Committee: The United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture

Topics: Governance and its Effects on Education, Preservation of World Heritage Sites, Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030

Country: the Commonwealth of Australia

Delegate: Anjali Mehindiratta, Earl Haig Secondary School

The Commonwealth of Australia is well known as the mainland of the Australian continent (Oceania). Home to nearly 24,265,000 people (as of 2016), the country ranks second highest on the Human Development Index, right behind Norway. Schooling in Australia from age 5-16 is compulsory, and has ensured a 99% adult literacy rate since 2003. Australia allocates its resources appropriately towards education, and is one of the least corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International’s annual index. It has both signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Australia boasts 19 World Heritage Sites, of which the Great Barrier Reef is one. The GBR is the world’s largest coral reef system, and features an incredible amount of biodiversity; much of which is threatened by the onset of global warming. On the topic of preserving this World Heritage Site, large efforts have been made on the part of the tourism industry to maintain ecological sustainablity. Daily fees from the industry generate nearly 20% of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s income. On the topic of the conflict in Syria, Australia has been constant in providing relief funds, and is open to dicussing how the international community can assist in the protection of World Heritage Sites located in the conflict area.

Topic 1- Governance and its Effects on Education

In recent years, Australia’s ranking on Transparency International’s index has been slipping. However, on the same index, public perception states that education is the least corrupt institution. Of which they would be correct. Australia manages its finances quite appropriately when it comes to education, and supporting pre-secondary education has never been in question. As mentioned previously, Australia has signed and ratified the UNCAC as of Dec. 2005. In September 2011, the Australian government announced that it would be commiting $700,00 to both developing and implementing a National Anti-Corruption Plan. However, the plan was never finalised. Australia’s current position on the index risks slipping even further if no new plans or ideas are suggested.

Subtopic- Education in Refugee Camps

Australia has provided nearly $130 million since March 2011 in aid for the Syrian conflict. This includes the $59.5 million to assist those in Syria under the UN’s Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan. This also includes $71.3 million to help refugees under the UN’s Refugee Response Plan. In funding UNICEF, Australia has supported the protection and education for children in and around Syria. 658,000 Syrian refugee and host community children have been enrolled in formal education. 352 education facilities have been constructed, renovated, or rehabilitated. Whilst its involvement has been mostly indirect, Australia is open to continuously supporting the education of those in the midst of the conflict through financial means. As far as recognizing corruption and putting policies in place to mitigate it, Australia believes that enforcing the UNCAC will prove beneficial. However, Australia recognizes that so far it has not been as effective as hoped, and would like to propose that the reasons being are looked in to.

Topic 2- Preservation of World Heritage Sites

The environment is something that Australia holds near and dear, and is currently a large political issue. Due to it’s geographical location, Australia is particularly vulnerable when it comes to climate change. Climate change is negatively affecting many different areas of the continent, one critical one being the Great Barrier Reef. The Reef is not only an incredible display of ecological diversity, but is also invaluable in the fact that it is unique. Being the world’s largest coral reef system deems it irreplaceable, and climate change is threatening to destroy this World Heritage Site through mass coral bleaching caused by rising temperatures. Whilst UNESCO has aided in bringing attention to the deterioration the Reef is facing, the Australian government is currently protecting and managing the reef using tourism as an economic generator for the region. Australia’s approach to benefitting from tourism is very moderated in that it places absolute importance on the well being of the reef. Tourism in the region creates almost $6.4 billion anually, a portion of which is contributed to research and management of the Reef. Australia believes that this is a very strong model, and has been functioning quite well. Whilst there is always room for improvement, Australia has managed to find a good balance. On the topic of the Syrian World Heritage Sites that are currently in danger due to the conflict, Australia believes that it is appropriate for the international community to be concerned about the issue. Australia is willing to provide monetary assistance, however understands that financial support in itself cannot solve the issue. Australia is open to discussion about more concrete resolutions, but does not hold a strong stance on the topic.

Topic 3- Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030

Australia has and will continue to be in support of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Australia has previously adopted the Millenium Declaration and intends to continue to uphold a global standard to improve quality of life throughout. Australia has supported these goals financially, and believes that it is the responsibility of developed nations to do so as well. Additionally, to help developing nations improve their education systems, Australia believes that resource programs are in order. Programs that send teachers, school materials, etc. to areas in need of them exist, however can be improved upon with international support. Australia would like to encourage UNESCO to look into and support such programs.