



United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Dear Delegates,

As the Dais of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), we would like to welcome all attending delegates to our inaugural Italy Model United Nations (ItalyMUN) Conference, being held in Prato, Italy as an initiative by the University of New Haven's own Model United Nations (MUN) program. As your Dais, we would like to individually introduce ourselves, as we will be your main point of reference for the functioning of this committee, as well as the conference.

Estefano Eichertopf Palazuelos is a third-year student at the University of New Haven and has been a part of the University of New Haven MUN program for four semesters, having attended 4 NMUN conferences (DC2016, NY2017, Canada2017, NY2018) as a delegate, representing countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Brazil. He has been a delegate on committees including the General Assembly (GA) First Committee and the International Organization for Migration. Estefano has also been part of three Outstanding Delegation teams. He was also the head delegate for the University's MUN team going to the NMUN DC Conference in November 2018, where they represented France.

Aneesha Kumar is currently a fourth-year student, pursuing her bachelor's degree in Forensic Science with a concentration in Biology with a Political Science minor at the University of New Haven. She has been a part of their Model United Nations Program for three ongoing four semesters (DC 2017, NY 2018, DC 2018, NY 2019) as a delegate representing countries such as Brazil, Hungary, and France. She has been a delegate on committees including the General Assembly (GA) First Committee, Human Rights Council (HRC), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Aneesha has also been a part of two Outstanding Delegation teams. We both look forward to being your Dais for UNESCO this conference.

For this conference, there will be two full days dedicated to running the committee, where we will be using a model very similar to the United Nations (UN). The time will be split between 3 types of session and procedures: Formal Session, where each Member State on the Speakers' List will give a speech presenting their ideas and positions to the rest of the committee; Moderated Caucus, where delegates will determine a specific topic to be discussed with separate speakers' list; and Unmoderated Caucus, where the Member States will be free to meet and come together to formulate working papers in groups and work to turn them into Draft Resolutions to be voted on and passed by the committee as a whole.

The topic before UNESCO is:

- Protecting and Preserving World Heritage Sites

In the spirit of cooperation and strength in diversity, we encourage all delegates to work hard to understand their assigned Member State and the process of the United Nations. We also encourage all delegates to engage each other outside of committee to form connections and friendships with delegates who share similarities and differences in an effort to create valuable,



lasting friendships, and broaden everyone's horizons in the way they understand our global community. In the UN's spirit of inclusiveness, we also ask that all delegates be focused on respecting each other and engaging in positive interactions throughout the conference.

We wish you the best in preparing for ItalyMUN and look forward to seeing you all there.

Committee Overview

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It was thought up after the San Francisco Conference determined the need for an international organization for education and culture, and its Constitution was created in London at the UN ECO/CONF¹ conference in November of 1945. It began its functions and operations after receiving the 20th ratification of its constitution in November of 1946 when it held its first General Conference. The UNESCO Constitution states that the purpose of the organization is "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed...by the Charter of the United Nations"². It continues to operate from its headquarters in Paris, France.

Although only 20 Member States attended the first General Conference on November of 1946, the constitution states that any Member State of the UN has the right to membership within UNESCO. Currently, all Member States of the UN except for Liechtenstein, as well as 3 non-UN Member States, adding to a total of 195 Member States and 10 Associate States (made up of dependent territories under Member States), as well as 2 Permanent Observers and 10 Intergovernmental Organizations that have permanent observer missions to the organization.

To fulfill its purpose, UNESCO works alongside the Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and other UN organs to promote the exchange of knowledge, culture and practices for sustainable development as a method to support peace, coordinating conventions and international standards for education and culture, also providing research and insight into key issues. In their General Conferences, held every 2 years, the organization publishes recommendations for the Member States in regards to education, sciences, and culture, as well as signing declarations that cover specific global issues in relation to education and science in the worldwide community. Within the UN framework, UNESCO works mainly with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), who serves as the primary contact between the specialized agencies of the UN.³

In the most recent General Conference held by UNESCO, the 39th session in 2017, the organization addressed the issues of ethical principles about climate change, releasing a

¹ "UNESCO In Brief". 2018. UNESCO. <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>.

