UNESCO

EDUCATION AS A TOOL TO PREVENT EXTREMISM
CHAIR REPORT

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS

Dear esteemed delegates and special guests,

We are your chairs Hanseul Lee, Jiyeon Jeon, and Leanne Ma, juniors from Branksome Hall Asia. It is our honor to serve you as chairs of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in GECMUN VI.

As students who all started our MUN career as hesitant delegates, we understand that MUN can be daunting to some of you. Here is our advice: Model United Nations is all about research, confidence, and collaboration. With the knowledge gained from our background guide and your independent research, you will be able to come up with a wide range of innovative ideas. And through collaboration, ideas from you and others will form a realistic solution. Our chairs will do our best to make this conference as meaningful as possible while you work to solve a current global issue.

If you have any questions regarding the conference, please do not hesitate to contact us via leehanseul01689@branksome.asia, jeonjiyeon01222@branksome.asia, and maleanne02573@branksome.asia. We look forward to having a fruitful debate with all of you soon!

Sincerely,
UNESCO chairs

INTRODUCTION TO COMMITTEE

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an official UN committee with a vision to protect the freedom of expression, a fundamental human right and a key condition for democracy and development. The vision of UNESCO is to keep the peace through international cooperation with the development of education, science, and culture. "Peace must be founded upon dialogue and mutual understanding. Peace must be built upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity."

Under this vision, UNESCO develops various programmes. First, UNESCO investigates educational tools to support people to be free of hate and intolerance. UNESCO works to promote the freedom to be educated and seeks to ensure that each child and citizen has access to quality education. Second, UNESCO promotes the importance of culture. Promotion of cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures strengthens bonds among nations. Third, UNESCO creates scientific programs and policies and aims to be a platform for development and cooperation.

In current society, cultural diversity is under attack and peace and human rights of global society are facing a great threat, such as violent extremism. In this situation, UNESCO's duty is to find an effective way of using a strong tool: education.

KEY TERMS

Contextual factors
Environmental or situational factors that provide a breeding ground for violent extremist groups: fragile states, the lack of rule of law, corruption, and criminality.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)
ISIS is an extreme terrorist group, also known as the Islamic State or IS. ISIS claimed to be responsible for the Paris Attack in November, 2015, which killed 131 innocent people and 7 perpetrators.

Jihadist
A person who believes that an Islamic state governing the entire community of Muslims must be created and that this necessity justifies violent conflict with those who stand in its way.

Pull factors

Factors that attract an individual into extremism. Well organized violent extremist groups provide services, revenue, employment, a place to belong, supporting environment, and more to drag people into their ideology.

Push factors

Factors that drive an individual to deviate from one's society. Examples are marginalization, inequality, discrimination, poor education, denial of rights, fragile states, and more.

Radicalization

Action or process that causes someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues. Radicalization is an inevitable factor that contributes in fueling violent extremism.

Right-wing

Right-wing holds that certain social orders are inevitable. Extreme right-wing violence and terrorism are a growing threat to Western societies. An example that represents right-wing is jihadist (see the definition above). Please note that right-wing itself does not have a direct correlation with violent extremism.

Violent Extremism

Use of violence in line with an ideological commitment to achieve political, social, and religious goals.

AGENDA INFORMATION

Violent extremism is one of the key agenda items UNESCO has been working to eradicate over the past five years. Well-known examples of violent extremism are ISIS, Neo-Nazi Groups, Uyoku Dantai, and the Taliban. In recent years, ISIS has thrown a number of messages of religious, cultural, and social intolerance. They eventually exerted a huge menace to global citizens. This kind of violent extremism is pervasive all over the world in our contemporary society, challenging our shared values of peace, justice, and human dignity. Socioeconomic, psychological, and institutional push and pull factors all trigger this terrorism and radicalization. This year's UNESCO committee will focus on education and the topic of "Preventing violent extremism through education." Mitigating this problem temporarily, such as by ensuring the safety of the general population, will not tackle the roots of violent extremism. As for effective and comprehensive intervention, education is a way to redress inequalities that oftentimes fuel violent extremism. Our committee will cover the ways to utilize education as a source to build up inclusion, resilience, safety, well-being, and partnerships in our global community.

