Delegation from Represented by Shachi Rajesh

Seychelles



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

The topics before the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are: Governance and its Effects on Education; Preservation of World Heritage Sites; and Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030.

1. ***Governance and its Effects on Education***

One of the building blocks of today’s society is coincidentally also one of the lingering issues still facing countries all over the world. Education provides us the knowledge about the world, allowing us to thrive on our planet. Education has played a key role all throughout history, and it is exceptionally important for all the countries around the world to expand their education systems. Not yet, does our planet have an example of the most advantageous education system. There are a number of problems with our modern education system such as the effect it has on the mental health of students, conformity of curriculum[[1]](#footnote-1), and the simple lack of access to cheaper education for those struggling with poverty. These effects all relate back to how the politicians of a state are able to govern. The main reasons for poor education in a country are the corruption of the government and political instability. Countries such as Guinea, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Pakistan, Gambia, and Ethiopia have some of the highest ranks on the corruption perception index[[2]](#footnote-2). It’s no surprise that these countries also have the worst national education systems[[3]](#footnote-3), because it’s difficult for an education system to be run properly with government money embezzlement and political instability happening in the country.

The government of Seychelles considers a strong education system to be one of the biggest priorities in a country. This is seen in our country’s history of constant education reforms. These reforms started in 1985 and went on until 1999 until a final piece of legislation was reached[[4]](#footnote-4). In 1985, The Ministry of Education produced a new version of education called "Education for a new Society," which started the movement into many changes of the education system. In 1990, the country's president publicized the changes of the education system, which was later called the "1991 Education Reform." The Education Management Division in the Ministry of Education then initiated the "School Improvement Programme Project" in 1994. The policy of education reform was then created in 1999. The purpose of these reforms in Seychelles was to improve the access and quality of the education through a rational and logical system. The creation of these educational reforms leads to the new section of management called the Principal Secretary’s office. This section makes policies, coordinates improvements, and monitors the country's education system. An example of a policy in Seychelles is shown between 1990 and 1997. At this time a major school reconstruction project was completed. The purpose of this project was to bring Seychelles up to the minimum standard regarding school buildings, materials, resources, textbooks, and equipment. An example of the prominent, negative effects of a corrupt and politically unstable country is Eritrea. The divide of Eritrea from Ethiopia has caused the government scandal of taxing Eritrean people living outside of the nation. The dictatorship in this country has caused a large population of the diaspora to flee the country[[5]](#footnote-5). It was recently reported that many Eritrean refugees have been found in slave and torture camps in either Egypt or Sudan. The government also declines most international food aid because the ‘Diaspora tax’ is a major source of revenue for them. Burkina Faso is another neighboring country to Seychelles who also suffer from grand political corruption. Only 3.3% of the citizens of Burkina Faso are enrolled in schools per year. On top of this, only 2% of the adult population of Burkina Faso have a secondary education. These poor statistics are all due to the autocratic regime currently in place. Citizens of Burkina Faso are rallying to protest the unfair government, in hopes to achieve a full democracy by ousting their current leader Zephirin Diabre. Diabre Is accused of large-scale embezzlement and stealing funds from the public for his own personal accounts. The situation happening in Burkina Faso is just another example of how corruption leads to the failure of an education system, according to UNESCO’s EDI scores[[6]](#footnote-6). While Burkina Faso and Eritrea are both countries found neighboring to Seychelles, the impact that stability and honesty of the government clearly allows for a well-functioning education system. Seychelles’ vision is to empower future citizens to contribute positively to the process of building a sustainable, peaceful and congruous society whilst safeguarding and promoting our unique traditions and cultural values.

Based on the examples of African countries whose political corruption affects their education system in such detrimental ways, our country would like to propose ways to prohibit governments from committing acts of depriving their country. Our country believes it is mandatory for the government to first listen to their people regarding the form of government they find most beneficial. This relates to the situation in Burkina Faso because of how the citizens protest for a democratic country. A country where people have a right to participate in their political situation is a country which is more inclusive of all and looks to deal with the people’s problems[[7]](#footnote-7). Democratic nations sometimes do find problems with politicians over-exercising their power. The best way to counter this is creating the transparency and openness in government spending. The UN has power over what a country needs to change about their government system in order to receive the benefits offered to them. Our country is suggesting that long-term loans be offered to countries in need of assistance for their education system, but only available to those who follow the policies we propose of the transparency of government spending. Fines should be in place if the government chooses to use these loans for any other reason than the betterment of their education. This would allow for the assurance that the politicians of countries stuck in poverty, such as Burkina Faso, will not embezzle from these loans because it would put them more into debt than they would be able to deal with. With the issue of poor quality education found in refugee camps, education can be made more accessible by finding neighboring countries to transfer students too. The most important thing that every person should have is some form of schooling or education. Countries should be willing to open their doors to take in students eager to receive an education who can’t due to political instability or war in their own country. Either this or providing the refugee camp educators with a better teaching system. This can be done by having the teachers teach students in a method that not only teaches the students the basic knowledge of the world but also train them in ways to protect themselves in their current political situation.