² "UNESCO Constitution". 2018. Portal.Unesco.Org. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

³ Fasulo, Linda M. *An Insiders Guide to the UN*. 6th ed. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015.



declaration on the principles behind the scientific evidence of climate change, while also releasing recommendations focused on the impartial position of scientific researchers in regards to policy-making, defining the importance of their role, and the responsibility of each Member State for their initial training.⁴

At the 38th session in 2015, a variety of topics were discussed within the organization, covering adult learning and education, as well as vocational education and training, with both topics settling a recommended global standard for the quality of education that should be made available for members of society no longer in their youth, in a way that may help them contribute to their communities through work and culture. The 38th session also focused on the preservation and access to past information, as recommendations were made regarding the preservation of documentary data, as well as the promoting museums and collections.⁵

As part of its many initiatives, UNESCO is a sponsor of programs that focus on securing the natural and cultural heritage of the world, designating locations of particular historical, cultural, or scientific value such as World Heritage Sites, and providing them with legal protection under international treaties. The International World Heritage Program is run by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, which is made up of 21 Member States elected by the organization's General Assembly. This committee is entrusted with the cataloging and conserving of sites around the world that are found to have outstanding cultural and historical value. As a primary program sponsored by UNESCO and its Member States, the maintaining of these sites is a primary concern for the committee as a whole.

Committee Topic: Protecting and preserving World Heritage Sites

Statement of the Problem:

With recent developments in the outbreak of conflict in areas that host a considerable amount of World Heritage Sites, the risk involved with maintaining locations that hold significant cultural, historical, or scientific value has vastly increased for several Member States who find themselves often affected by internal conflict, as can be seen through the example of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

⁴ Proceedings of UNESCO General Conference, 39th Session, Paris.

⁵ Proceedings of UNESCO General Conference, 38th Session, Paris.



During this conflict, significant portions of Syrian and Iraqi territory came under the control of Islamist fighters. This not only places the World Heritage Sites in Northern and Western Syria at risk as the government of Syria could not directly maintain and preserve these locations, but it also put the security of the civilians and the local communities who are involved in the daily operating of these sites at risk. There were also several indirect reports of stealing and demolition of ancient temples and artifacts that are deemed as valuable for the cultural or historical heritage of the world.

In addition to the outbreak of conflict, the World Heritage Sites have also been at the mercy of natural factors and disasters such as earthquakes, as one was seen in the case of the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, which not only brought significant human casualties but also put several World Heritage Sites in danger in Kathmandu.

There is, therefore, a concern that while much progress has been made to recognize the importance of World Heritage Sites, there may still be a lacking structure for the way in which these locations are managed and preserved in the face of disruptive or destructive factors. It is therefore in the interest of UNESCO, and the global community altogether, for there to be more regulation in terms of the existing programs and resources for the way in which the Member States can preserve the World Heritage Sites. They can be designated within their territory and managed by their own local population within their borders.

Without the proper addressing of the issue, more and more Heritage Sites may find themselves under risk of being damaged or completely destroyed, as the improper or inconsistent efforts to preserve these locations may allow for outside factors, such as natural disasters or the involvement of non-state actors, to have a lasting impact. This could be possible by limiting how much of the world's historical, cultural and scientific heritage is left available to the rest of the world for posterity. The damaging of the cultural and historical locations and artifacts can also have a negative impact on local populations, as this deterioration is felt on part of their identity, which is tied to the Heritage Sites due to their intrinsic significance.

