

GAICMUN 2015



GAIC MUN

United Nations

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chair Report

Committee: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Agenda 1: Protecting cultural properties and antiquities from IS attacks

Agenda 2: The threat of climate change on World Heritage natural and cultural properties

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Welcoming words from the chairs

Welcome to the UNESCO committee of the 2015 GAIC MUN. In this committee, you will be exclusively focusing on two issues; the destruction of antiquities and cultural properties by ISIS and the need for the protection of natural and cultural World Heritage against the effects of the climate change. These problems are no longer the problem of a single nation, but of the entire world. In order to tackle these issues effectively, each and every delegate must work hard in order to come to a world-wide consensus on these issues. Each delegate must take on his or her own country's persona and act accordingly.

In order to have a fruitful debate about the topic, the chair highly recommends to read the given chair report thoroughly and research about these topics beforehand. Also, if the delegates have any questions, it is advisable that he or she contacts the chairs before the beginning of the conference. The chairs will be happy to answer any and all questions related to the conference. I hope that everyone in the UNESCO division will be able to enjoy themselves throughout this conference.



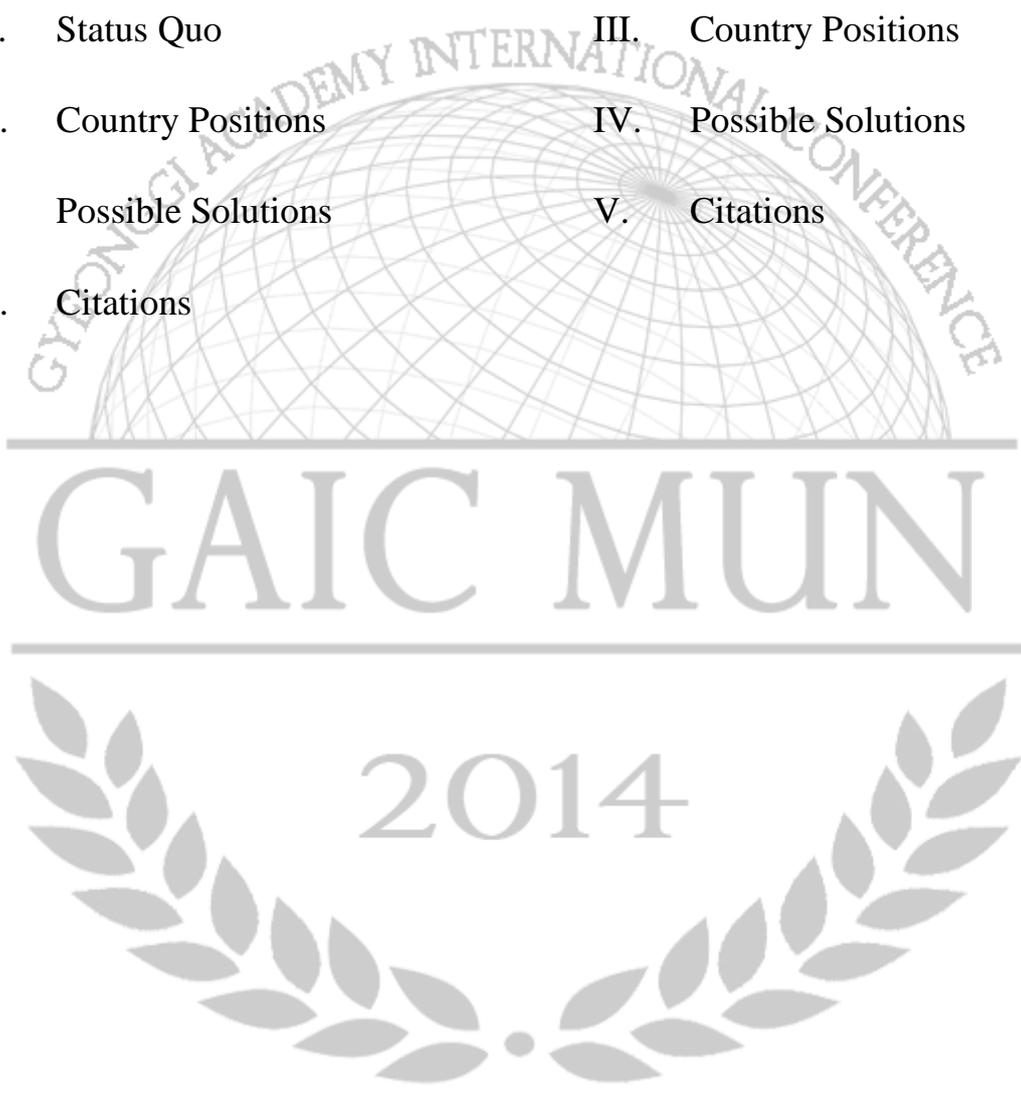
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Agenda 1: Protecting cultural properties and antiquities from IS attacks

