting cultural property within their borders as a means of preserving their past, present, and future. It is important that these nations work not only with the nations in this bloc, but with other nations in other blocs in an attempt to access a greater range of finances and resources.
- c. *Asian and South American Bloc*: Nations belonging to this bloc host fewer conflict zones. As a result, the loss of cultural heritage is less of a pressing issue to the countries belonging to this bloc. However, the future is uncertain and changes in climate and politics may bring conflict and war to these nations. As a result, the nations in the bloc must focus on initiatives associated with prevention. These nations must also aid other nations and work towards contingency plans as a means of further preserving and protecting cultural property.

VI. Concluding Remarks

It is important to understand that the scourge of conflict brings with it immense destruction to cultural property and heritage sites. Illicit arms trade during times of war encourages the illegal exportation of goods. The presence of radical terrorist groups is accompanied by the destruction of natural and cultural sites in order to disrupt society and reign terror. War and conflict makes it impossibly difficult to preserve and protect culture. This in turn only serves to further deteriorate



the state of the world as we know it. Cultures and nations across the world must join hands and work to ameliorate the hardship and destruction brought about by the presence of war.

In order to effectively work towards the protection of cultural property and cultural heritage, the states and bodies of the world must collaborate with one another. The history of one nation or region cannot be given more importance than the history and culture of other nations and regions. Furthermore, education and cultural programs must be created that encourage the creation of preventive measures. Once the decimation of heritage starts, it is very difficult to halt. As a result, countries must have plans regarding cultural heritage protection and preservation that can be set into motion prior to the start of a war. Beyond the generation of preventative measures, nations must also ensure that contingency plans are made. For example, if a real monument is lost, how can that very monument be rendered using modern technology so that its cultural importance and significance can be maintained for generations to come.

Delegates debating this topic must use their knowledge of the past, their understanding of the present, and their aspirations and hopes for the future to generate resolutions that have significance in the short term, medium term, and long term.

a. Questions to Consider:

- i.* How can modern day technology be used in order to preserve things that once existed in the past?
- ii.* How can lost sites of cultural heritage and lost cultural property be recovered?
- iii.* How does tourism impact the longevity of cultural sites, natural sites, and cultural property?
- iv.* How does climate change and global warming play a role in the destruction of cultural heritage? While this topic does not deal directly with this issue, is climate change more destructive than war and conflict? If it is, then what can be done to ameliorate the issue?
- v.* Why do terror groups so often destroy sites of cultural significance?
- vi.* What does the loss of a heritage site mean to a nation? To the people? To the communities?
- vii.* What does the loss of a heritage site mean to the world? To the international community and international bodies? To specific regions and continents?



- viii.* Can heritage be classed and organized in order of importance? It is possible to categorize and catalogue the heritage sites of the world?
- ix.* Are museums appropriate and accessible sites for the storage of cultural property?
- x.* Does it make sense for museums in certain parts of the world to host cultural property from other corners of the world?
- xi.* Would digital reconstructions of cultural property diminish their value?
- xii.* In a globalized world, does cultural property continues to hold the same value?

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