LETTER FROM CHAIRS

Dear Delegates,

We are thrilled to welcome you all to the NEWMUN conference. As Chairs of the United Nations Scientific and cultural organization, we consider it a great opportunity to begin this journey along with you, where the work of diplomacy, collaboration, and critical thinking would hold center stage.

Good preparation is indeed a primary determiner of any debate. We encourage you to do research about the country positions and the wider context of the issues at hand. Knowing your nation's stance for or against any passing bill would enable you to argue effectively and constructively listen to others in order to bring about solutions through compromise. We look forward to hearing original ideas and your passion about global governance.

Let's remember: MUN is not about winning or losing, it's about building bridges across borders. And, please don't go in with a closed mind and with something rigidly fixed in your mind. The skills you foster in this hall-public speaking, negotiation, and critical analysis-will be useful to you long after you leave this conference.

Respect and inclusivity are what each and every discussion should be based on as we go forward. Let this be a forum where everyone is made to feel important and heard. Together, with honor and perception, we can have answers to all the problems of our times.

We look forward to seeing the ingenuity with which each one of you shall participate. May this be an enriching experience for all in this conference.

If you have any queries, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely , with best wishes & lot of excitement,
Jhanvi Gupta & Michelle Prince
Chairpersons - UNESCO [NEWMUN VII]

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION (UNESCO)

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a specialized agency dedicated to strengthening shared humanity through the promotion of education, science, culture, and communication. UNESCO is known as the Laboratory of Ideas of the United Nations: a forum where experts, creators, and thought leaders can come and share ideas that influence discussions worldwide.

It sets standards, produces tools and develops knowledge to create solutions to some of the greatest challenges of our time, and fosters a world of greater equality and peace. Protecting biodiversity, responding to artificial intelligence, advancing quality education, safeguarding heritage, and ensuring access to reliable information are some examples of the work that UNESCO does with its 194 Member States across the globe.

As early as 1942, global leaders began imagining an organization that would use education, culture, science and information to build lasting peace. Over the years, UNESCO has implemented initiatives that have radically improved lives around the world, and shaped global action in its field of competence, through nation-wide educational and scientific programs, the creation of tsunami warning systems, lists and designations that form a unique global network, protecting cultural heritage, promoting peace, and inspiring positive change.

BACKGROUND GUIDE

AGENDA 1: World Heritage Sites in Danger due to Earthquakes and Natural Disasters

Introduction

Cultural heritage that comprises the monuments, historic towns, archaeological sites and landscapes inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List represents an irreplaceable record of human creativity and identity. Yet many UNESCO World Heritage Sites lie in zones exposed to earthquakes, floods, wildfires and other natural hazards. These events cause immediate physical destruction (collapse, fire, flooding), long-term material degradation (salt, moisture, biological growth), and loss of intangible practices and local livelihoods. The international community has increasingly recognized that protecting heritage must be built into disaster risk management and recovery frameworks rather than treated as a separate afterthought.

General overview

Scale and mechanisms of risk

Earthquakes are particularly destructive for built heritage: many historic buildings were constructed without modern seismic-resistant design and rely on brittle masonry, timber joinery, or unreinforced stonework that performs poorly under strong ground shaking. Flooding undermines foundations, encourages salt crystallization and biological decay, and removes archaeological context; wildfires rapidly destroy wooden elements, roofs and surrounding historic landscapes. Compound events e.g., quake-triggered landslides or post-fire erosion, and climate change-driven extreme weather events magnify these threats. Manuals and training initiatives produced by UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS emphasize that both movable and immovable heritage are vulnerable and that mitigation requires integrated planning and community involvement.

The vulnerability of heritage sites is compounded by human factors such as urban expansion, inadequate maintenance, and lack of emergency preparedness. In many countries, heritage management institutions operate with limited technical capacity or financial resources, leaving monuments unreinforced and communities untrained for crisis situations. Once a disaster strikes, heritage preservation often becomes a secondary concern compared to immediate humanitarian needs leading to irreversible losses.

Why it matters internationally

Damage to World Heritage Sites carries social, economic and diplomatic costs: loss of identity and cultural continuity for affected communities, collapse of tourism income, and complicated reconstruction that can strain state resources and international cooperation. Because World Heritage Sites are deemed to have outstanding universal value, damage to them becomes a matter of international concern and mobilizes multilateral actors and technical partners.

Earthquakes: Sudden Destruction and Long-Term Impacts

Earthquakes are among the most destructive threats to cultural heritage. They strike without warning and can destroy centuries of architectural achievement in a matter of seconds. Many ancient temples, churches, and palaces were built before the advent of seismic design knowledge, making them structurally fragile.