I. Introduction

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIS is a Wahhabi/Salafi jihadist extremist militant group, self-proclaimed to be a caliphate and Islamic state. It is led by and mainly composed of Sunni Arabs from Iraq and Syria. The group has emerged in 1999. The group started its actions as a joint forces with the al-Qaeda beginning in 2004. In 2014, it cut all ties with the al-Qaeda. The ISIS have from then on continued to expand through waging war with many of the middle-east countries most notably Syria and Iraq.

The ISIS have gained the world's attention through numerous bombings and terrorist attacks that have been ongoing up to the present date. The problem they pose to the world is alarming and ever increasing. They recruit new members through the use of SNS and powerful propaganda. The people who are affected by this propaganda is not just limited to Middle Eastern countries, but rather people all over the world is being influenced by the action of ISIS.

The issue that this committee will be focusing on is the issue of the destruction of ancient sites and cultural heritage. The ISIS have been continuing on this trend of destructing the symbolic monuments spanning from simple statues to entire cities. The committee needs to come up with a viable solution in order to deal with this issue at hand. As this committee is UNESCO rather than a Security Counsel, the delegates must focus on methods to preserve the cultural properties rather than to deal with the ISIS directly.

II. History

“Iconoclasm” is defined as the destruction of religious icons and other images or monuments for religious or political motives. It is usually carried out by extreme terrorist groups, and it has a long history that could be traced back to nearly a decade ago.

In 2001, the Taliban which had taken control over Afghanistan eliminated all Bamiyan Buddhas in the country. Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar had ordered the radical group to destroy all non-Islamic statues and sanctuaries. This was completely contradictory to the previous statement of the Taliban Minister of Culture of 1999, when he said Bamiyan in Afghanistan would be “protected” and that their religious artifacts would be dealt with “respect”. It took only weeks for Taliban to destroy all the major Buddha statues in the nation.

In 2012, there was a similar case in Timbuktu, Mali. The Islamic group Ansar Dine, which was related to Al-Qaeda, completely demolished the mosques, monuments, and manuscripts in the region. Those cultural properties of Timbuktu, made of mud and limestone bricks, had been long-preserved treasures of the Sufi traditions which had endured through centuries until the Ansar Dine destroyed them. Ansar Dine cruelly destroyed the monuments and shrines where saints were buried using pickaxes and bulldozers. And in addition to that, they made sure that the monuments would never be rebuilt using the same materials. It is recorded that after destructing the monuments, Ansar Dine carried the clay from those properties outside the city, so that it would be impossible for Timbuktu to build the monuments again with the same clay.

All these are examples of “cultural cleansing”, which is an attempt by extremist groups to obliterate historical cultures and civilizations in order to strengthen their own identities and to start on a fresh, clean platform. And during the recent years, the ISIS has been ravaging important cultural heritage, sites, and symbols in Iraq and Syria with this idea of “cultural cleansing”.

III. Status Quo

Since the rise of the ISIS, attacks on cultural properties and artifacts have become a pressing issue to the global society. Their iconoclastic crusade especially grabbed the world's attention when they destructed the remains of the ancient Iraqi city of Hatra in March 2015, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Hatra, with its unique architecture that is a mixture of Roman, Hellenistic, Arab characteristics, was once a major trading center which came to become a symbolic site that represents the region's rich variety of cultural history. It had endured through continuous foreign attacks for 2,000 years, and had been a living reminder of the region's strong resilience. UNESCO, IESEC, the Arab League, and many other organizations around the world raged over this attack. UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova stated "The destruction of Hatra marks a turning point in the appalling strategy of cultural cleansing under way in Iraq," and that "the attack was in direct violation to the most recent Security Council resolution 2199 that condemns the destruction of cultural heritage and adopts legally-binding measures to counter illicit trafficking of antiquities and cultural objects from Iraq and Syria."