1. ***Preservation of World Heritage Sites***

With the modernizing of current society, what people find refreshing about a country are the national parks, historical monuments, and heritage sites. A world heritage site is classified as a natural or man-made site that has outstanding international importance and therefore deserves special protection. These sites are nominated by the World Heritage Convention. The WHC chooses their site nominations based on six cultural and four natural criteria[[8]](#footnote-8). These sites play vital roles in connecting the present with the past. Buildings from a certain era, specifically during the time of the second World War, have intrinsic value. These structures tend to be built with a higher quality of materials such as stronger and scarcer woods, or are built with wood from old forests that no longer exist. A century-old building from this era might be a better long-term building than those made now with more modern materials. The antebellum Kennedy-Baker-Walker-Sherrill House[[9]](#footnote-9) in West Knoxville, Tennessee is an example of a house whose five brick thick walls can withstand the severest of windstorms, which was a much more beneficial building to use as an office than a newer, regular building would be. The Daylight Building[[10]](#footnote-10) is another building in Knoxville which was seen as an unoccupied and unpleasant house. The developer who had procured the house had plans to demolish it but with multiple failed deals to demolish the building, it was finally sold to a properties company. The building was found to have multiple hidden ancient architecture beauties such as areas made with very valuable types of wood, a large clerestory, and unusual tinted opalescent glass. The value of not only the building but the community rose due to the treasures found in the building. Old buildings are a reminder of a country’s culture and complexity The Tombs of Buganda Kings is an endangered cultural heritage site in Uganda. The site is a major example of the unique architecture of organic materials with its thatched roof[[11]](#footnote-11), walls made of woven reeds, and wood columns. Regardless of the architectural amazement, the tombs main significance is in spirituality, continuity, identity, and its imperceptible values of belief. This site had been threatened in 2010 by a fire that caused the destruction of part of the property. Over the past few years, the frequency at which the World Heritage Committee has recognized this site has gone severely higher due to the abundance of natural threats, such as fires.

The government of Seychelles sees the preservation of historic sites to be very important in order to honor the country’s history. Our country only has two sites that fit the criteria of the WHC, but as a nation, we believe it is our responsibility to protect all the other national parks and historic sites in our country. There are thirty sites around the country which the government has specified as historic sites or important monuments. The Aldabra Atoll and the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve are the two sites in Seychelles that qualify as a World Heritage site based on the criteria by the WHC. The Seychelles government enacted the Seychelles Islands Foundation[[12]](#footnote-12) to manage and protect these sites. The foundation was established in 1979 with the president as a supporter. The President has also appointed a Board of Trustees including five representatives that are concerned with the conservation of wildlife and natural history. The Aldabra Atoll is a natural site consisting of the world’s largest coral atoll, different species such as tiger sharks, manta rays, white-throated Aldabran rails, red-footed boobies, dimorphic egrets, the Aldabra sacred ibis, greater flamingos, and the Malagasy kestrel. In addition to the variety of birds and aquatic animals, the Aldabra is the habitat of the highest population of giant land tortoises of the world. The Seychelles government and the SIF see that this unique site should be protected because of the variety of animal species. The other UNESCO World Heritage site, the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve, so remarkable that it was once believed to be the original location of the Garden of Eden[[13]](#footnote-13). This picturesque primeval forest is home to around 6000 Coco-de-mer trees, which are considered to be one of the most exclusive plants of the botanic world. The Vallée is also the last habitat of the endangered Black Parrot. Our country finds it mandatory to protect endangered or very unique species. In the Seychelles Constitution of 1993, Article 38 declares that “the State recognizes the right of every person to live in and enjoy a clean, healthy and ecologically balanced environment and with a view to ensuring the effective realization of this right the State undertakes ....to ensure a sustainable socio-economic development of Seychelles by a judicious use and management of the resources of the Seychelles[[14]](#footnote-14).” There has been different environment legislature since the 1960’s, which is before Seychelles even became a country. The SIF protects the two World Heritage sites, while the federal government deals with the protection of the other historic sites in Seychelles. We believe it is in a country’s service to protect what is inimitable about their country. Seychelles believes a strong praise to their history benefits the current day situation. World heritage sites in unstable regions should still be a priority, but understandably not the main. In times of war, countries should first offer protection over their citizens, and then regard their historic sites. Places such as Syria have history on their walls, but it is a difficult task to protect their heritage sites and their people at the same time during times of distress. The ancient city of Aleppo in Syria has recently been put on the World Heritage sites in Risk list but how is it possible for one government to protect everything? The only way distressed countries, such as Syria, can preserve their historic sites, is if other countries help with the act of protecting their people and historic sites.