The issue of preserving the heritage of the world has been in discussions for various years now, and with the outbreak of internal conflict in recent years in various parts of the world, putting Heritage Sites in danger, it is important now more than ever that the Member States have a clear plan of action to ensure that short-term events don't have a lasting negative impact on the cultural and historical heritage that can be passed down to the next generations. It is important that we be able to preserve the knowledge and history of humanity for posterity, so that future generations may be able to reap the full benefit of the combined knowledge and experience of



the global community. Therefore, it is important that the issue of preserving and protecting World Heritage Sites be resolved in a systematic way now, when there are many sites at risk that can still be saved.

History of the Issue:

The initiative that led to the idea of preserving world heritage came from 1954 when the construction of the Aswan Dam by the government of Egypt led them to reach out to UNESCO to help rescue and protect their cultural heritage. This was centered on the monuments and sites that were at risk of becoming inundated along with a significant portion of the shores of the Nile River, which contained artifacts and antiquity sites from Ancient Egypt. The initiative launched by UNESCO appealing towards the Member States led to the creation of the International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia, which helped unearth valuable artifacts and rescue them from becoming lost. This led to further safeguarding initiatives by UNESCO, including the preserving of Venice, as well as the preservation of the Borobudur Temple in Indonesia, the largest Buddhist temple complex in the world.

The UNESCO World Heritage Program was born from the Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was signed and adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1972. The convention set forward the principle of preserving cultural heritage for prosperity and asked each Member State to provide periodic data on sites of cultural and natural importance, as well as the conditions in different Heritage Sites to report to the World Heritage Committee, made up by Member states elected by the General Conference of UNESCO.

The designation of a site as a World Heritage Site provides legal protection to the culturally sensitive sites under the Geneva Convention, The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property, and under International Law. This gives it protection in the event of an outbreak of war or conflict between states.

As part of the program, UNESCO has also set up a list of endangered sites, which are stated as being under risk of losing its characteristic features, whether through outside factors or through natural disasters. This list also serves to provide awareness of Heritage Sites and the different factors that place them at risk, encouraging Member States and civilians to contribute to countermeasures which may assist in protecting and preserving those World Heritage Sites



which need only the right planning and observation. The list also includes sites that are located in regions of instability and conflict, where these countermeasures are harder to implement, and resources are limited.

Through its connections with NGO's and non-profit organizations, UNESCO has also occasionally partnered with organizations such as the Global Heritage Fund, while other initiatives have mostly been funded through promotion among the Member States of the General Conference.

In addition to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO has also progressively updated a separate document, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, with the latest version being updated in January 2011. In this document, the World Heritage Sites have their protection ensure by requiring the Member States to submit periodic reports to the organization so that the Operational Guidelines followed for each site can be passed down from generation to generation to ensure long-term efficiency in terms of operations and management of each location.

Recent developments, including global warming, has led to concerns regarding the preservation of Heritage Sites that are at risk of being damaged by climate change. To this end, UNESCO passed the *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage in 2001*, which dealt with the standards that should be maintained when protecting the underwater Heritage Sites designated by the organization as having considerable natural or cultural significance. In the list of World Heritage Sites, there are over 40 designated underwater locations, which have become more of a concern due to the risks from pollution and rising water levels. To deal with this concern, UNESCO has partnered with organizations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to promote research and studies into the effects of climate change on biodiversity, as well as a way to promote awareness of the vast effects of climate change around the world.

There have been regional efforts that have been attempted, such as the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on Heritage Parks*, which has promoted the protection of ecosystems and natural habitats in the protected parks across Southeast Asia. The European Parliament has also passed the resolution *Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe*, which calls on the Member States to provide long-term funding and acting on environmental threats in a collaborative effort to properly preserve World Heritage Sites.



Current Situation:

Recent years have brought a range of factors as possible sources of risk to World Heritage Sites. This has been a result of continued research and developments in climate change, as well as the constant threat of natural disasters. In addition, there has been a rise in the risk level arising from political instability and internal conflict, as various regions around the world have seen the rise of non-state actors.