Previous to the destruction of Hatra, there have been many other attacks by the ISIS on significant cultural properties. In July 2014, they destroyed shrines that held religious values to all Jews, Christians, and Muslims, including the tomb of the Prophet Jonah in Mosul and the shrine of Prophet Seth. And in February of 2015, a shocking video of the ISIS militants mercilessly smashing statues and carvings of Mosul Museum went viral on the internet. Also, other archaeological cities such as Nimrud, Ninevah, and Khorsabad, which are the ancient capitals of the Assyrian Empire, were demolished.

There are several motivations behind the ISIS's atrocities.

First is their most fundamental ideology to construct monotheism and eliminate polytheism. Their puritanical interpretation of Islam is leading them to destroy all sites and

symbols related non-Islamic religious and cultures. Furthermore, it is an effective way for them to get the world's attention and spread shocks of fear through media coverage.

Another is related to financial issues. It is reported that cultural antiquities are largely used to finance ISIS activities. Thus, they smuggle out the antiquities and illegally sell them in underground black markets or auction houses of Europe and North America, much to the horror of many global citizens.

Despite these continued acts of barbarity, the international community has not taken any solid actions nor composed specific plans and treaties to prevent them. The security in Iraq and Syria remains poor and neglected. In fact, the U.S has recently declined to send airstrikes to protect Iraqi cultural properties due to "lack of sufficient partners on the ground". Currently the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is publicly asking for the global society to intervene to help Iraq protect its cultural heritage.



IV. Country Positions

[China]

Currently, Asian countries including China are not directly affected by the ISIS. However, China remains cautious of any possible attacks that may be imposed on its cultural properties such as the Great Walls of China.

[France]

Especially with the recent terrorist attack in Paris, France stands aggressive towards the ISIS and should focus on strengthening securities of at-risk nations.

[Iraq]

Being the biggest target of the ISIS and the iconoclastic attacks, Iraq is requesting for the international society to intervene in protection of its cultural properties and has also attempted to become part of the World Heritage Convention, and is waiting for ratification.

[Syria]

The on-going civil war and the terror of ISIS have caused a gigantic outflow of its citizens, and its cultural heritage is in just as much danger. Obviously Syria is not in the conditions to provide aid to Iraq's problems, and should rather ask for more participation of Western countries in protection of the cultural heritage.

[USA]

With its strong military, rich economy, and developed technologies, USA along with other Western nations is a hope to the suffering Middle Eastern countries. However, USA remains cautious when it comes to direct intervention with the ISIS, and would focus more on global cooperation by means of strengthening international treaties and organizations.

V. Possible Solutions

Listed below are some of the possible solutions that the delegates may consider. Again, delegates should keep in mind that the main objective of this committee is to strengthen the protection itself of the cultural properties, not to deal with the ISIS by using violence or military force.

1. Digitally preserving cultural properties- Scientific technology may be used to digitalize important cultural artifacts. For example, street view and virtual reality technology could document and record landscapes and sites. Google's Cultural Institute has already partnered with hundreds of museums to "host the world's cultural treasures online."

2. Ratifying international instruments – In order to strengthen protection of cultural heritage, it is needed to ratify conventions to align Iraqi laws with international norms. International conventions that lack ratification currently are UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention's addition of Iraq, and the 1970 Convention of the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

3. Other states' involvement with prosecution of crimes at the International Criminal Court- Iraq is not a party to the Roman Statue. Under the principle of universal jurisdiction, "intentional and discriminatory destruction of buildings dedicated to religion and historic monuments" qualifies as a war crime, and allows any country to prosecute such crimes.

4. Practical rescue of cultural properties- Museums in the relatively safer parts of the world should host cultural properties until security in the dangerous region is re-established. Problems that may arise with this proposition is the confusion over the means of repatriation, and the costs for shipping and maintenance

5. Making a way to better track down trafficked artifacts- Surveying at-risk sites and itemizing cultural properties could make a systemized way of tracing them when they're looted into the black market and auction houses.

