Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

MUNUC 34

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAIR LETTER

Our cultural and natural heritage is an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration. It is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations.

–UK National Commission for UNESCO

Dear Delegates,

I would like to warmly welcome you to the United Nations Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) at MUNUC 34. My name is Chloe Zheng, and I will be serving as your committee chair for the duration of the conference. I cannot wait to meet all of you and work with you during MUNUC!

So, a little bit about me: I am a third-year undergraduate student at the University of Chicago, double majoring in Mathematics and History, with a possible minor in Education and Society. Two years ago, I served as an Assistant Chair for the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), and last year, I served as the moderator for the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), both of which are large GA committees. I am interested in a wide variety of issues, from the forming of societies and cities, Enlightenment philosophy, to urban and indigenous history, and German history. On campus — apart from MUNUC — I work for the Admissions Office giving tours of campus, and I take photos for the Maroon, our student-run school newspaper. Last year I worked as an Urban Research Intern for Chicago Studies in the College, which is a team working on curricular and cocurricular programing based on interests in studying the city of Chicago, and I am serving on the Student Advisory Board for Chicago Studies this year. Starting this year, I am also working for CISSR, which is Center for International Social Science Research at UChicago, taking part in a variety of interdisciplinary social science research projects.

I hope you are all excited for the conference as well as your topics: Cultural and Historic Preservation, and Limitation of Freedom of Expression in the Digital Age. As delegates, I hope you will welcome the opportunity to focus on advocacy for the voiceless: cultural and historic properties cannot advocate for their rights, nor could oppressed, vulnerable, or hurt communities online. Besides delving deep into one of the issues, I would also like to see collaboration and communication, as well as respectful disagreements and discourse during this conference. I believe that everyone is well equipped with knowledge and skills to contribute to our topic, and I am very excited to be working with everyone on public speaking, resolution writing, and teamwork skills throughout the conference.

Over the next few months, you will be learning about these topics and discovering many interesting things about the world that you were not previously aware of. I hope you genuinely enjoy the process of learning, researching, and writing about these topics, and please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about MUNUC, the University of Chicago, or anything else I might be of assistance.

See you all in February,

Chloe

Dear Delegates,

 I expect this weekend will be filled with engrossing yet fun debate and growth. That said, it must be noted that throughout the weekend I and the rest of the dais expect the utmost respect when discussing either of these topics. We will not tolerate any hateful or discriminatory clauses or speeches and will immediately stop any content that we deem contains racist, sexist, homophobic, or bigoted tones. If you are unsure if something is appropriate, air on the side of caution. However, you can always discuss potential ideas with me or anyone else on the dais if you are unsure.

Furthermore, while freedom of speech was an especially prevalent and highly discussed topic during the COVID-19 pandemic, we as a committee will not be discussing the pandemic in any form. It is discussed in the background guide only because it provides a good example for the types of problems our world faces with respect to free speech, but it is not to be debated as something which requires a solution. I am confident that each and every one of you can uphold these standards while having a productive and thought-provoking weekend.

Best,

SOCHUM

TOPIC A: HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND NATURAL PRESERVATION

Statement of the Problem

We live in a world where natural, cultural, and historic heritage are of abundance. They represent and exemplify the beauty and meaning in where we come from, while requiring and deserving our understanding, protection, and appreciation, for their economic, cultural, and environmental value to our world.

Historic Preservation

Let us first look at the definitions and categorizations of historic, cultural, and natural preservation. Historic preservation is a term widely used in the United States to describe the efforts to protect buildings, objects, landscapes, or other artifacts of historical significance. In the United Kingdom, similar efforts have been characterized as heritage preservation or heritage conservation. Different practitioners in this field might prefer different terms, but for the purpose of our discussion, historic preservation suffices. To clarify, historic preservation is only concerned with the preservation of the built environment, not that of the wilderness, though there are joint efforts to preserve both the historical and natural heritage of our world. The main goal of historic preservation is not to halt change of the built environment, but to contain and manage change. It is about planning and preserving based on the inherited culture of a place, building, and object, which means assessment, interpretation, conservation, documentation, and most importantly, strategic management. In order to complete a successful historic preservation project, the individuality and uniqueness of a place, a building, or a site have to be considered.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the legacy of cultural resources and intangible attributes of a group or society that is inherited from past generations, though heritage is a product of societal selection. In particular, cultural heritage can be divided into three categories: tangible culture, such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artifacts; intangible culture, such as folklore,

traditions, language, and knowledge; and natural heritage, including culturally significant landscapes and biodiversity.[1] For our consideration of cultural conservation, we will be focusing on the preservation of the built environment and civilizations, specifically tangible and intangible heritage that is maintained in the present and bestowed for future generations. Tangible cultural properties are divided into two more categories: the immovable and the movable.

We can consider physical cultural products in more detail. Immovable heritage includes buildings, large industrial installations, residential projects, installed arts such as stained-glass windows, frescos, and historic monuments, just to name a few. Efforts such as monument protection have been initiated to preserve immovable cultural heritage properties. For example, prevention of robbery digs at archaeological sites, of looting or destruction of cultural sites, or from theft of works of art from churches and museums are all instances of cultural preservation to maintain access to our common cultural heritage. Moveable heritage, on the other hand, includes books, documents, moveable artworks, machines, clothing, and other artifacts that can be physically removed from where it is housed without damaging the property. Intangible cultural heritage that consists of non-physical aspects of a particular culture are usually maintained by social customs during a specific period of history, it includes rules and behaviors in a specific cultural climate, for example: social values and traditions, customs and practices, aesthetic and spiritual beliefs, artistic expression, language, and other aspects of human activity. Usually, intangible cultural heritage is more difficult to identify and preserve. Therefore, preservation practices such as folklore, oral history, and language preservation have been made in order to recognize and pass down the intangible cultural heritage of our world.

Natural Heritage

Natural heritage is also a significant component of a society's heritage, encompassing the natural environment and its diversity. Flora and fauna, known as biodiversity, as well as geological elements, known as geodiversity, compose an important part of a country's natural assets and often attract visitors from around the world. Natural heritage sites also have cultural, economic, and spiritual

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[1] UNESCO. (n.d.). *Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/

significance to local and global communities, stimulating the tourism industry as well as contributing to our demographic diversity of the world, with different cultural wisdoms being shared, appreciated, and preserved .

