***Position Paper for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization***

**Introduction**

Georgia has been ravaged by a recent economic crisis that was compounded by the aftermath of the 2008 clash with the Russian Federation and national political troubles, known as the ‘triple crisis’. The ‘triple crisis’ caused not only for education and cultural heritage sites to deteriorate but the living standards of all Georgians. Georgians enjoyed a relatively high quality of life under Soviet rule-with incomes buoyed by Soviet tourism, agriculture, solid infrastructure and manufacturing. Much of that infrastructure and manufacturing withered in the war-torn decade following the break up of the Soviet Union. Therefore, many families today are faced with poverty and are unable to send their children to school. Other factors related to poverty barriers prevent many males of attaining a proper education, and by 2020 it is estimated that 35% of all Georgian children will be living in poverty. Along with poverty affecting the education in Georgia, the recent clash with the Russian Federation affects the restoration of cultural heritage sites. Currently the restoration of cultural heritage sites is almost impossible because of the scare of nearby mines. Although over the past couple of years, Georgia has received a strategic plan by the World Bank and UNICEF to better the education system along with the cultural heritage sites, little progress is actually being made. Currently Georgia remains extremely poor and needs the help of the United Nations to preserve its heritage sites and create education that is accessible for all.

1. **Cultural Heritage Sites**

The recent hostilities in Georgia have focused attention on the impact of armed conflict on the region's ancient sites and monuments. One of the oldest countries of the South Caucasus region, Georgia is particularly rich in cultural heritage, containing countless archaeological sites buildings of great significance. The country has three sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List and a further fifteen on the Tentative List for possible inclusion. In 1991, following the fall of communism, Georgia became an independent nation. However, like many of its neighbours it has struggled with the transition from a Soviet state to an independent republic. The conflict of the early 90s in the Russian-backed separatist republic of Abkhazia in north western Georgia brought widespread damage and destruction to the region's cultural heritage. As a result, the International Council on Monuments and Sites had stated that, “*the entire cultural heritage of Georgia is endangered”.*

In addition, with the recent conflicts of the 90s, a major threat to Georgian cultural heritage was the economic situation and the inadequacy of the law. This inadequacy of law created uncertainty in the roles and responsibilities between authorities and institutions, which meant that they both created different systems to aid in the rebuilding of cultural heritage sites. Procedures to grant monument status complicated and thus no action took place, which leaves many objects unprotected today.

Recently, a few changes have taken place in the management of cultural heritage. In 2014, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia delegated most of its obligations in the management of cultural heritage to the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia. This made the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia responsible for the decisions in the field of cultural heritage, such as activity planning, research, and management of the sites. Such actions would be useful, if it implied the protection of the interests of the historic cultural heritage. However, such withdrawal of its powers by the Ministry demonstrates a policy of "washing hands of" responsibilities. An example of this is the drafting amendments to the Law on Cultural Heritage. The amendment implies simplifying the rules for delisting heritage of local importance. This amendment poses a potential threat to the majority of sites and this consequently has led to a serious campaign against it. As a result of this campaign, the hearing of the draft law in the Parliament has been postponed, but the proposed amendment to the law is still in the Parliament.

1. **Education**

Due to years of conflict, natural disasters and neglect as well as insufficient capital investments from the government towards education, the condition of many schools is deteriorating rapidly to a level below the minimum conditions needed for learning and teaching. Since the ‘Rose Revolution’, the Government’s sector wide education reform has made considerable progress in instituting structural, quality, and financing reforms which have been institutionalized into a new legislation. The government, in partnership with the World Bank and UNICEF, completed a Consolidated Education Strategy and Action Plan. In addition, in 2008 the programme department has been established in the MoES to manage and implement these priorities. In 2006, the government introduced a per capita funding formula nationwide at the general secondary education level. Under the new scheme, schools receive a direct transfer of funds from the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) based on the number of students enrolled for a given year.

These initiatives and others although aiding in the education system of Georgia, have slowly ceased in progress. With years of neglect and years of no government funding due to corruption in the distribution of funds, the school system has deteriorated. As outlined, Georgian net enrollment rates for its nine years of compulsory schooling are similar to regional and sub-regional averages, specifically 93%, despite significantly lower expenditure rates. In the wake of the 2008 conflict, the number of out-of-school children increased significantly due to destroyed school buildings, trauma and displacement. The government has been slow in its action of rebuilding and re-installing these services which has led to only 43% of children being enrolled in early childhood education.

The education system of Georgia ceasing progress has led the educational attainment rates to convey inequities between income groups. By this Georgia’s poorest students are about 20% less likely to complete secondary school than students in the richest 5%. In addition, the attainment of equal education enrollment rates among boys and girls was one of the highest priorities of the Soviet era, but during the transition period, enrollment rates fell below their pre-independence numbers at all levels of compulsory education. For example, in upper secondary school, boys are increasingly showing a disadvantage in enrolment and completion, as enrollment rates are 5% higher for girls.

With the education system deteriorating due to insufficient funding by the government, children with disabilities and special learning needs continue to suffer lower access to education. According to UNICEF, of the roughly 10,700 children registered with disabilities, only 28% have access to education. In addition, for children with disabilities there have been few alternatives to care or special education and there is currently no policy for special or inclusive education in general. Disabled children remain isolated from society and have been deprived of their right to receive an education. Moreover, Georgian society continues to discriminate against children with disabilities.

With this, there is evidence that education quality in Georgia has been deteriorating in recent years, which is a remnant of the phasing out of the Soviet school system during the transition years. The system is being used inefficiently with too many school buildings and too few students. Pupil teacher ratios are very low, at about 14:1, and high drop out rates and low secondary school completion rates are other signs of poor quality education.

**Conclusion and Steps to Improve Cultural Heritage Sites and Education**

Concluding, Georgia strongly urges Member States to uphold to these outlines which were created, and asks for additional aid of all forms throughout the republic. Our vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver to strengthening our economy and conserving our culture. We are committed with a sense of urgency to renew and rebuild destroyed schools and schooling institutions as for them to better the education of both our populace youth and the disabled. We want to create a better transfer to schooling institutions, as currently there is none, because distance is a large determining issue in the attendance of many students. We want to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education by furthering training and teaching our instructors so that students can both meet and surpass the global standard of education. However, this will not be achieved unless we are able to create stronger alliances regionally to prevent conflicts that destroy the education of future generations our cultural heritage sites. With the cultural heritage sites almost laying in ruins and surrounded by mines, we require funding for programs to scan and secure the area before and restoration can begin. With this, Georgia desperately asks for the boards help to take many of the problems concerning funding, and the deterioration of both the education system and cultural heritage sites into serious light and aid with financial support, in order for us to reinforce our plans. These plans, hopefully by receiving the financial support, will aspire to be met and surpassed by 2030.

**Works Cited**

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