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Agenda 2: The threat of climate change on World Heritage natural and cultural properties

I. Introduction

One of the major issues at hand for the entire world to deal with is the issue of climate change. Ever since the industrial revolution, mankind have been burning up fossil fuels in order to make our lives more comfortable. However, due to the overuse of this natural resource, the human race is now facing the consequence of its actions which is global warming, otherwise known as the climate change.

Climate change has had significant impact on the current society that we live in. One of these impact, and the focus of this committee is the impact it had on the World Heritage sites that were chosen by UNESCO. These sites, from the London tower to the Great Barrier Reef, are now getting destroyed due to the change in the climate change that the world is now experiencing globally.

Your job as the delegate representing each of the country is to come up with a realistic and plausible solution in order to tackle this issue of global climate change and its detrimental effects to the World Heritage properties. Even though the delegation can discuss ways to possibly prevent any future changes in the climate, the chair recommends the delegates to mainly focus on the actual methods that can be used to protect these sites from further damage.

II. History

The UNESCO have been concerned with the issue of global climate change and the detrimental effects it could have on the World Heritage as early as 2005 when it was still debatable whether or not climate change was having a negative impact on the environment. Ever since, UNESCO have been trying to let the world know the possible consequences that the global climate change could bring to the cultural heritage that we have as of now.

UNESCO have been producing numerous articles and reports such as “Case Studies on Climate Change and the World Heritage” which includes 26 examples of World Heritage currently being effected by the global climate change. The cause behind the climate change varies and cannot be pin-pointed to a specific cause. The detrimental factors towards the World Heritage sites are the same. As each site has a very different situation and problem it is facing, it has been very difficult to come up with a viable solution that expands over the entire world.

To list a few, the effects of the climate changes would beL

- The melting ice caps and glaciers in the polar and mountain region.
- The increasing temperature and the CO₂ concentration of the atmosphere.
- The bleaching of the coral reefs.
- The destruction of bio diversity.

Already 35 out of 228 sites are showing evident damage by the climate changes.136 out of 700 listed cultural monuments will be affected in the long run. If nothing is done about the situation, the damages done will be irreversible. Unlike the ISIS attacks on these sites, the problem of climate change is that it is not as simple as defending the site from physical attack. The committee needs to not only come up with the short term solutions of dealing with the issue as well as dealing with the overall issue of the climate change.

III. Country Positions

[Australia]

Australia is one of the countries that has been most effected by the change of climate over the years. As many of the World Heritage sites in Australia are natural sites, the climate changes can be devastating for them. One example of this would be the Great Barrier Reef. This teed is the world's largest coral reef system. The issue can be most devastating for the coral reefs as the change in the ocean temperature and the pH level means that the environment is no longer safe for the corals to dwell in. Currently, there are approximately 11 different sites within Australia that is threatened by the climate change.

[Peru]

The Chavin archaeological site is the most significant representative site of the formative period in the Perucian Central Andes. The problem that they are facing problems with the melting ice caps on the mountains, causing massive rock avalanches onto the site itself and the population living in the area. This damages is seen to increase over time as scientists have claimed that the rate of melting glaciers will only increase over time.

[United Kingdom]