Preservation

Now, we can take a closer look at the current structure and organization of cultural, historic, and natural preservation globally. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations aimed to promote peace through the cooperation in education, the sciences, and culture. According to UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention, landscapes and sites of outstanding universal value can be designated World Heritage Sites. In this convention, sites of historic value are considered under the category of cultural heritage: Article 1 of the convention specifies that monuments, groups of building, and sites of "outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, or science" are to be designated cultural heritage.[2] In other words, historic preservation is categorized as one branch of cultural preservation that focuses on the historical value of a place. For sites to be designated as world heritage sites, the designating nation has to have appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative, and financial resources and measures in place to identify, protect, conserve, and rehabilitate those sites. However, according to Article 6 of the convention, while sovereignty of the state where the site is located is not to be compromised, the state acknowledges that protection of world heritage sites is a shared responsibility among the entire international community.[3]

With the rules and regulations outlined by the World Heritage Convention comes the World Heritage Committee, which is the body responsible for the practical implementation of the convention as well as managing the World Heritage Fund. In addition to managing the convention, the Committee also has the power to decide whether or not a site will be included in the World Heritage List, which recognizes sites and practices with significant cultural, historic, or natural values to a place. Currently, there are 1121 heritage preservation properties in 167 countries across the globe, with some countries having more than others.

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

Another international partner of UNESCO is Blue Shield International, which, from both a national and international perspective, alongside United Nations peacekeeping, ensures the sustainable existence and development of cultural assets in the world. It is important to note that some of the severe threat of destruction of world heritage sites and practices stem from international military conflicts, which explains why preservationist efforts have to be combined with securing peace in the world.

In practice, there are tremendous challenges and pushbacks to historic, cultural, and natural preservation. Though there are researched and known benefits of preserving historic buildings and cultural sites, residents of a designated historic district might fear that their property values and investments in housing can decrease over time, which is a well-founded concern. Other times, refusal of preservation can lead to dangerous or unhealthy living conditions for current occupants of the said historic building, which poses great challenges to the health and wellbeing of residents and the erected structures. When buildings are designated historic and receive preservation attention, policies are country dependent as to how designation and renovation can proceed when it comes to resident approval and consent.[4]

Preserving Historic and Cultural Heritage

Preserving historic and cultural heritage is extremely important and meaningful for our generation and the generations to come. Each group's historic and cultural heritage is different, precious, irreplaceable, and irreplicable. When tackling a cultural or historic preservation initiative, there is a retrospective process during which we ask ourselves questions such as "What is important in our culture and history?" and "What parts of our past should we preserve for the future?"[5] This allows us to ensure that we move forward as a generation and a group conscientious of our past legacy and current actions, in that no irresponsible or irreversible decision of demolition or destruction of historic buildings or cultural sites is made by any entity carelessly. According to Article 2 of UNESCO's convention, "distinctive and irreplaceable, cultural heritage is a crucial element in the

[4] Caves, R.W. (2004). *Encyclopedia of the City.* Routledge. p. 345
[5] UNESCO. "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed June 20, 2021. https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/.

fabric of the peoples of our world," highlighting that significance and attention need to be given to cultural heritage properties, not only for their inherent beauty or value, but also for their cultural and spiritual significance to a community, and therefore, to us all.

From an environmental and economic perspective, it is ecologically responsible and efficient to preserve older commercial and residential structures, instead of tearing down the old and rebuilding new ones. To summarize, historic preservation is a form of commercial and residential redevelopment and revitalization with environmental benefits: it results in lessened dependence on new materials, decreased construction costs, and minimized manufacturing energy and pollution. Culturally, preserved structures and buildings add beauty, unity, and pride to a community, which promotes a strong sense of identity and culture among residents of a place, making our world a better place for all generations dwelling on the land.[6] On a macro scale, historic buildings have become an integral part of the global tourism industry, stimulating local economic opportunities and growth.

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[6] The Language Doctors. "Learn 10 Things Why It Is Important to Preserve Culture." The Language Doctors, April 5, 2021. https://thelanguagedoctors.org/why-it-is-important-to-preserve-culture/.

History of the Problem

Before we talk about the history of historic, cultural, and natural preservation in different countries, we have to realize that each generation has placed varying degrees of attention and importance on different historic, cultural, and natural heritage properties. We all know that in order for heritage to exist, it must have been passed down by previous generations and continue to be preserved by the current generation.[7] Therefore, the idea of preservation is integral to the development of historic, cultural, and natural heritages, and preservation initiatives are inherently driven by people who are conscientious, concerned, empathetic, responsible, and passionate citizens dedicated to conserving unique heritage properties and practices for the future generations.

As highlighted in the last section, conservation looks differently in various countries, both by historical development and current methods. In this section, we are going to look closely at the history of preservation in some countries, though plenty of information can be found on many countries in the world that have designated world heritage sites.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, with the advancement of expansive railways across the country came damages to historic sites, including Trinity Hospital, Furness Abbey, Berwick and Northampton Castle, and the ancient walls of York, Chester, and Newcastle, just to name a few. This also spurred historic preservation actions, which solidified in the 1833 designation of Berkhamsted Castle as the first historic site in England protected by the statute under the London and Birmingham Railway Acts of 1833-1837, though the new railroads in 1834 did demolish the castle's gatehouse.[8] Another early preservation event that is uniquely British also occurred at Berkhamsted. In 1866, Lord Brownlow tried to enclose the adjoining Berkhamsted Common with 5-foot steel fences in an attempt to claim it as part of his private estate. In England since early Anglo-Saxon times, the commons had been an area of land the local community could use as a resource. Across the country

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[7] Heinzen, Nick. "Cultural Heritage Preservation and Philanthropy." Cultural Heritage Preservation and Philanthropy | Learning to Give, 2017. https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/cultural-heritage-preservation-and-philanthropy.

[8] Wheeler, Michael. *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-cloud of the Nineteenth Century.* Manchester University Press, 1995.

between 1660 and 1845, seven million acres of common land had been enclosed by private owners by application to parliament. On the night of March 6, 1866, Augustus Smith MP led local folks and hired men to break the enclosure and to protect Berkhamsted Common for the common people in what became known as the Battle of Berkhamsted Common.[9] Four years later in 1870, Sir Robert Hunter, later co-founder of the National Trust in 1895, and the Commons Preservation Society succeeded in legal action that ensured protection of open spaces threatened with enclosure.[10] This example showcases how grassroots effort organized by concerned and caring community members led to success in preserving natural heritage resources for the enjoyment of all, which serves the purpose of preservation. As mentioned before, the meaning of preservation is not to freeze a space or place in time, but rather, to ensure continued development, care, renovation, and enjoyment of historic, cultural, and natural resources. It is about the balance between utilization and sustainability.