The **2015 Nepal earthquake** exemplified this danger: in the Kathmandu Valley, iconic temples and pagodas collapsed entirely, while priceless sculptures, wooden carvings, and historical archives were buried in debris. The earthquake not only caused physical damage but also disrupted the continuity of local traditions, rituals, and livelihoods tied to these monuments.

Similarly, the **2009 L'Aquila earthquake in Italy**, the **2016 Kumamoto earthquake in Japan**, and the **2023 Türkiye–Syria earthquake** all caused severe destruction to World Heritage properties and raised global awareness about the need for heritage-specific emergency planning.

Floods and Water-Related Disasters

Floods and storms present more prolonged but equally devastating effects. Rising sea levels and heavier rainfall events linked to climate change threaten low-lying heritage zones such as **Venice (Italy)**, **the Historic City of Bruges (Belgium)**, and **the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras**. Floodwaters erode foundations, deposit salts, encourage biological decay, and destabilize fragile masonry. Repeated exposure accelerates deterioration and may ultimately render sites uninhabitable.

Wildfires and Secondary Hazards

Wildfires, increasingly intense in regions like Australia, Greece, and California, pose a growing danger to heritage landscapes and sacred forests. The 2019–2020 Australian bushfires, for instance, damaged several Indigenous cultural sites and threatened the **Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area**. In addition, earthquakes and fires often occur sequentially; a collapsed building may ignite fires, while post-fire erosion and landslides can further destroy archaeological contexts.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030)

Adopted by the United Nations in **March 2015** in **Sendai, Japan**, the Sendai Framework is a global agreement that guides countries in reducing disaster risk and building resilience. It succeeded the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015) and emphasizes prevention and preparedness rather than post-disaster response.

Its goal is to substantially reduce disaster losses in lives, livelihoods, and assets including cultural heritage. The framework outlines four key priorities:

1. Understanding disaster risk
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and
4. Enhancing preparedness and "Building Back Better" after disasters.

Major parties involved

i. **State Parties / National and local governments:** responsibility for protection, emergency response, recovery planning and implementing conservation measures.
ii. **UNESCO World Heritage Centre & World Heritage Committee:** provide normative guidance, emergency support, coordination and monitoring of state of conservation reports.
iii. **ICCROM and ICOMOS:** technical expertise, training and guidance on disaster risk management for cultural heritage.
iv. **UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR):** promotes integration of cultural heritage into disaster risk reduction frameworks.

v. **Donor states and international technical partners:** financial and technical assistance during recovery.

Timeline of key events

- **March 18, 2015:** Adoption of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030**, which provides the global blueprint for reducing disaster risk and explicitly supports "Build Back Better" in recovery-a framework increasingly referenced in cultural heritage risk planning.
- **25 April 2015:** A magnitude 7.8 earthquake strikes central Nepal; massive loss of life and widespread damage to historic fabric in the Kathmandu Valley, where many World Heritage monuments were hit.
- **12 May 2015:** A major aftershock (M 7.3) further damages structures and hampers recovery.
- **April–June 2015:** UNESCO and partners issue emergency appeals, conduct damage assessments and recommend protective measures (site cordons, salvage of fragments, documentation). Reports mapped damage in core monument zones including Kathmandu Durbar Square.
- **2015–2020:** International and national recovery and restoration programs, technical trainings (ICCROM, ICOMOS), and efforts to rebuild using improved standards and to revive local craft skills; debates continue about authenticity, materials and resilient reconstruction.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

- **World Heritage Convention (1972):** establishes State Party responsibilities and the World Heritage Committee's remit to monitor and assist with conservation of sites of outstanding universal value.
- **UNESCO guidance & manuals:** "Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage" and a suite of technical resources guide risk assessment, emergency preparedness and recovery tailored to heritage properties.
- **ICCROM / ICOMOS training and guidance:** capacity-building courses (e.g., Disaster Risk Management for Cultural Heritage) and joint guidance on recovery and conservation post-disaster.
- **Sendai Framework & integration efforts:** UNDRR, UNESCO and partners have produced tools (e.g., Cultural Heritage Scorecards, integration guidance) to mainstream heritage into national disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning.
- **Nepal 2015 response:** rapid visual assessments, emergency stabilization of vulnerable monuments, salvage and documentation campaigns, and phased restoration programs supported by international donors and technical partners. UNESCO and national authorities coordinated site safety measures.

