



**11-13 JULY 2014**

# **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

## **BACKGROUND GUIDE**

## Message from the Executive Board:

Dear Delegates,

We welcome you to the simulation of General Assembly 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee – SOCHUM at DPSGMUN 2014. It is our privilege to be discussing the agendum of extreme relevance in today's world politics. Active citizenship is picking up immense pace and the roots of it lie in increasing participation of the youth in governance. It is important, therefore, for us to see how education plays a role in the process of political socialization.

The topic is contentious at many fronts. First and foremost, it is required that we acknowledge the variations in political systems all across the world. The scope of decision-making is also divided, decentralized, concentrated or appropriated on the basis of type of governments, societal norms of power sharing, differences in system of social stratification and most significantly, awareness of the citizenry. Thus, the concepts laid out in this background guide serve to give broader understanding to the issue. These definitions are not universal in nature and can be contested and critiqued comprehensively. However, it is important to lay the foundation nonetheless.

We would want you to research upon how individuals and groups get initiated in the political process of your country and then look at if and how formal and hidden curricula have played any role in this regard. We would want you to not get restricted to schools or established institutions for the purposes of studying education. Your understanding regarding this agenda would be better if you draw from examples that surround you.

We hope to be learning from you a lot throughout this committee. For any queries, feel free to contact the undersigned.

Regards

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### *Committee Background:*

The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising all 193 Members of the United Nations, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. The Assembly meets in regular session intensively from September to December each year, and thereafter as required. The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ of the UN. Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority. Decisions on other questions are by simple majority.

Each country has one vote. Some Member States in arrear of payment may be granted the right to vote. The UNGA has established a number of Councils, Working Groups, Boards, etc. for the performance of its functions.

The Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Affairs Committee (SOCHUM) is one of the six specialized subcommittees of the United Nations General Assembly and generally referred to as the Third Committee. It was established after the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The committee's main task is to strive for better compliance to human rights in every region of this world and thus promote international peace and security.

Due to SOCHUM's general mandate, the committee has the ability to discuss many topics presented to the UN. Most issues have a social or cultural aspect, allowing this committee to be involved in developing numerous solutions. Past topics include the protection of human rights, global literacy, the advancement of women and indigenous people and human rights issues in Iran, Korea and the Democratic

Republic of Congo. SOCHUM plays thus an integral role in the UN as it works, protects and better the lives of civilians.

Other issues discussed by SOCHUM include: treatment of refugees and displaced persons, rights of children, international drug prevention, crime prevention, and elimination of racism and racial discrimination, to name only a few. SOCHUM examines reports of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council but it can also conduct its own studies. It is important to note that the SOCHUM cannot demand action but only suggest that and what actions can and should be taken.

The Third Committee meets annually to discuss, form resolutions and vote on important issues. Each member nation is allotted one vote, and vote passes with simple majority. The Committee works closely with other UN bodies in order to be most effective in dealing with social concerns all over the world. These bodies include the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and several other subcommittees. SOCHUM can also request reports from other UN organizations.

At the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Third Committee considered 59 draft resolutions, more than half of which were submitted under the human rights agenda item alone. These included three so-called country-specific resolutions on human rights situations.

Under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Stephan Tafrov, the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations, the Third Committee is expected to consider a similar number of draft resolutions.

## ***POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION***

Definition: “Political Socialization refers to the process by which an individual is made aware of the various political processes in his/her society, locality and country. Simply put, it is the process by which individuals acquire the political culture around them.”

The acquisition of this culture happens mostly during the pre-adolescence and adolescence period when individuals are at the prime of their cognitive development. These cognitive gatherings may be in terms of the norms or codified rules.

1. **Codified rules:** This refers to the acquiring of knowledge about how the political sphere functions, what is its role and how political leaders are elected. These processes are usually documented, usually in the Constitution, for them to be followed periodically in a uniform fashion. For example, in India, the First Past the Post (FPTP) system is made use of to elect political leadership since the time elections were held in independent India.
2. **Normative learning:** This refers to gathering of omnipresent and unspoken rules and processes of how the political sphere is constituted. For example, in certain societies, it may be normative for only male members of the family to stand for political positions. In these cases, it is understood or assumed that women members of the society are simply not permitted to stand for the positions of political leadership.

Similarly, Political Socialization takes places in individuals by means of various agents present in the society. These agents inculcate the ‘rights’ and the ‘wrongs’ of politics within growing individuals. These ideas may be carried by the individual for a portion or rest of his/her lifespan when he/she makes political decisions.

There are a number of agents involved in the process of Political Socialization of an individual. Some of these agents can be chosen voluntarily while some cannot.