Monuments such as the Stonehenge also saw damage from tourism and virtually no attempt at preservation: by the 1870s, the private owners of the monument decided to sell the land to the London and South-Western Railway who believed that the monument was "not the slightest use to anyone now".[11] John Lubbock, an emerging champion of preservation of England's national heritage, bought private land that housed ancient monuments in Avebury, Silbury Hill, and elsewhere in 1872, from owners who planned to clear away the monuments to make room for housing. Soon, he began to campaign in Parliament for legislation protecting monuments from destruction and promoting monument preservation, which led to the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882, a legislative milestone for structural protection, awareness, and actions at cultural heritage preservation. Though this Act only covered ancient monuments, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings founded in 1877 by William Morris aimed to supplement the same protection of historic buildings, followed by the National Trust in 1895 that bought estates from private owners for preservation. There are also more recent revisions and developments. For a country like the United Kingdom, there are a variety of examples on the history of historic, cultural,

[9] Cobb, John Wolstenholme. *Two Lectures on the History and Antiquities of Berkhamsted*.
Sherwood, Jennifer. "Influences on the Growth of Medieval and Early Modern Berkhamsted". 2008. Birtchnell, Percy. Short History of Berkhamsted. 1988.
[10] "Mr. Shaw-Lefevre on the Preservation of Commons". The Times. 11 December 1886. p. 10.
Ashbrook, Kate. "Modern commons: a protected open space?" (PDF).
Gazette, Hemel."Exhibition and commemorative walk marks anniversary of battle to save Berkhamsted Common". Johnston Publishing Ltd. 12 October 2015.
[11] Bryson, Bill. *At Home: A Short History of Private Life.* Doubleday, 2013.

and natural preservation, exemplified by focuses on historic buildings, monuments, and the commons.

United States

In the United States, there have also been various attempts at preserving the historic, cultural, and natural heritage of the nation. For example, founded in 1889, the Richmond, Virginia based Preservation Virginia, formerly known as the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, undertook the historic preservation of George Washington's Mount Vernon in 1858.[12] In 1895, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society was formed, as the first American organization of its kind that did not limit its activism to a single historic place or object. The Society operated as a national organization to protect natural scenery, to preserve historic landmarks, and to promote appreciation for the scenic beauty of America, combining the conservation and advancement of both the historic and the natural heritage.[13] Throughout history, there is the trend of historic preservation being more interdisciplinary: from focusing on a single site to caring for the heritage of a larger geographical area, and from concentrating on the historic value of a place to appreciating places in a more holistic lens. With these goals in mind, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) was created by Charles E. Peterson to ensure and establish protection of historic buildings in America. This also helped with the first graduate degree program in historic preservation in the US. Another organization that focuses on providing resources and advocacy for America's historic places is the US National Trust for Historic Preservation, aiming to revitalize communities and to treasure legacies through preserving cultures and traditions. In the 1960s, the demolition of Pennsylvania Station in New York shocked the world of historic preservation, making many realize that this issue deserves urgent attention, while international law and agreements expanded the scope of preservation from one single building or site to the whole nearby area or district.

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[12] Helium Studio. "Preservation Virginia". Apva.org. Archived from the original on 2012-10-08.
Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos: A Tribute to Enduring Ideals." A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century. ed. Robert Stipe. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
Lindgren, James Michael. Preserving the Old Dominion: historic preservation and Virginia traditionalism. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.
[13] "Scenic and Historic America: Bulletin of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society." ASHPS 2.1 (March 1930):3.

Other Countries

In other countries in the world, the course of historical development has posed different challenges to historic and cultural preservation. For example, in Melbourne, Australia, the boom of international modernism in the early twentieth century had led to major demolition of traditional Victorian architecture, to make space for large public libraries, schools, churches, and offices.[14] The rise of international modernism in Australia saw a new approach to the built environment that valued replacing older, elaborate buildings with new ones, in the name of urban sanitation. In the Netherlands, maritime heritage preservation occurs, which is a unique program that takes place within this culture and place. Maritime trade was the Dutch specialty, shaping much of their story, intertwined with water, with its geographical feature of having 50% of the country under sea level.[15] In Amsterdam and Rotterdam, there are museums that store and show the Dutch maritime heritage, though the Dutch government is still working on taking responsibility for shipwrecks from The Dutch East India Company found all over the world, that are technically their property and require their care.[16]

Origins of Preservation

Overall, preservation of cultural heritage properties in the early days was driven by the desire to fix old and broken items and to continue to use them, without any grand goals or aims beyond the practical. As artists and scientists began to realize how the environment and human activities can damage historical and cultural items, more attention was placed on interdisciplinary methods and organized preservation efforts. The first one in Europe belonged to the United Kingdom's Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, and at the same time, a French movement was being developed under the direction of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, an architect famous for restorations of medieval buildings. In Germany, conservation of cultural heritage was a distinct field of study, where in 1888 Friedrich Rathgen, a chemist employed by the Königliche Museen in Berlin (Royal Museums of Berlin), chose a scientific approach in term of caring for objects in the collections and published a

[14] "Conservation of Australia's heritage historic places" (PDF). Australian Government. April 6, 2006.
Doyle, Helen. Thematic History – A history of the City of Melbourne's urban environment, 2011.
[15] Howard, Peter; Ashworth, Gregory John. European Heritage, Planning and Management. Intellect Books, 1999.
[16] Dromgoole, Sarah. The Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage: National Perspectives in Light of the UNESCO Convention 2001 - Second Edition. Brill, 2006.

Handbook of Conservation in 1898 for others to follow and learn. In Britain, key research and experimentation in conservation were spearheaded by women such as Ione Gedye in the field of archaeological collections, particularly in the Institute of Archaeology in London. Also in the United Kingdom, pioneering research into conservation of painting, ceramics, and stoneware was introduced by Arthur Pillans Laurie, also a known academic chemist, and Dr. Harold Plenderleith at the British Museum, whose appointment has been said to have given birth to the conservation profession in the United Kingdom.