The first step in protecting culture and history around the world is the WHC expanding their criteria of what is considered a World Heritage site. There are many places around the world that are not considered a World Heritage site, but still should be under the policies that the WHC has about heritage sites. An example being the number of national parks in Seychelles that are not considered World Historic sites but should, in fact, be protected more than just federal government legislature. The Mission Lodge[[15]](#footnote-15) is situated on the island of Mahé originally set up by the Missionary Society in hopes to educate the first black slaves to be freed in Seychelles. Today the ruins are still visible and visitors can enjoy the area free of cost. The mission lodge is a place that is culturally and historically important in the Seychelles history and should be considered an important heritage site according to the WHC. Because of their stricter rules on what can be considered, there are many areas around the world that aren’t receiving the protection by the federal government that they should be receiving. Our country finds it important to preserve our history, but there are many countries around the world that don’t have this same value. It’s in our belief that the World Heritage committee should try harder to include every majorly historic site around the world in their policies to ensure that these important sites do have protection. Policies from the WHC will force countries to create foundations and organizations to protect those sites. Although the criteria should be expanded, in regards to if it were not, cultural and natural sites should all be given major priority at a federal level by every country regardless of whether or not those sites classify as a World Heritage site. It is important for all countries to protect their history. We believe the first phase of protecting heritage is by renovating damaged man-made historical monuments and providing legal protection. Since older buildings are usually built with a higher quality of materials, it requires fewer building materials because of how properly built it was originally[[16]](#footnote-16). This reduces waste while still allowing the building to be used again. The only negative impact that can come from trying to refurbish older buildings is not being able to find the same materials used, or not being able to match the style of the architecture, but clearly, it is better to have some parts of the structure standing rather than tearing the building and its history down. Legal protection is advantageous for both man-made structures and nature reserves. We believe that in order to protect sites, legislation must be in place so that companies cannot legally purchase those lands and build on top of them. With proper legislation, national parks can, in fact, be protected, which is the case we see in Seychelles. Morne Seychellois National Park, Praslin National Park, Baie Ternay Marine National Park, Curieuse Marine National Park, Ile Coco Marine National Park, Port Launay Marine National Park, Silhouette Island Marine National Park, and Ste Anne Marine National Park are all legally protected national parks in Seychelles[[17]](#footnote-17). We find it most effective to have detailed and extensive legislation in place in order to protect these lands from any maltreatment. The assurance of no loopholes in the legislation is what allows for a fully protected site. Countries should also stop the practice of popularizing certain historic monuments because that causes risk to these sites. Obviously sites should be seen by the people to fully show the cultural connection of the past, but the problem here, is not all historic monuments are stable enough to deal with contact with people. Monuments and parks that are easily accessible by the general public should only be those that are structurally sounds, in terms of man-made buildings, or that do not have endangered species of animals or plants located on the land, in terms of natural reserves. Our country believes that it is a right for every country to put action forth in order to preserve their history, heritage sites and nature reserves.