These agents are:

1. **Family:** The family constitutes of the first and immediate influence on an individual's values, choices and decisions. This not only includes political preferences, but also several other spheres concerning the individual's life and surroundings. There is a constant relationship and interaction between an individual and his/her family due to which the political values or preferences as imbibed by the person are same or similar.
2. **School:** This refers to the knowledge acquisition about politics and the aspects and processes attached to the same in institutions of education. This often translates in studies of "Civics" or "Civic education" in which young individuals are taught of the methods by which political leadership is elected. This is facilitated by way of textbooks and lectures by teachers. It is also at this point where the students come to respect the teachers and their point of view due to them being viewed as erudite in the subject and being capable enough of teaching at an educational institution. The influence of peers in this interactive space plays an important role as well.
3. **Peers:** Individuals interact with people in the same age bracket constantly at every stage of their lives. For most individuals, the opinion and inclination of their friends and peers is considered as valuable due to the same sharing common experiences and similar issues. For example, the issues of the youth vary from that of the elderly. The youth may be more passionate about issues surrounding education, jobs etc. whereas the elderly may be concerned about retirement and government provisions for the same. However at the same time, there are also issues that are a common concern for all age and social groups. These may be civil rights and basic amenities.
4. **Religion:** In most multicultural societies, religion plays an important role in determining the leadership choices of individuals. This includes the religion the person may be born in or chooses to adopt. A number of religions require their followers to attend regular sermons or sessions to inculcate greater, more in-

depth learning about the same. For example, Roman Catholicism has very static and firm views on social justice, abortion and capital punishment. The same often translates into the laws that are followed in a particular political system. It is important to note that the authenticity of various religious 'classes' is often contested and their credibility is put to question, following qualms about the thin line between propaganda and professing. For example, a number of objections have been raised to regulating the content being professed in Madrasas (Muslim institutions of religious education) due to the impression of the same as being 'instigating'. Whether or not these claims have any base or are simply falsified due to cultural misconceptions remains to be discussed.

5. **Mass media:** The mass media of today remains one of the major and most important educator as well as influencer of political systems, parties, processes and leaders. With the access to various forms media such as print, broadcast and New Media (Internet) increasing ever so widely, it has played a significant role in determining opinions and inclinations of populations towards certain leaders or parties. For example, the landmark win of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India in the Lok Sabha Elections of 2014 is attributed to the role of media in promoting the party and its top leadership.

The direction in which the various forms of media choose to channel debate and discourse in remains to key to the functioning of a healthy or a flailing political regime. It is widely accepted that the media is one of the main harbingers of social and political change and plays a crucial role in the downfall of unsatisfactory political empires.

It is key to note that it is not just advertisements, websites, news channels and newspapers that play a role in influencing choices and opinions but also tools of Public Relations (PR) and Image Management (IM) that silently and subtly do so. These have to come to be criticized a great deal in contemporary context as 'cheating' individuals due to their silent manner swaying opinions. Individuals

cannot distinguish between news and PR and result may be often, if not always, being disastrous.

Apart from channels conveying news, TV shows and serials are also a major means of imbibing certain choices for a number of households. For example, individuals watching crime shows have shown as assuming a direct correlation between the crime they may watch in TV and the level of crime in their actual surroundings.

6. **Government:** The government plays one of the most instrumental roles in the process of political socialization right from the initial stages of cognitive development of individuals. The government determines the course work and syllabus as well as prescribes texts and books for various libraries etc. With respect to media, what is printed and broadcasted is regulated in almost all the countries in the world today. A distinction between “family friendly” and “adult” programming is also made to suit the cultural norms and acceptability in political societies of countries. This can amount to a little or a lot of censorship on the behalf of the government in the content that may be printed or screened.

The level of freedom allowed by a political regime is also indicative of how independent the media and the civil society are in expressing free thought and opinion. These may be determined by the level of crackdown on peaceful protests, rallies and demonstrations in a country.

### ***Formal Education & Political Socialization:***

The school as an agent of socialization performs a great number of roles towards socializing the individual to be an integral and useful member of the society by providing or acquainting him with knowledge and skills, and also to socialize him politically. It is posited that political socialization is “the developmental processes through which the citizen matures politically” where child should be molded towards a priori set of conventions, rather than considering the child as an active innovator



and modifier of political learning during the socialization process. It is the transmission of values, beliefs, ideas and patterns of behavior pertaining to generation, distribution and exercise of power.