More and more museums started to create positions specific to addressing the deteriorating condition of objects in their collections, damages caused by the First World War, when objects were stored in the London Underground tunnels to avoid total destruction. In this way, the development of the conservation movement, both in theory and in practice, has shifted its center from Germany to Britain, marked by Plenderleith's 1956 handbook called *The Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art*, supplementing Rathgen's earlier work and setting new standards for the development of conservation science. In the world, the early development of conservation of cultural heritage objects is usually associated with the creation of positions for chemists and other material scientists within cultural and preservationist institutions like museums, who follow guidelines and standards set by the published handbooks.

Conclusion

To summarize, the history and development of cultural property conservation has involved protection and restoration using "any methods that prove effective in keeping that property in as close to its original condition for as long as possible."[17] Though, as historic and cultural preservation develops as a field, divergent opinions arise over methods such as preventive and interventive conservation. Preventive conservation zooms onto many of the heritage objects' sensitivity to temperature, humidity, and lighting, ensuring that those works are protected in controlled environments and professional care. Throughout the years, museums more broadly have taken on this approach, expanding its staff to include experts in different fields and upgrading its facilities to

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[17] Walston, S. "The Preservation and Conservation of Aboriginal and Pacific Cultural Material in Australian Museums". ICCM Bulletin, 1978. 4 (1): 9. doi:10.1179/iccm.1978.4.4.002.

accommodate for those needs. Interventive methods, on the other hand, focus on direct interaction with the material fabric of the cultural heritage object. Some of the reasons for choosing interventive method over preventive, though the common goal is to preserve and restore the object as close to its original condition as possible, are aesthetic choices, stabilization for structural integrity and function, or requirements for cultural continuation of intangible heritage practices.

Past Actions & Possible Solutions

Some of the most damaging threats to cultural and historic preservation are armed conflicts, for example, modern conflicts in the Middle East and natural disasters like the 2010 Haitian earthquake. For war-torn areas of the world, the existence and development of cultural heritage are at risk, both in the physical form and in the intangible, as lives of their people carry on the traditional wisdom and practices. Therefore, in the past century, many efforts have been inspired in order to conserve our world heritage.

UNESCO's World Heritage Mission

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization has been the main support behind cultural and historic preservation efforts around the world. The UNESCO's World Heritage mission, as outlined on their website, is to "encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage; encourage states parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List; encourage States Parties to establish management plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage sites; help States Parties safeguard World Heritage properties by providing technical assistance and professional training; provide emergency assistance for World Heritage sites in immediate danger; support States Parties' public awareness-building activities for World Heritage conservation; Encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage; encourage international cooperation in the conservation of our world's cultural and natural heritage."[18] Though this is only a brief outline of the hopes and goals for international conservation, it is obvious that many of the efforts are multi-year, long-term independent and cooperative initiatives. This means that each country would have to be held responsible for identifying, reporting, and conserving their own cultural heritage, while working with the international community to ensure mutual understanding and cooperation.

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[18] UNESCO World Heritage Convention. "World Heritage." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed June 22, 2021. https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/.

Hauge Convention

One of the most significant watershed events in the history of cultural preservation in the world is the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with UNESCO. With the extensive damage and widespread theft that occurred throughout Europe and Asia during World War II, UNESCO was founded with the official aim of promoting peace and cooperation through cultural exchange and preservation, which helped to draft and sponsor the Hague Convention, signed in The Hague, Netherlands. It is important to note that participating parties of the Convention are obligated to protect cultural heritage properties in both peacetime and wartime, including those located in combat zones. It is particularly important for the Hague Convention to establish regulations and guidelines for properly protecting and preserving important cultural heritage objects and sites, despite political or military conflict in the world. Not only were the practice novel and attention well-deserved, the idea of prioritizing the preservation of culture, history, and the built environment of a place over political ideologies or military agendas was also newly introduced and upheld during the Hague Convention of 1954. While there had been earlier international treaties making mentions of protection of cultural properties, the Hague Convention of 1954 was especially inspired by the massive damage to cultural properties and sites during World War II. Being the first-ever international proposal dedicated exclusively to the preservation of cultural heritage during armed conflicts, the Hague convention aimed to prevent large, organized lootings of private and public historical and cultural collections during wartime like those carried out by the Nazi regime.

International Committee of the Blue Shield

Since then, other organizations have engaged in supporting, strengthening, and furthering the 1954 Hague Convention. In 1996, the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) was formed by various international non-governmental cultural heritage organizations. Based in Paris, the organization consists of executive directors representing professionals active in different fields: the International Council on Archives, the International Council of Museums, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the International Federation of Library Associations.[19] Formed from

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[19] Wegener, Corine. The 1954 Hague Convention And Preserving Cultural Heritage. Archaeological

national committees and coordinated by an International Board, Blue Shield International, the governing body of Blue Shield is chosen through nomination and election, ensuring fair participation from countries around the world. Along with its sister organization founded in 2008, the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield, an alliance of Blue Shield organizations in various countries, ICBS mainly works to enforce and support the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention, which includes providing emergency response to cultural properties facing manmade and natural disasters across the globe.

Outlined in the Hague, one of the most distinct features of the treaty is the responsibility each and every member has as the first responder to a cultural property emergency. In other words, nations are responsible for listing important national cultural heritage sites with UNESCO, for including cultural properties in national disaster plans, and for ensuring the marking of protected cultural properties with the symbol of the Blue Shield as set forth in the convention (similar to the use of the Red Cross in the Geneva Convention). This way not only are international standards and expectations established, each nation also has the responsibility, initiative, and flexibility to create their own system of marking and protecting their cultural heritage, though in practice, many countries face the challenge of lacking a clearly defined implementation process, or a structured, designated body of members. Therefore, in different parts of the world, current actions need to be taken in order to preserve important cultural heritage for the generations to come, both by establishing standardized processes and eliminating ambiguity or confusion in terms of international cooperation and national autonomy.

Other Past Actions

Some of the other past efforts include the ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives, which aims to protect cultural heritage by documenting damage, promoting global awareness, and planning emergency responses for international crises that may arise. SAFE, which stands for Saving Antiquities for Everyone, is a volunteer group devoted to raising awareness about the world's endangered cultural heritage. Other national efforts include the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural

Institute of America, Oct 19, 2010. Accessed on June 25, 2021. https://www.archaeological.org/the-1954-hague-convention-and-preserving-cultural-heritage/.