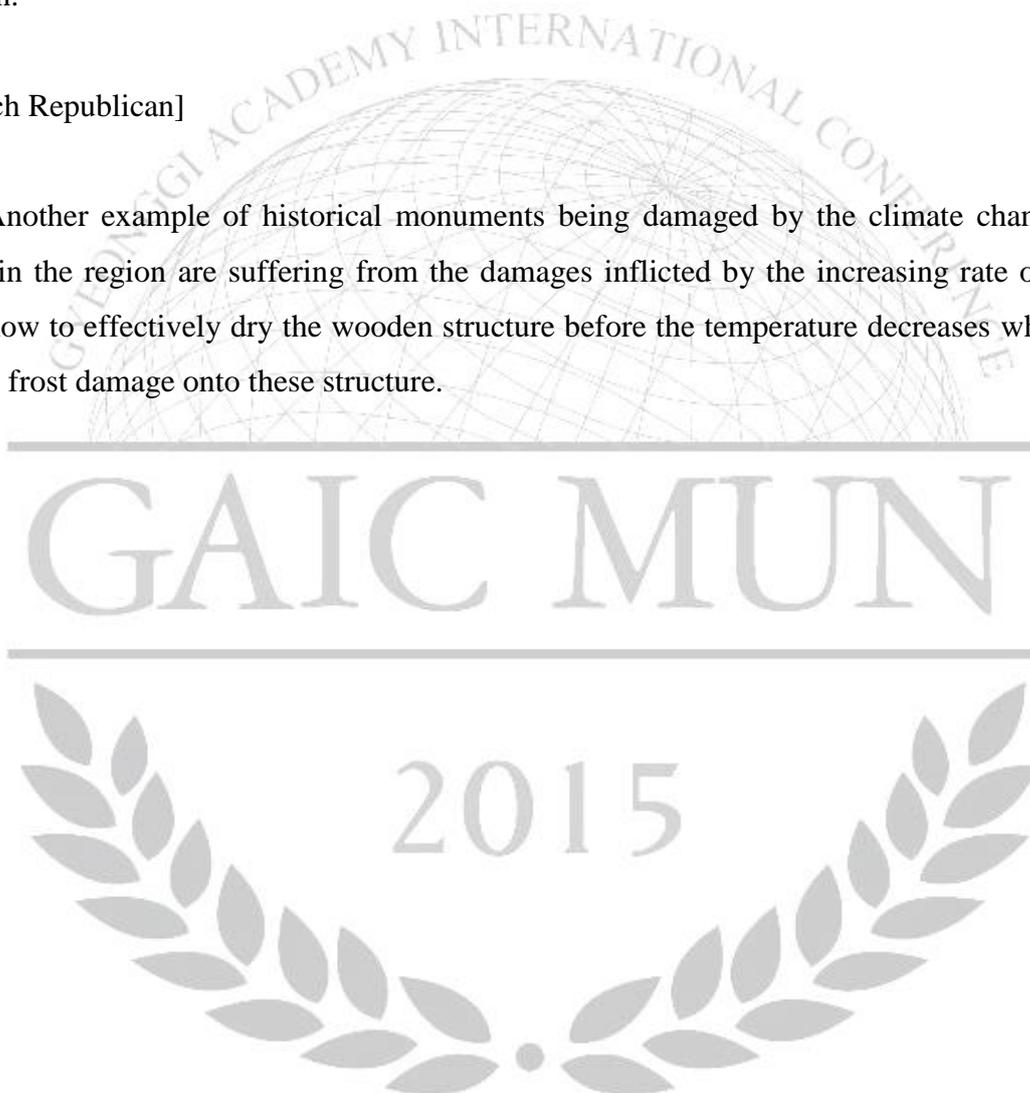
United Kingdom with its varied World Heritage sites suffers from the rising sea level and the dramatic changes in the weather caused by the climate change. The most notable example being the tower of London, the site is in danger of being consumed by the rising sea level. The increase in sea level and the weather changes means that there are more floods that is happening than ever before. The same goes for the cyclones happening in the region. The country needs to deal with this situation as quickly as possible or risk losing 80 billion pounds worth of property.

[Russian Federation]

The Golden Mountains of Altai is a major mountain range that spans over 1,600,000 hectare of land. The zone is well known for being the only source of information about the Scythian burial mounds. The mounds are currently in danger due to the melting of the permafrost. The permafrost layer is a layer of ground that stays frozen for the entire duration of the year no matter what time of the year it is. However, due to the increasing temperature, the permafrost layer is melting, thus damaging the archaeological sites and artifacts in the region.

[Czech Republican]

Another example of historical monuments being damaged by the climate change. The sites in the region are suffering from the damages inflicted by the increasing rate of floods and how to effectively dry the wooden structure before the temperature decreases which will cause frost damage onto these structure.



IV. Possible Solutions

[Noah's Ark Project]

This is the method used by the EU in order to keep their World Heritage sites safe from the future impact of the climate change. The goal of the project is to deal with the issue before it actually happens. The project mainly aims to assess the damages to the World Heritage sites and predict future damages in order to come up with a possible plan of restoration.

[Link between other countries]

In order to combat this issue, no country should be left standing by itself. As the impact of the climate change is global and the fact that these World Heritage sites should be valued by everyone, effective cooperation between the countries from both LEDCs and

[Cooperation of the local population]

Many of the regions needs local population's support and cooperation in order to tackle successfully. In areas such as the Russian federation, the human resources in order to tackle the issue effectively will require the use of the local population. The delegates must come up with ways to incentivize the action to protect the World Heritage Sites

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