In the case of Nigeria, for example, the political system or more accurately, political change has affected the educational system as much if not more than the educational system has affected it over the same period of time. Some argue that Nigerians need a wholesale national orientation from the traditional mode to the democratic, and the place to cultivate this new national endeavor is the primary and secondary levels of our education system. "The idea was to enable government more easily to create a new secular nation where the values of patriotism, unity, discipline and hard work could be more intensively inculcated in the youth."

The school is important setting for political education, youngsters in schools, learn political attitudes, beliefs and behaviors both formally and informally, directly through instruction and indirectly through casual experiences for chance happenings.

Four main dimensions of instruction and learning can be constructed to facilitate enquiry about political education and socialization in schools. The four dimensions are: (i) knowledge (ii) intellectual skills (iii) participation skills, and (iv) attitudes.

- (i) **Political knowledge:** refers to the knowledge of objectives of curriculum developers, as far as concepts, information and factual judgments about government and policies are concern.
- (ii) **Intellectual skills:** ability to describe, explain and evaluate political phenomena.
- (iii) **Political participation:** abilities needed to interact smoothly with others to maintain a group, cooperate, achieve common goal, negotiate and bargain, influence and make decisions.
- (iv) **Political attitudes:** internal state which affects an individual's choice of action towards same objective, person or event.

### *Relationship with Political and Civic Engagement:*

The relationship between political and civic engagement and its implications for political socialization has generated debate. Some scholars contend that distinguishing between the two forms of engagement is erroneous as the activities that fall under both rubrics are inherently political in nature. Others view civic participation as a bridge to political participation. Civic engagement acts as an invitation to community life which can be crucial for establishing participatory norms. It provides individuals with experience and skills, such as organizing, speaking in public, and raising funds that are necessary for taking part in political affairs. Volunteerism brings people together within communities, and promotes group norms of cooperation and compromise. People involved with community groups are placed within larger networks of activists who can recruit them for political activities. There is some empirical evidence that youth voluntary organizations serve as agents of political socialization. Involvement in voluntary associations that take part in community service, advocate on behalf of issues, and work with disadvantaged groups encourages adult political participation, especially electoral involvement.

On the other side of the debate are those who believe that civic engagement has little, if any, connection to political engagement or to the making of good democratic citizens. “Voluntary groups perform wonderful services and have undeniable value to society, but their effect on democratic politics is tenuous and possibly negative” argue some researchers. Many people choose to take part in civic affairs so that they can work on behalf of their communities while avoiding the tainted practice of politics. Participating in civic affairs can actually turn people off to politics when they have a bad experience or run up against even routine obstacles to getting things done. Finally, many groups do not pursue goals commensurate with democratic citizenship, such as fostering meaningful deliberation on issues and leaders.

### *The Unresolved Caveat:*

It is important to address the pressing question: What makes a citizen in the twenty-first century? There is a need to carefully examine the baselines for previous generations in order to accurately assess stability and change. For example, researchers in the middle decades of the last century relegated the mass media to secondary status among the agencies of socialization, assigning them a minor, primarily reinforcing role in the politicization process. A second look at the data that led to this conclusion shows that the political knowledge, attentiveness to politics, and preferences of young people as well as adults were influenced by media both directly and through the arbitration of other agents.

It is important that your research as delegates representing countries consider macro level system and societal factors when explaining cross-generational shifts in political socialization. Immigration and globalization have influenced the very fabric of political community, yet their treatment in studies has been superficial bordering on trivial. Examining the cross-cutting and transformative effects of immigration and globalization on the political socialization process presents helps to explain parochial assumptions.

The development of national identity and its implications for citizenship have not been studied much. For example, in the United States, the assumption has been that immigrants will be 'resocialized' into American society, and adapt beliefs and behaviors of their native political system to conform to the norms of their adopted country. Reluctance to adapt will dissipate over time as immigrants gain greater exposure to the norms and practices of the dominant culture. Our knowledge of how national identity forms in a multicultural era and how this reflects changing attachments to nation-states is incomplete at best. There is a need to examine how people might hold multiple political identifies, memberships, and citizenships, and to explore the conditions under which these identities are mutually reinforcing and when they might conflict. For example, the political socialization of foreign-born school

children differs markedly depending upon whether they attend schools that have high levels of diversity or those that are essentially segregated by ethnic group. Students who are isolated in segregated educational environments lack a connection to the mainstream culture and are less likely to develop norms of political participation. To date, studies of immigrant populations, which concentrate primarily on Latinos and Asians, have focused on their identification with the Democratic and Republican parties, their stands on issues, their mobilization by political organizations, their development of political coalitions, and turnout in elections. Few studies document the political socialization of foreign born youth outside the school context, nor trace the political development of immigrants over the life course.