Heritage in Italy, the Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology for preserving cultural heritage of Afghanistan, and the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Cultural Heritage Center, just to name a few.[20] Besides the aforementioned organizations, there are countless international and national groups advocating for either the preservation of a single cultural site, or the conservation of a whole cultural community, or even further, a whole nation or civilization.

Considerations for Draft Resolutions

However, there are also controversies and questions that need to be addressed in your draft resolutions. Many questions arise around who is ultimately responsible for the preservation of cultural heritage. Are national governments or nonprofits responsible? Are individuals responsible for their own heritage, or is it always a shared effort for many across the globe? Is it our responsibility to preserve another nation's culture? One could argue that the responsibility for conserving cultural heritage falls on us all, since we could all benefit from the education enriched by diverse cultural heritage practices and objects. On the other hand, one could also argue that since each culture should be the rightful owner of their cultural heritage objects, it is their responsibility to document, preserve, and protect them.

In your draft resolutions, consider what constitutes a quality community: in terms of the balance between economic and cultural values of a place, and the overall wellbeing and happiness of a community. To elaborate, we can approach this consideration in five categories: sense of place, identity, evolution, ownership, and community. The most important factor to consider is the particularity of a place, shaped by the built and natural environment, so that this community is neither "anyplace" nor "no place" but "someplace," unduplicated anywhere. Sense of identity commands that a community should strive to be a valuable place in the long term, which can be defined in an economic sense. Regardless of that though, a place should identify attributes that add to its differentiation, constructing its own unique identifier. Sense of evolution emphasizes that a quality, living community can neither be frozen in time nor look like they were built yesterday. The

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[20] Dr. Jeffrey A. Becker, "Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage," in Smarthistory, March 25, 2018, accessed June 11, 2021, https://smarthistory.org/preserve-cultural-heritage/.

physical fabric of a community needs to accurately reflect its cultural and historical evolution. Sense of ownership specifies that a sense of broad, shared sense of responsibility should be felt by all individuals in the particular place, even if those are not legally bound or economically incentivized. Lastly, a sense of community acknowledges the sense of interconnectedness that is inherent to the process of community building and strengthening, that each and every one of the residents has the obligation to communicate and respect one another.[21] The overarching goal of cultural and historical conservation is to ensure the wellbeing and development of a community, which is a dynamic and ever-changing process that requires caution and knowledge to proceed.

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[21] Culture, Historic Preservation and Economic Development in the 21st Century. Accessed July 13, 2021. http://www.columbia.edu/cu/china/DRPAP.html.

Bloc Positions

There are several ways to consider bloc formation. Firstly, countries with more heritage sites can collaborate on a more progressive, expansive, and broad structure for cultural and historic preservation in similar countries with rich cultural and historic heritage and developed preservation agencies. That being said, Italy and China are home to the largest number of UNESCO world heritage sites: both countries have 55 each, including the city centers of Rome and Florence, the Amalfi Coast, and the Great Wall of China, and the Forbidden City. Those tourism magnets face different, yet significant challenges in terms of preservation: how does a nation preserve its history and culture, without compromising the tourism industry? Spain ranks third with 48 world heritage sites, ahead of Germany with 46. France, India, Mexico, UK, Russia, US, and Iran rank high on the list as well, respectively.[22] Then, for countries with less recognized heritage sites, it is crucial to come together and realize the abundant sources of cultural heritage within each country, and to collaborate with each other on drafting resolutions that help discover, maintain, and preserve cultural and historic sites in those countries.

The opposite approach to bloc formation can be taken as well. If countries with more world heritage sites and countries with less can work together, that is also a great example of some sort of paired, buddy system, in that countries with more heritage sites can lend the resources and experience to countries with less recognized heritage sites, and in return, the countries with less heritage sites could offer some economic benefits or cultural programs for their "sister country" or "sister city." Either way, it is in your best interest to align with countries that share similar dedication and concerns regarding cultural and historic preservation, and only with mutual interests and respect can countries come together and benefit from cooperation.

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[22] Katharina Buchholz, Data Journalist. "These Are the Countries with the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites." World Economic Forum. Accessed July 13, 2021. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/12/unesco-world-heritage-countries-history-archaeology-landmarks-italy-china/.

Additional Resources

Getty Conservation Institute and World Monuments Fund – Jointly developed the Arches Project, an open-source software platform for cultural heritage inventory and management – (www.archesproject.org)

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization is a U.N. agency contributing to international peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights (www.unesco.org)

List of Resources by Country:

Australia: Burra Charter; Heritage Overlay in Victoria, Australia

Brazil: National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage

Canada: Heritage conservation

Chile: National Monuments Council

China: State Administration of Cultural Heritage

Egypt: Supreme Council of Antiquities

Estonia: Ministry of Culture; National Heritage Board

Ghana: Ghana's material cultural heritage

Honduras: Secretary of State for Culture, Arts and Sports

Hong Kong: Heritage conservation in Hong Kong

India: Ministry of Culture; National Archives of India; Archaeological Survey of India; Anthropological Survey of India; Culture of India; National Museum Institute of the History of Art, Conservation and Museology

Iran: Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization

Japan: Cultural Properties of Japan

Macedonia: Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments

Namibia: National Heritage Council of Namibia; National Monuments Council

New Zealand: New Zealand Historic Places Trust

Pakistan: Lahore Museum of Art and Cultural History; Lok Virsa Heritage Museum; National Museum of Pakistan; Pakistan Monument and Heritage Museum

Philippines: National Commission for Culture and the Arts; National Historical Commission of the Philippines

Poland: National Ossoliński Institute

South Africa: South African Heritage Resources Agency; Provincial heritage resources authorities; Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali; Heritage Western Cape; Northern Cape Heritage Resources Authority; National Monuments Council; Historical Monuments Commission

Syria: The Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology

United Kingdom: Conservation in the United Kingdom; English Heritage Archive; Northern Ireland Environment Agency; Historic Environment Scotland; National Trust for Scotland

United States of America: National Register of Historic Places; Smithsonian

Zimbabwe: National Monuments of Zimbabwe

TOPIC B: LIMITATIONS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Statement of the Problem