MAJOR MEMBER STATE STANCES

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is confronting violence from the Taliban and ISIS. According to the research from the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), it was found that the push factors for numerous high school students' radicalization included unemployment and economic stagnation. Even though the Afghani government is making an effort to combat extremism with other countries, researchers criticize the dysfunctional education system of the nation; girls receive much less education (10% of girls merely finish primary school) than boys in the same age, and students who live far away from school rather give up their education.

Albania

Albania was one of the countries where al-Qaeda gained a foothold from the mid to late 1990s due to weak security and provincial volatility. Today, ISIS continues to recruit extremists in Albania through both offline and online methods. The Albanian government published a national program against extremism in 2015. This includes a broadscale education that raises awareness of violent extremist ideologies.

Australia
There are more than 200 Australians who are associated with the foreign jihadist groups, and about 20 of them returned to Australia. This poses a threat to the nation as they might bring violence with them as well. Consequently, the government launched the Countering Violent Extremism Unit (CVEU) to support both NGOs and government-based education programs that would counteract extremism.

France
France has been a target of extremists, including the violent extremist group 'Lone Wolf.' In order to combat this issue and to reinforce security, France established the "Stop-Djihadisme" (Stop Jihadism) campaign in 2015. The education part of the campaign consists of 11 sub-measures, focusing on spreading republican values within the school curriculum. Specifically, republican values refer to secularism and fighting against prejudice.

Kenya
Kenya experienced a series of attacks from both al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab, the latter's attacks leading to the deaths of innocent citizens and students. The Kenyan government launched the Kenya National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) as a response. NCTC began to collaborate with the Ministry of Education to design a school program that counters violent extremism.

Malaysia
ISIS is constantly recruiting their Malaysian members through social media. The Malaysian Islamic Development Department (MIDD) is working with the local university leaders to educate the true values of 'jihad' and to conduct anti-extremism campaigns. In addition, government officials are visiting primary and secondary schools to raise awareness of the perils of ISIS.

Morocco
Even though Morocco experienced fewer terrorist attacks in the past than its adjacent neighbors, al-Qaeda and ISIS-related events still take place. The kingdom initiated a peer education program in 2015 along with the publication of anti-extremism comic books.

Netherlands
Right-wing extremism recently became a concern in the Netherlands. Right-wing violent extremists claim to be motivated by anti-Islam and anti-immigrant attitudes. Education has an integral role in deradicalization, as the majority of Dutch jihadists' education level is low to medium. This eventually leads to limited opportunities in the workplace.

Pakistan
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is more vulnerable to extremism compared to other countries because of the separation between ethnic, religious, and other factions. Furthermore, the government's limited education curriculum is often abused by extremist groups and violent extremists end up providing their own, free education to those living in poverty.

Philippines
 In the Philippines, the conflicts around extremism derive from various roots: the Communist People's Party (CPP), Islamic extremist groups and ISIS. The government agreed to launch an educational program in 2018 to combat extremism by educating Islamic creed so that students can realize that true jihadists in Islam are not always violent nor commit brutal activities.

Russian Federation
 The Caucasus region of Russia has been the main pretext for the majority of terrorist attacks; extremist groups have claimed that their actions are justified as the Caucasus independence movement. Experts point out that Russia's education infrastructure must be improved as part of the solution; the fact that only a minority of the worker population receive life-long education becomes a threat to the nation's security.

Somalia

Since the breakdown of the central government in 1991, Somalia suffers from civil war and unstable political situations. As this allowed Islamic extremists to dominate over the Somali society, the federal government developed a national action plan in 2016 to impede extremism. Improving the educational curriculum is part of the plan to exterminate the roots of extremism.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom was a victim of frequent extremist attacks in the 2010s. In 2015, the British government legally ensured that every educational institution has protocols to protect students from being drawn to extremist groups as a requirement. Additionally, the 'Education & Training Foundation' website provides online materials for universities to engage in protocols and to support their students' welfare.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Even Though the history of violent extremism threatening global peace is extensive, active measures involving UNESCO that target eradicating violent extremism on a global scale have only been carried out relatively recently. Throughout the timeline of key events, delegates will be able to comprehend international relations and gain inspirations for possible solutions that could be discussed during the conference.

September 2006

The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/60/L.62. This resolution mainly discusses the 'United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.' Clause I sub-clause III encourages the promotion of education and awareness programmes throughout the society, while UNESCO is playing a key role.

November 2015

'Decision 197EX/46' enhances UNESCO's capacity to provide assistance to States in building strategies to prevent violent extremism, genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. It aimed to provide education programs based on global citizenship that promotes   human rights by implementing all the activities in close collaboration with all sectors of UNESCO.