Globalization fosters concentric circles of socialization which present people with a greater choice of citizen identities that are not necessarily based on birthright or kinship. People may identify in different ways with a nation, town, community, or group; they may be “directed from the local to the general, from particular to universal, from proximal to global entities, from state to supranational entities”. We can only begin to understand the complexities of these interlocking and overlapping identities by studying the process by which nationality becomes integrated into individuals’ political orientations.

The international reach of globalization and the accompanying economic, political, and social interdependencies along with wide-reaching communication networks have brought to light tensions between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. Allegiances to particular nations may be weakening as traditional state boundaries deteriorate and cross-state interactions become increasingly salient. Individuals may develop new allegiances based on ‘communities of shared fate,’ where membership is based not on identity with a nation or racial/ethnic community, but instead is founded mutual need and shared vulnerabilities. Issues surrounding the environment and global warming, food and agriculture, military intervention, poverty, and racism, have led people to perceive that their destinies are enmeshed with those of others existing outside of their

own country and culture. Commensurate with these potential shifts in attitudes, you, as delegates, should consider the role of supranational institutions in the political socialization of global citizens.

In addition to exploring the implications of macro level factors, you need to rethink the ways in which we look at the agents of political socialization. A more expansive set of agencies needs to be examined in order to get the total picture. Religious institutions, the military, the workplace, correctional facilities, entertainment organizations, interest groups, political organizations, social clubs, sports, and online communities, to name a few, can be instrumental for political socialization when they hold an important place in individuals' life. For example, a great deal of meaningful political discussion takes place inadvertently on sports and entertainment talk boards. Communities of fans who have developed a level of comfort with one another branch out beyond the designated topic of the board to engage in discourse about leaders and issues.

Further, your research needs to provide more precise specifications about the role of agents in the socialization process under particular conditions. Rudimentary differences in the school context—public versus private, large versus small, urban versus rural—have been linked to variations in political socialization. But, we need to know more about the conditions under which learning experiences will successfully convey political and civic orientations to young people. The extent to which children are segregated from adult activities related to politics influences their intent to engage later in life. “Real life” school and service learning exercises that allow young people to meaningfully engage the political and civic community as opposed to simulations or “play” appear to be effective socializing experiences, although much more evidence is required.

The relative prominence of particular agents in the socialization process over time should be assessed.

Lastly, the most significant development warranting the attention is the influence of technology on twenty-first century political socialization. If we view socialization as primarily a communications process, technology has fundamentally altered the core mechanisms that sustain the enterprise. The means by which people receive and process information has been essentially altered. Communication takes place more through technological intermediaries than via face-to-face contact. Each generation of intermediaries serves the conflicting purposes of placing greater distance between communicators while at the same time keeping them in closer touch. Text messaging, which often substitutes for phone calls, allows texters to send many short missives to recipients with ease. Communications technologies have allowed people, especially younger citizens, to form their own groups that meet and act both digitally and offline. Social media have been used to generate virtual organizations that attract thousands of members. There is some evidence that young people are developing their political identities online, and that these identities are consistent with the norms of engaged citizenship.

With such issues at hand, the General Assembly will convene to discuss in depth the agenda designated.

Following are recommended links for research:

- <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/1953435?uid=3738256&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102420403791>
- [http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed\\_lead/el\\_197010\\_massialas.pdf](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_197010_massialas.pdf)
- [http://www.abu.edu.ng/publications/2009-06-22-120459\\_2619.doc](http://www.abu.edu.ng/publications/2009-06-22-120459_2619.doc)
- <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Jon%20Lauglo%20Political%20socialization%20at%20home%20and%20young%20people's%20educational%20achievement%20and%20ambition.pdf>
- [http://faculty.washington.edu/mbarreto/courses/MGC\\_polsoc.pdf](http://faculty.washington.edu/mbarreto/courses/MGC_polsoc.pdf)

- <http://gradworks.umi.com/1494362.pdf>
- <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/niemi.pdf>
- [http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/355\\_V9N3%20FALL%2092%20-%20Rashid%20-%20Secular%20Education%20and%20Political%20Socialization.pdf](http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/355_V9N3%20FALL%2092%20-%20Rashid%20-%20Secular%20Education%20and%20Political%20Socialization.pdf)
- [http://www-personal.umich.edu/~presto/Downloads/DC/9-23\\_Galston2001.pdf](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~presto/Downloads/DC/9-23_Galston2001.pdf)
- <http://bridgingdifferences.mcgill.ca/en/Hooghe.pdf>
- <http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1170&context=curej>
- Iranian Case Study: <http://journal-archievs17.webs.com/357-363.pdf>
- <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:231686/FULLTEXT01>