Before understanding the limitation of freedom of expression, we have to first understand the definition and protection of free speech. Freedom of expression is known as the right to express one's ideas and opinions freely through speech, writing, and other forms of communication, without deliberately causing others harm, whether it be harm to reputation, to character, or to health.[23] The right to freedom of expression has been recognized by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a basic human right, and recognized in international human rights law in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states that "everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference" and "everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom o seek, receive, and impact information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice".[24] Furthermore, it also specifies that the exercise of these rights "carries with it special duties and responsibilities," signifying that limitation and restriction to the freedom of expression is allowed "for respect of the rights or reputation of others".[25] Of course, within this international context, we have varying degrees of response and agreement from different countries, but no matter the regime, culture, language, and belief, all are subject to the same standards when it comes to the protection of free speech.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) believes that the protection and promotion of human rights related to freedom of expression are crucial foundations for democracy.[26] Enshrined in the UN Charter of 1945, the principle of equal rights of peoples and fundamental freedoms is essential for fostering environments for freedom of expression, press freedom, and journalistic safety, which goes hand-in-hand with a democratic government.[27] Though

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[23]Amis, Jacob. "Article 19: Freedom of Expression Anchored in International Law." Free Speech Debate, February 10, 2012. https://freespeechdebate.com/en/discuss/article-19-freedom-of-expression-anchored-in-international-law/.
[24] OHCHR. "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Accessed July 19, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx.
[25] Ibid.
[26] UNESCO, Fostering Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom, plus safety of journalists, 2017.
[27] Charter of the United Nations, 1945.

this is not our topic of discussion, press freedom is a crucial element to fostering a society where individuals have access to diverse information, which can also inspire our conversation about freedom of expression in the digital age.[28] In conclusion, freedom of expression has been a well-researched and discussed topic, taking into consideration the different governmental structure, belief systems, cultures and languages, and private public sector divisions in different countries. However, for our topic of interest, understanding how the freedom of expression has grown and evolved on social media platforms is crucial: in the world, people have discourses on platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, QQ, WeChat, Instagram, Twitter, Line, and Snapchat, just to name a few. With the increasing convenience in communication and connection also arises concerns about this new version of freedom of expression, namely freedom of speech in our online presence.

Limitations to Freedom of Speech

Some countries and governments place strict limits on free speech. For example, governments might censor art, books, and images, or outlaw specific religious or political groups. Some of those actions are meant as a way of controlling opinions, peoples, and public opposition, but others as protection of vulnerable groups in society. To start, we can consider four reasons for limiting freedom of speech. The first kind is with regards to true threats and intimidation, which would require a viable threat to be made regarding someone's safety and/or health. The second kind is speech with the intent of incitement, when imminent violent and lawless actions are involved. The third kind is harassment speech, which has to be targeted and discriminatory in its nature. For example, hate speech could be considered a subcategory of harassment. However, the authority behind deciding what causes harm to others can largely be up to debate. The last kind is unlawful conduct, which includes vandalism, destruction of property, or disruption, which causes legal and societal harm to a wider extent.[29] Other concerns that are readily addressed by limiting free speech include national security, public order, public health, and societal morals, just to name a few. Those are only some of the aspects of limits of free speech that we need to consider before we can formally

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[28] UNESCO, Press freedom and development, 2008.
[29] FIRE. "Lesson: Limits to Free Speech." FIRE. Accessed July 19, 2021. https://www.thefire.org/resources/free-speech-freshman-orientation/limits-to-free-speech/.

recommend clauses that will speak to the protection of the freedom of expression, while recognizing the limits of free speech.

It is very easy to argue that freedom of expression should be protected at all costs, in all circumstances, because there is no ultimate authority to decide on what kind of speech should be restricted so that everyone agrees, or that there is no alternative to preserving a world where human rights are prioritized. However, I would like to encourage everyone to consider the counterargument, which is that with certain restrictions placed on freedom of expression, everyone can feel safe enough to have a conversation, without fearing personal, discriminatory attacks. In this case, I would argue that in order to let *everyone* participate in mutually beneficial conversations, and to be able to learn and grow as individuals without feeling attacked or humiliated personally, about their inherent human characteristics, we have to restrict harassment speech. This does not discourage conversation, but allows for more discussion, in an environment that is more safe, diverse, and inclusive. Of course, to work together as a committee does not entail accepting or rejecting one argument completely, but rather, to use these ideas as a launching pad when it comes to debating the proper limitations on freedom of speech. The central, probing question we shall set out to explore as this committee centers around freedom of expression social media, on web platforms, in the increasingly digital world.

History of the Problem

Following the derogation of human rights during World War II, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was adopted by the UN General Assembly, which prescribed, for the first time, a concept of fundamental human rights for all, emphasizing efforts of all states and peoples to protect and promote human rights as their common standard.[30] Though the UNDR does not have binding effects, it is a document with significant implications, in outlining the fundamental principles of basic human rights for future references. Two decades later, in 1966, the UN General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is a legally binding treaty for states that have ratified, complementing the UDHR to implement the concepts of fundamental human rights around civil and political rights.[31] It is worth noting that Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of expression as long as individuals do not violate the human rights and reputation of others, with an exception for protecting the public order in the case of national security matters. This sets the foundation for our conversation around limits placed on freedom of expression, by inspiring other topics for consideration, for example, speech threatening public health in the case of a global pandemic, or speech expressing hatred and intolerance of others due to religious, racial, or socio-economic identifying factors.

Laws and Regulations to Free Speech

In the past, there have not been many laws or declarations regarding the limitation of free speech. For example, some believe that even regulating hate speech contradicts the freedom of expression guaranteed and protected by international and national laws and charters. In this committee, we are focusing on the debate of whether freedom of expression has limits, and if so, what they are in the digital age. This involves understanding firstly, whether freedom of speech inhibits or allows the sharing of ideas and opinions to blossom, and secondly, what kind of restrictions are commendable to be put in place for the better enjoyment of everyone when it comes to speech.

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[30] UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
[31] UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.