Possible solutions

1. **Integrate heritage into national DRR and urban planning:** require heritage inventories and risk assessments to be part of National Disaster Risk Reduction strategies and urban land-use plans
2. **Preparedness and capacity-building at local level:** fund and institutionalize disaster-risk training for site managers, municipal authorities and artisan networks. Create regional hubs (training, technical support) in seismic and hazard-prone zones to share best practice and mobilize rapid technical teams.
3. **Pre-disaster documentation and digital inventories:** systematic photogrammetry, GIS mapping and archive digitization to enable rapid damage assessment and informed reconstruction.
4. **Financial mechanisms and contingency funds:** establish rapid-response heritage funds (national and multilateral) to finance stabilization, salvage and early recovery so heritage tasks are not sidelined in the immediate aftermath.

Treaties, conventions and resolutions related to the issue

- **Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)** - foundational treaty for World Heritage protection and State Party obligations.
- **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030** -global framework that calls for disaster risk reduction mainstreaming across sectors and includes cultural heritage under the "Build Back Better" ethos.
- **Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (UNESCO, 2011)** -promotes integrated urban heritage management that can reduce disaster vulnerability for historic urban sites.
- **Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague, 1954) and Protocols** - while focused on armed conflict, this treaty and emblem (Blue Shield) form part of wider legal frameworks for cultural property protection.

Sample Moderated Caucus topics

1. The effectiveness of Early Warning Systems in Mitigating Damage to Cultural Heritage
2. Assessing the Role of Urban Planning in Reducing Natural Disaster Risks near Heritage Areas
3. Should UNESCO Create a Dedicated Fund for Post-Disaster Heritage Restoration?
4. Balancing National Sovereignty and International Intervention in Heritage Site Protection

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AGENDA 2: Use of Technology in Education

Introduction

Technology has become a transformative force in modern education. Digital learning tools ranging from online classrooms and interactive simulations to artificial intelligence (AI)-driven tutoring are reshaping how students access and process knowledge. These innovations have the potential to expand learning beyond traditional boundaries, offering flexibility and accessibility to millions worldwide.

However, the rapid digitization of education also presents major challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning but simultaneously exposed deep inequalities known as the digital divide between students with reliable internet access and those without. While technology has made education more interactive, it has also raised concerns about screen dependency, social isolation, and disparities in digital literacy.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasizes that technology should serve as a means to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): *"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."*

General Overview

The integration of technology into education has become one of the most defining transformations of the 21st century. It has expanded access to information, created new modes of learning, and improved inclusivity for many. Yet, the same technologies that promise to democratize education have also exposed stark inequalities between and within countries. While some nations are thriving in digital learning, others are struggling to ensure even basic connectivity, revealing a global digital divide that threatens the universality of education.

Finding a Balance Between Tech-Based and Conventional Education Practices

The growing reliance on digital tools has forced educators and policymakers to confront an important question: how can technology enhance education without eroding traditional educating values? In developed countries like Finland, Japan, and South Korea, technology is carefully integrated into education systems to complement not replace face-to-face learning. Finland's education model, for instance, combines digital tools with personalized and play-based learning, ensuring that screen time remains balanced with human interaction. Similarly, Japan incorporates robotics and AI-driven learning platforms while maintaining an emphasis on teamwork, ethics, and classroom discipline.

In contrast, in many developing nations, the balance is harder to achieve due to limited access to digital infrastructure. For example, schools in rural Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Nepal often lack reliable electricity or internet, forcing teachers to rely heavily on traditional classroom instruction.

Striking the right balance requires blending traditional teaching methods like teacher-student interaction and experiential learning; with innovative technologies that make education more inclusive and adaptable. The challenge lies not only in adopting technology but in doing so thoughtfully, with cultural and social sensitivity.

Remote Learning During COVID-19 and the Global Digital Divide

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the unequal landscape of digital education. When lockdowns began in 2020, 1.6 billion students worldwide were forced out of classrooms. While students in high-income countries quickly transitioned to online learning via platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, millions in developing nations were left behind.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, only about 30% of schools had access to electricity and less than 15% had internet connectivity, according to the World Bank. In Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, many students could not participate in virtual classes at all. Similarly, in South Asia, countries like Nepal and Bangladesh faced challenges where rural schools lacked devices and stable connections. The poorest families often had to share a single mobile phone for multiple children's schooling, severely limiting access to remote learning.

Even within developed countries, inequality persisted. In the United States, low-income households and minority communities struggled with poor connectivity and device shortages. In India, about 23% of households lacked internet access (National Sample Survey, 2020), and children in remote areas often relied on radio or television broadcasts instead of live online classes.

In response, governments and international organizations launched emergency initiatives:

- **UNICEF and ITU's Giga Initiative (2019–present)** aims to connect every school globally to the internet by 2030.
- **India's DIKSHA platform** provided free e-learning content to over 30 million students in multiple regional languages.
- **Kenya's Digital Literacy Programme (DLP)** distributed laptops to public schools and trained over 100,000 teachers to handle remote education.
- **Bangladesh's "Muktopaath"** platform offered free courses for both students and teachers to adapt to digital tools.