April 2016

The Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism was co-hosted by the Government of Switzerland and the United Nations. Building upon the February formal debate of the General Assembly, the Geneva Conference provided an opportunity for the international community to share experiences and good practices in addressing the drivers of violent extremism and to build support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action.

July 2016

On the 1st of July 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus, resolution (A/RES/70/291) on the Fifth Review of Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy reinforcing global consensus in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. The General Assembly recognized the importance of preventing violent extremism and recommended that the Member States consider the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, as applicable to the national context.

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February 2018 to the present day

A new two-year project on "Prevention of Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia" was launched by UNESCO on February 1st, 2018. This project is adopting an inclusive, multi-dimensional approach by combining issues such as youth, education, culture, and communication and information. More than 8000 young women and men and key practitioners will be trained through activities such as training on conflict-sensitive reporting; capacity building programmes for religious authorities to develop prevention of violent extremism (PVE) initiatives; countering online hate speech; and, creating new media spaces to disseminate alternative narratives by and for youth.

UNESCO will work closely with partners such as Ministries of Youth, Education, Labour and ICT's but also with civil society organizations such as youth, educational and cultural networks, local religious leaders, universities, etc. Partnership with private-sector companies is also on the agenda, particularly with the tech industry.

The primary outcome of this project is to create an environment where young women and men are empowered, heard and engaged as change-makers in their communities. This project also aims at mainstreaming PVE through formal, non-formal and informal education. Finally, this project intends to mobilize media professionals and online youth communities to combat radicalization and online hate speech through training and the development of national and regional online campaigns.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Identifying the Common Causes of Violent Extremism

Even though the negative effect of violent extremism is spreading rapidly, its causes vary in different countries. In order to educate anti-extremism ideologies, it is necessary to understand the push factors and pull factors towards extremism. Education may not be effective if there is a huge gap between anti-extremism ideologies and reality.

Reformation of the Educational Systems

Education system and curriculum is considered as a double-edged sword; some countries' education system is vulnerable and limited, which becomes one of the push factors. At this point, reformation of educational systems can be discussed as part of the solution.

There is an international agreement that human rights-related content must be included in the education curriculum. An inclusive human rights education would prevent students from recognizing violent extremism from a biased perspective. In addition, small changes in classroom climate - at all levels of education - can implicitly aid the PVE efforts of the government. Examples would be encouraging teachers to initiate classroom discussions regarding PVE and building a respectful community. Critical thinking is especially crucial, as it helps students to judge violent extremism through an objective point of view. Last but not least, global citizenship and genocide prevention training sessions for education experts can be utilized for capacity-building. These sessions work as guidance for addressing PVE effectively within the classroom in both formal and informal ways.

Regulation of Online Access to Extremist Groups

Social media is one of the methods that extremist groups use to lure new people to violence. Along with education to raise awareness of the terrible scenes from extremism, regulation of online access to extremists would reduce the exposure to violent fanaticism. To add on, combating hate speech through training and the development of national and regional online campaigns is truly essential to stamp out radicalization. How else can regulation be enforced? What are the potential challenges?

CONCLUSION

Extremists are active across boundaries, hence, international collaboration must be followed along with the national endeavors against violent extremism. As head cooperative organization of education, UNESCO has its responsibility to tackle the root and create long-term solution for extremism. Each nation might have been attacked by different extremist

groups in different ways, also will have different ways of dealing with extremism in the education field. Lessons gained from all the past events and own creative ideas from delegates will help creating plausible solutions. We hope that we can reach resolutions that could contribute to making any ideology accepted without creating conflicts, achieving one of UNESCO's crucial goals.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Considering that education is a double-edged sword, in what ways can the world ideally educate people to counter extremism?
- How can collaboration from different countries become more effective in addressing various causes of extremism?
- Are there effective ways for a number of countries of our global community to reach the goal of stamping out violent extremism that allow them to carry out complementary education in a consistent manner?
- How can we educate people from a neutral perspective? In other words, how can we teach people in a way that is not negatively biased towards the extremist values such as right-wing and jihad?
- Are there ways to ensure children from all around the world have access to anti-extremism education while taking cultural differences into consideration?
- How can we make sure students outside of school to be fully informed about the dangers of violent extremism when they are in a situation of not being able to attend school regularly?

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