Internet and Social Media

Similarly, not much discourse or regulation on freedom of speech on the Internet has been seen in the past years, with exception of the first-ever panel discussion held by the UN Human Rights Council in 2012. In the past two decades before the panel discussion, we have seen exponential growth in mobile communications and new media platforms, which is why discourse around limitations of freedom of expression on the Internet needs to be revisited and updated. Therefore, for us, some of the questions we might ask as a committee include: how can the right to freedom of expression be respected, protected, and promoted when exercised through the Internet? Is there a need to define new rules for human rights on the Internet? The digital divide we see across the world and the lack of universal access to the Internet are topics necessary to be addressed by the UN, but not the main focus of our committee. Currently, under international human rights law, limitations of freedom of expression are permissible in exceptional cases, such as child pornography and incitement. For those exceptions, we can ask ourselves what are the most effective and moral ways to take into consideration those cases without jeopardizing the right to freedom of expression? Looking back to UN Human Rights Committee's announcement in 2011, new online platforms constitute "a global network to exchange ideas and opinions that does not necessarily rely on the traditional mass media", which suggests that "state parties should take all necessary steps to foster the independence of these new media and to ensure access." This signifies that unlike traditional media, online platforms, whether it be websites, blogs, or other internet-based networks, caution should be practiced when it comes to restricting freedom of expression. However, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR, which lays the ground rules for the right to freedom of expression, allows two situations that are justified in its limitation of freedom of expression: respect of the rights or reputations of others, and protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals. It is worth noting that debates and criticism concerning high-level political figures or public institutions are not reasons enough for regulation: in fact, the Convention makes an explicit point of outlining how even the highest levels of political authority are subject to criticism and opposition.

Past Actions & Possible Solutions

Special Rapporteur

One of the most significant watershed events in regard to United Nations actions on the freedom of expression came in 1993 with the establishment of a mandate on the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.[32] Since the Human Rights Council replaced the Commission on Human Rights in 2006, the three-year mandate for the Rapporteur has been extended a total of four times, each producing new thematic reports examining the intersection between timely world events and the continued interest of the UN to protect the freedom of expression across the globe.

Recent thematic reports produced by the Special Rapporteur have examined a number of pressing issues that intersect, threaten, and/or complicate the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression across the globe. In the following sections, we have highlighted some of the recent thematic reports that interestingly complicate the conversation about free of expression.

Digital Disinformation

In a report presented in April of 2021, the Special Rapporteur examined the complexities and challenges posed by disinformation in the digital age, arguing that attempts to combat digitally disseminated disinformation often counterproductively undermine the right to freedom of expression in the process. Furthermore, the report reframed the intersection of attempts to curb digital disinformation and the protection of freedom of expression in terms of a vital collaboration rather than a conflict of priorities. The report further challenged states and companies to see the right to freedom of opinion and expression not as part of the problem, but rather as a means for combatting disinformation, especially in the digital space, calling for companies to recalibrate their

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[32] "Sr on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/freedomopinion/pages/opinionindex.aspx.

responses to disinformation, enhance their collaboration with free, independent, and diverse media, and invest in media and digital literacy across their business models.[33]

This often contentious intersection between the freedom of expression and attempts to curtail disinformation came to a particularly devastating head during the events of the COVID-19 pandemic, when disinformation about the pandemic posed a deadly threat to global health and safety.

The UN and World Health Organization opted to fight disinformation with positive collaborations with businesses, such as WhatsApp and Facebook to disseminate a flow of accurate and science-based information about the pandemic. Furthermore, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized a "disinfodemic" of misinformation about the pandemic, and acknowledged how digital misinformation disproportionately affected developing countries where community media lacked the resources and capacity to properly combat fake news.[34] To this effect, UNESCO sought to connect online resources, fact-checking professionals, disaster management authorities, and radio stations with community media organizations in Eastern and Southern Africa and Eastern Caribbean countries in order to reach a wider general audience with verified information.

Even with all of these provisions and countermeasures against the spread of misinformation, the rapidly developing digital space has magnified the potentially deadly ramifications of free speech. In light of the significant role that disinformation played in lengthening and intensifying the effects of the pandemic, especially in marginalized communities across the globe, the conflict between the threat of disinformation and the protection of free speech is more pressing and contentious than ever before. We invite you to explore this conflict, especially by examining the questions at the nexus of the issue: How much are we willing to pay for free speech and expression? How much should world leaders prioritize free speech when the proliferation of disinformation can threaten the lives of those around us? Should we still ardently fight for the protection of free speech, even when that free speech contains lies with horrific repercussions? Is there truly a way to both combat disinformation

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[33] "Report-on-Disinformation." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021.
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/Report-on-disinformation.aspx.

[34] Posetti, Julie, and Kalina Bontcheva, DISINFODEMIC: Dissecting responses to COVID-19 disinformation § (n.d.).

and protect free speech? **Note: while COVID is being used as a specific example here, this committee will not be discussing the pandemic, as it is an ongoing situation that the world, and likely fellow delegates, is dealing with and experiencing differently. However, delegates are welcomed to discuss the issue of disinformation in a general sense, without examples of COVID.**

Academic Freedoms:

In a report presented in July 2020, the Special Rapporteur examined the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression as it intersects with academic fields, acknowledging the vital importance of academic institutions in promoting the capacity for self-reflection, knowledge generation, and acting as an "engine for discovery, innovation, cultural preservation and national progress." [35]

However, despite the crucial necessity for academic institutions to protect freedom of expression as a pillar of their mission to facilitate knowledge and discovery, these institutions are paradoxically spaces where freedom of speech is often most at jeopardy. Across the globe, there have been frequent instances of government pressure and retaliation against faculty who teach against popular government messaging. For example, government officials in Turkey forced the dismissal of hundreds of academics in Turkey who had signed a scholars' petition calling peace within the Kurdish community, China has imprisoned an economist, Iham Tohti, on arbitrary grounds relating to his criticism of policies within the Uyghur community, and Uganda imprisoned a prominent feminist academic following her anti-government posts on social media.[36] These offenses constitute only a couple of the numerous threats to free speech that occur within academic communities and institutions across the globe.

In response to the threat posed to academic institutions by government retaliation and pressure, the Special Rapporteur reaffirmed that "limitations on expression must be read narrowly and consistent with the cumulative three-part test under article 19 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and

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[35] "Report on Academic Freedom and the Freedom of Opinion and Expression." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/AcademicFreedom.aspx.

[36] Ibid.