Climate Change & Pollution

The continued pollution of the world's oceans, as well as the rising sea levels, have deeply affected underwater ecosystems, including a few World Heritage Sites. The clearest example of destructive developments in a Heritage Site is the coral bleaching of the Great Barrier reef in 2016 and 2017, which resulted from the pollution of the waters around the Northeastern coast of Australia.

The increased water pollution has led to increased risk to many of the World Heritage Sites located underwater and has led to increased risks for sites that are reliant on underwater ecosystems, as populations of particular species can affect the rate of decay of many underwater sites.

Lack of response to the effects of pollution and climate change could lead to a continued cycle of a continued flow of losses of Heritage Sites, as they slowly deteriorate as their environment is left permanently affected by the effect of mankind on nature. This would rob the next generations of significant insight into the natural world.

The European Parliament has introduced several standards such as the resolution *Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe*, which has included standards in ensuring the environment is left unaffected by urbanization, as well as placing requirements in the protection of designated Heritage Sites.

Natural Disasters



Another concern has been the risk posed by natural disasters, as was shown in the Nepal Earthquake in 2015. This earthquake saw significant damage inflicted to World Heritage Sites across Kathmandu and preceded a lengthy period of time when resources available for the repairing of these locations became very limited. The local community was deeply affected due to the damage inflicted directly to them by the earthquake, and the damage to these cultural sites served as a blow to the culture and traditions of the local community, as their symbol of local pride and tradition was left in disrepair.

With an ever-constant threat of natural disasters across various regions of the world, some Heritage Sites are forced to be constantly aware of the surrounding environment despite the lack of warning in the event of a natural disaster.

Letting these World Heritage Sites remain at risk without a solid plan of action or response in the event of a natural disaster provides an even greater level of risk. Allowing the damage resulting from these events to be maximized would serve only to limit the experience and culture that can be passed down to future generations, as communities are left deeply affected as well.

Instability and Internal Conflict

With the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East across Syrian and Iraqi territory, the risk to World Heritage Sites was increased in the region. With the decreased presence of recognized government authorities, there was a rise in the presence of Islamist fighter groups seeking to assert their own authority and military power.

In 2015, militant forces under the authority of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) raided and demolished sections of the Heritage Sites in Northern and Western Syria, damaging ruins and structures that had stood for centuries and had been designated as World Heritage Sites.



With increased political instability, it becomes more difficult to regularly proceed with the operations necessary to preserve Heritage Sites, as local communities are affected, with civilians being placed in major risk by continuing to fulfill their duties at World Heritage Sites in times of conflict, as was seen in the ruins of Palmyra in Southwestern Syria. Political instability and times of conflict also affect the accessibility of valuable resources not just for communities, but also for the maintaining of Heritage Sites.⁶

To respond to this problem, there have been propositions from Italy, among the other Member States, to deploy Peacekeepers and peace-keeping efforts and resources to ensure the safety and security of World Heritage Sites, especially in areas suffering from conflict. Their 2015 suggestion to deploy such measures enjoyed only limited support from the other Member States, as the resources suggested lay beyond the authority of UNESCO, and the instructed purposes for these deployed resources and personnel would have to be redefined.

By allowing World Heritage Sites to come under threat of destruction and damage at the hands of violent groups in times of instability and conflict, we are allowing groups such as non-state actors to directly influence the knowledge and culture left behind for posterity, as they damage the cultural and historical artifacts that represent the history of the world, limiting what we can leave behind for future generations to learn from.

Further Research

For further information and projects undertaken by the global community, we recommend delegates take a look at the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger, a list of all the World Heritage that is at risk of being damaged or lost due to different factors and conditions. We recommend researching the World Heritage Committee, which meets every 2 years and puts out publications and updates regarding the preserving sites. With this in mind, we ask delegates to consider the following questions when doing research, what are the largest threats posed to World Heritage Sites and how could we better protect and preserve World Heritage Sites. We cannot wait to see you all in April!

⁶ UNESCO. "UNESCO Director-General Condemns Destruction of the Tetrapylon and Severe Damage to the Theatre in Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site." News release, January 20, 2017.