These programs highlight a crucial trend; technology can empower education, but only if access is equitable. Bridging this divide requires more than hardware and connectivity; it demands sustained investment in teacher training, local-language content, and digital literacy.

UNESCO's Advocacy for Equitable Access to Educational Technology (SDG 4)

UNESCO plays a leading role in promoting inclusive and equitable use of technology in education, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) - *"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."*

Through initiatives such as the Global Education Coalition, Education 2030 Framework for Action, and the Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER, 2019), UNESCO encourages countries to leverage technology to close learning gaps, not widen them. These frameworks provide policy guidance for governments to develop national digital education strategies that prioritize affordability, teacher training, and inclusive access.

UNESCO also warns against technological dependency and unequal access that could deepen inequality. Its Global Education Monitoring Report (2023) highlights that while South Korea, Finland, and Singapore have

successfully embedded digital literacy in curricula, countries like Chad (country in South Africa), Afghanistan, and Yemen remain largely offline.

To promote fairness, UNESCO works with governments to build infrastructure, provide policy frameworks, and develop teacher training programs. The ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (2018) defines the skills educators need to integrate technology effectively. UNESCO's *"*Reimagining Our Futures Together*"* initiative also emphasizes that education systems must adapt technology ethically protecting student data, cultural diversity, and mental well-being.

Ultimately, UNESCO advocates for a **"**human-centered digital transformation**"** where technology serves as a tool to enhance human potential, not replace it.

Major Parties Involved

- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization):
  Leads global efforts to promote equitable access to digital learning through initiatives such as the "Global Education Coalition" and the "UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers".
- UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund):
  Supports digital inclusion programs like *"*Giga*"*, which aims to connect every school to the internet.
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU):
  Provides global data on internet access and supports infrastructure development for education connectivity.

Timeline of Key Events

- **2005–2015:** Rapid expansion of digital learning initiatives; open online courses (MOOCs) and mobile learning emerge globally.
- **2015:** Adoption of **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)** under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasizing quality and inclusive education.
- **2019:** Global internet penetration surpasses 50%, but large disparities remain between developed and developing regions.
- **March 2020:** Outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forces over 1.6 billion learners out of classrooms worldwide; remote learning becomes essential.
- **2020–2021:** UNESCO establishes the "Global Education Coalition*"*, connecting over 175 partners to support remote learning continuity.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

- **Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015):** Provides guidance on implementing SDG 4 and promotes inclusive digital learning strategies.
- **UNESCO Global Education Coalition (2020):** Mobilized governments, private sector, and NGOs to ensure learning continuity during the pandemic.
- **Giga Initiative (UNICEF + ITU, 2019):** Aims to connect every school in the world to the internet by 2030.
- **UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (2018):** Defines skills educators need to effectively use technology in teaching.

National Policies

- **Finland:** Integrated coding and digital literacy into its national curriculum since 2016.
- **China:** Launched large-scale online learning platforms and digital textbook programs.
- **Kenya and India:** Distributed tablets and developed e-learning platforms for rural and remote schools.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist: inconsistent connectivity, lack of teacher training, cybersecurity threats, and insufficient digital infrastructure funding continue to hinder universal implementation.

Possible Solutions

1. **Bridging the Digital Divide:**
   Expand affordable internet access through public-private partnerships, community Wi-Fi programs, and investment in rural infrastructure.
2. **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:**
   Equip educators with digital skills and pedagogical strategies to effectively integrate technology without replacing traditional methods.
3. **Hybrid Learning Models:**
   Promote blended education that combines in-person and online methods to preserve social interaction while ensuring flexibility.
4. **Affordable and Open-Source Technologies:**
   Support low-cost devices, free educational apps, and open educational resources (OERs) for developing countries.
5. **Digital Safety and Data Privacy:**
   Implement global standards for protecting students' data and preventing exploitation in online environments.

Treaties or Resolutions Related to the Issue

- **UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015):** Ensures inclusive and equitable quality education for all; emphasizes digital inclusion.
- **UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015):** Sets policy guidelines for achieving SDG 4 through technology and innovation.
- **UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/122 (2019):** Promotes the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) for development.

Sample Moderated Caucus topics

1. Bridging the Digital Divide between developed and developing countries
2. Finding a balance between tech-based and traditional learning methods
3. Integrating Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality into classrooms responsibly
4. Long-term impacts of remote learning on educational equity and student wellbeing
5. Should governments make hybrid learning a permanent feature of National education systems?
6. Aligning educational technology with SDG 4: Quality Education for All

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