Political Rights."[37] The three prongs of this test include the legality, legitimacy, and necessity and proportionality of any restrictions on speech, following the principle that "where the harm to freedom of expression outweighs the benefits, a restriction on the right cannot be justified."[38]

It is crucial to note that these principles that safeguard freedom of speech and expression at the academic level do not include protections against blasphemy or the denial of past genocidal events. Therefore, given the unique position of an academic institution to influence the young minds of students, the academic institution remains at the nexus of the debate about free speech at the expense of protections against harmful words and expression. For example, the report is clear that, "as a matter of academic freedom and freedom of expression, such work – even if appropriately characterized as pseudoscientific, polemical, advocacy-driven or antisemitic or racist – should be left to the self-governance structures of the academy."[39]

As such, we invite you to explore the questions raised by this report, as well as the other debates about freedom of expression on academic campuses. Should freedom of speech look different within academic institutions, in light of the fact that a conducive learning environment should seek to make every individual feel safe, included, and welcomed? Should arguments that express messages, which are deeply offensive to students, be allowed to proliferate on academic campuses, subject only to the self-governance structures of the institution? Should students be allowed to express profane messages that significantly injure another student under their right to freedom of expression?

While these questions do not have easy answers, they frame some of the most pressing issues within conversations about freedom of expression, and should be considered thoughtfully as you begin to formulate your own opinions and policy solutions surrounding this issue.

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[37] Ibid.
[38] "Report on Academic Freedom and the Freedom of Opinion and Expression." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/AcademicFreedom.aspx.

[39] Ibid.

Online Hate Speech:

In this report, released in October of 2019, the Special Rapporteur underscored the international human rights laws that 'hate speech' legislation must meet in order to preserve freedom of expression. The three-pronged test imposed by the international human rights law requires hate speech legislation to meet the requirements of legality, necessity and proportionality, and legitimacy. [40]

In light of these requirements, the Special Rapporteur encouraged states to avoid criminalization and prohibition of online hate speech. Instead, they should generally utilize other tools at their disposal such as education, counter-speech, promotion of pluralism to address speech that does not incite discrimination, hostility, or violence.

Furthermore, the report acknowledged the extended arsenal of innovative tools at the disposal of the private companies in this sector to combat hate speech, including "restricting its virality, labelling its origin, suspending the relevant user, suspending the organization sponsoring the content, developing ratings to highlight a person's use of prohibited content, temporarily restricting content while a team is reviewing, demonetizing, minimizing its amplification, interfering with bots and coordinated online mob behavior, adopting geolocated restrictions, and even promote counter-messaging."[41]

The conversation around online hate speech is at the very center of current debates around freedom of expression in the digital age. We invite you to critically examine the standards set forth by the UN previously as well as to contemplate future actions that might be necessary to continue to cultivate a safe and free online forum for the exchange of opinions and fruitful discourse. Do you think the innovative tools detailed in this report on online hate speech go far enough in preventing the dissemination of hateful opinions on the internet? How do you feel the three prongs of legality, necessity and proportionality, and legitimacy should be interpreted in light of online hate speech?

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[40] "Report on Online Hate Speech." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021.
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/ReportOnlineHateSpeech.aspx.
[41] "Report on Online Hate Speech." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021.
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/ReportOnlineHateSpeech.aspx.

Do you feel that the substantial threat of cyber-bullying magnified by the anonymous characteristic of the online space is enough to change the rules surrounding freedom of expression? We invite you to consider these questions, as well as others as you begin to formulate your own opinions and policy proposals surrounding the freedom of expression.

Online Content Regulation:

In the first-ever UN report to examine the regulation of user-general online content, the Special Rapporteur released details on UN expectations for both states and social media companies in April of 2018. The report specifically examines the role of social media companies in providing an online environment for freedom of expression and access to information online. The report goes on to detail the unique obstacles that mark the contemporary landscape of free speech, including the advent of "fake news," disinformation, and online extremism, and encourages states to practice smart regulation in order to allow the public to choose how they engage within the online public forum.

The report defines this order of "smart regulation" as "not heavy-handed viewpoint-based regulation" and urges states to only restrict content when under the direct order of an independent and impartial judicial authority practicing due process. To this effect, the report calls on the three-pronged human rights law that mandates standards of legality, necessity, and legitimacy in order to necessitate the restriction of online content. [42]

Under the norms of the smart regulation principles detailed in the report, states should practice transparency and careful consideration of their actions surrounding online content regulation. The report specifically cautions states to refrain from establishing laws requiring the proactive monitoring or filtration of content, which could constitute a violation of the right to privacy and an instance of pre-publication censorship.[43] In a similar vein, the report cautions states to only restrict content pursuant to a direct order from a judicial authority, avoiding in all regards an arrangement in

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[42] "2018 Thematic Report to the Human Rights Council on Content Regulation." OHCHR. Accessed August 30, 2021. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/ContentRegulation.aspx.

[43] Ibid.

which government agencies became the arbiters of lawful online expression or by which a corporate body is delegated the task of adjudication.

In regard to the social media companies themselves, the report strongly urges the exercise of transparency and accountability consistent with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights previously published by the UN. The report also advises that the industry at large develop and prioritize industry-wide accountability measures to govern all segments of the ICT sector involved in content moderation, acknowledging again the importance of these companies in promoting and ensuring human rights within the online space. [44]

Like in the case of online hate speech, the standards of online regulation are a vital conversation within the larger context of freedom of expression within the digital age. As such, we invite you to carefully consider, and question, the validity of the principles detailed above. How effective do you think these guidelines will be in promoting free speech online? Do you feel that these principles go far enough (or conversely, too far?) in promoting and protecting the freedom and sanctity of the online forum? In the nearly four years since this report was published, the online space has continued to rapidly evolve and develop. How should the regulations surrounding online speech be updated to accommodate for recent developments and evolutions within social media and online forums?

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[44] Ibid.

Bloc Positions

For this topic, bloc formation can be approached in two ways. Firstly, countries with similar political regimes and ideologies can easily work together in terms of deciding on the degree of freedom and means of protection of freedom of speech as well as regulation. One advantage of having this sort of bloc alignment is that different countries can formulate and support working papers and draft resolutions that speak to their political standing and address their specific needs while keeping the uniqueness of their countries in mind. However, there also lies a weakness. Oftentimes when countries lack funding or infrastructure for technology, communication, and web-development, it is difficult to then extract funding to support committees that oversee, protect, and guide speech. This is why we can also consider a different strategy: for countries with more economic and general infrastructure, it can be mutually beneficial to support those with less developed infrastructure. This way, countries can share wisdom and truly cooperate on a level that is similar to the nature of internet speech, addressing a universal, common, and boundaryless issue with a universal approach.

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