1. ***Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030***

Ever since the creation of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, they have both placed emphases on the importance of education. Education is looked on differently by all countries around the world but generalizes the provision of basic knowledge to young people. Education can also be split up into primary, secondary and tertiary forms as a way of teaching different skills at each level of education. The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 was developed at the World Education Forum in 2015, with the intention to provide and improve education to all with no exceptions. Education 2030 has the basis that no one will be excluded from receiving a better education. There are many situations in current times where it is very difficult for one to receive education[[18]](#footnote-18) such as natural disasters, war, poor funding, or an untrained teacher. You see corruption as a big issue in third world countries which then proves to effect the education system of those countries, examples include Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Somalia, and Niger. At the current circumstance of their political situation, they will not be able to reach the goal of education for all in 2030. Issues such as natural disasters affect a great population of people around the world. In 2005 the Pakistan Earthquake killed 17,000 students with the collapse of over 10,000 schools[[19]](#footnote-19). Natural disasters are the cause of the terrible loss of life in areas where there isn’t enough funding towards the making of properly constructed faculties for teaching. Cambodia has had similar experiences with natural disasters causing deaths in school. The flooding in 2000 killed only 374 people in the country[[20]](#footnote-20), however, 80%[[21]](#footnote-21) of those citizens were children attending school. During this flood, 2.7 million people were adversely effected by either direct affects to their belongings or indirect effects such as the destruction of crops. Aid money from foreign countries was given to corrupt politicians rather than flood victims. The accumulation of these negative consequences made it understandable to see the high rate of school drop-outs. The schools that were not greatly affected were co-opted as emergency shelters rather than an actual faculty of schooling. In the 21st century alone there have been 31 major natural disasters[[22]](#footnote-22) that affected schools and students directly. The rate of school drop-outs was consistent for every one of those situations. This proves to us that over 11 years of natural disasters affecting schools, we still haven’t been able to agree on a policy that can allow relief and access to education for the citizens affected by these disasters.

The government of Seychelles values education and prioritizes it in the federal government agenda. We believe that expanded access to a high quality of education is beneficial for everyone. Refugee intake is an important factor for us regarding education. Refugees deserve education regardless of what their political situation is in their own country. We believe there is untapped potential found in every child that is unable to access a valuable education. In 1994, the Rwanda Genocide was occurring just west of us. At this time, as many as 800,000 people from the Tutsi minority were murdered by members of the Hutu ethnic majority. Once the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front gained control of the country, 2 million people from the Hutu ethnic majority were found with refugee status. Clearly, in times of political havoc, education was not seen as a priority in those countries. Our only response was to welcome as many refugees into our country as needed. With the size of our country being placed as the 58th smallest country[[23]](#footnote-23) in the world, we were only able to admit around 550[[24]](#footnote-24) people into our nation. Most refugees chose to emigrate to countries far from Africa such as china, which saw around 3000 refugees from Rwanda, however, we valued those who chose to immigrate to our country. The protection of these people was seen as our priority and offering them a quality education was the first step in allowing them to integrate into society. 95% of the population of refugees, not just in 1994, were able to enroll into schooling after about two years of living in Seychelles. Our priories are ensuring they are able to make a livable income, enroll into schooling if they are of the schooling age, and thrive in society.

The government of Seychelles would like nations to consider the importance of prioritizing education at a governmental level. Developing nations currently see their issues of not having resources or the funding in order to better their country but they fail to understand that providing education for their citizens will allow for the betterment of their economy. Statistics from the UN Food & Agriculture Organization found that no country has ever achieved rapid and continuous economic growth without at least a 40% literacy rate[[25]](#footnote-25). The lack of education in developing countries causes them their own distress by tarnishing their chance of achieving economic growth. Developing countries should put funding towards their education systems and acquire the best-trained teachers for schools. This can create a bigger impact on the achievement of Education 2030. Countries that are developed should also be helping with funding to those countries who need assistance in creating a better education system. Most richer countries have failed to keep their promises in helping poorer countries improve their education system. If we don’t help other countries out with their problems, they will not be able to help themselves otherwise. Countries such as Greece, Austria, Italy, and Germany are not giving as much as they should, which is why we are suggesting the creation of a loans policy. There should be consequences to countries who choose not to help their poorer counterparts. If countries see the possible consequences that will come to them if they do not lend money, it will encourage them to do so. Our country also sees the corruption of politicians to be a major cause of developing countries not being able to provide adequate funding. Based on the Educational Development Index and the Corruption Perceptions Index, the countries with the highest rate of corruption in their government, are also those with the worst national education systems. Policies should be created in order to combat the elections or appointing or corrupt politicians. The continuous embezzlement from a country by their government clearly will affect the amount of funding that goes into their education. Organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, ILO and UNHCR should be creating more extensive policies that force bigger countries into helping developing countries. There should also be the creation of an international standard because it will allow for all countries to have an education system goal to reach and maintain.

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