United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chair: Ellie Baldwin
Vice Chair: Alyssa Strayer

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Letter From the Chair

Dear Honorable Delegates,

Hello and welcome to LYMUN XI! My name is Ellie Baldwin, and I am so so excited to be chairing UNESCO this year. As a sophomore, this is my second year in Model UN and my second year being on staff for LYMUN. I'm looking forward to accomplishing great things with all of you in what will hopefully be an insightful and exciting day.

Outside of Model UN, I'm a part of Math Team, Scholastic Bowl, Best Buddies, volunteer at my local soup kitchen, and participate in musical theatre. I also love to read, bake, and hang out with my dog (she's my best friend).

Although I'm sure you'll all be doing your best, here are a few ideas of what I'll be looking for in a model delegate (see what I did there? Because Model UN??). Ideally, a good delegate would be able to collaborate in a constructive way with their peers, present their ideas in an engaging and comprehensive manner, but most importantly, would be able to make committee a safe space for all delegates of all experience levels.

A position paper will be required for this committee. More details on formatting can be found on the LYMUN website. If you're submitting your position paper online, it should be submitted by February 28th at 11:59 pm to bal515218@d204.lths.net. If you procrastinated and ended up writing until 3 in the morning (I've been there), feel free to turn in your paper in person as well! However, please remember that this is a no-tech conference, so make sure to print before arrival. Feel free to email me at bal515218@d204.lths.net with any comments, concerns, or questions. I'm looking forward to seeing each and every one of you!

Best,

Ellie Baldwin

Committee Members:

1. Afghanistan
2. Argentina
3. Australia
4. Bangladesh
5. Brazil
6. Cambodia
7. Colombia
8. Democratic Republic of the Congo
9. El Salvador
10. Ethiopia
11. France
12. Germany
13. Guatemala
14. Honduras
15. India
16. Italy
17. Japan
18. Kenya
19. Madagascar
20. Mali
21. Nigeria
22. Pakistan

23. Panama
24. People's Republic of China
25. Poland
26. Russian Federation
27. Saudi Arabia
28. Singapore
29. Somalia
30. South Sudan
31. State of Palestine
32. Sudan
33. Switzerland
34. Syria
35. Thailand
36. Turkey
37. Uganda
38. Ukraine
39. United Kingdom
40. United States of America

Committee Background:

World War II was terrifying. It made citizens scared of other citizens, and brought horrible nightmares into a reality. In the midst of all this turmoil, political leaders everywhere wondered how they could possibly keep their states at peace. If their former trade deals, peace treaties, and diplomatic relations hadn't worked once, who's to say they couldn't fall apart again? UNESCO was founded out of that fear, entering into effect in 1946, soon after said war. Instead of aiming to bring together countries through trade, treaties, and deals, UNESCO aimed to bring together citizens by connecting cultures, educating the people, and creating dialogue between countries. In the preamble of the organization's founding charter, it states; "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed".



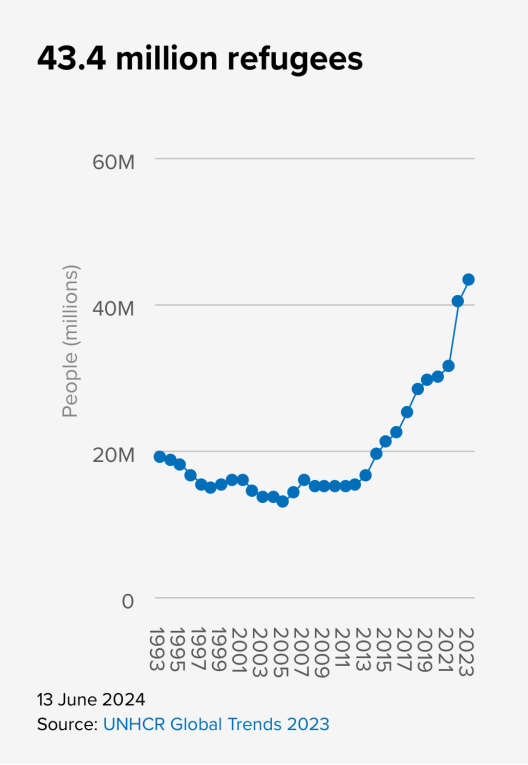
These beliefs have been reflected in the various projects and programs put into action, all designed to target the people directly, creating effective change at an individual level. In the 1950s, UNESCO published their statement on race, stating that there is no scientific basis for racial prejudice. Later, UNESCO supported literacy campaigns in many countries, paving the way for future development and creating self-sufficient countries.

Now with 194 member states, 2,217 staff, and 1154 world heritage sites, UNESCO is a thriving force for good in the world! At LYMUN, you'll be able to participate in this force for good by offering your own ideas and solutions on some of the more pressing issues of present day UNESCO.

Topic A- Educating Refugees

Topic Background:

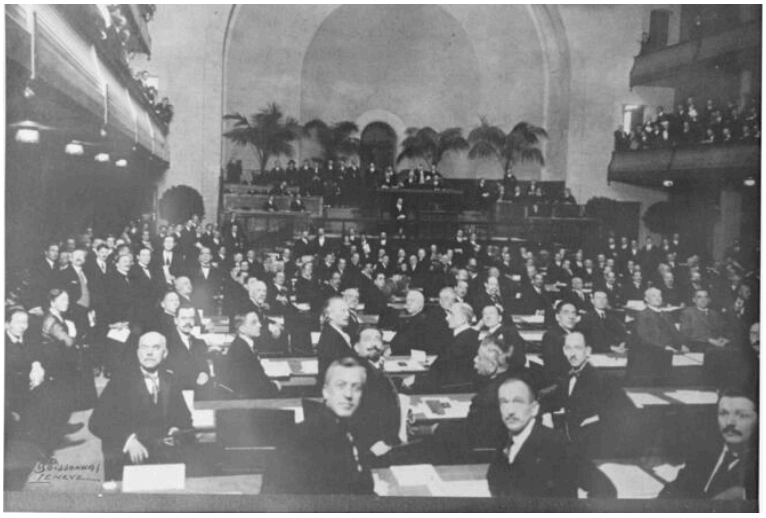
Since 2011, the global number of refugees has only been increasing. Today, it is estimated that almost a whopping 117.3 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, with around 43.4 million of those being refugees (refugees being people who were forcibly displaced outside of their home country). The idea of being a refugee is not new- in Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt, it was common practice for persecuted people to seek refuge in churches or other similar holy places. Whilst in these aforementioned places, they were considered under the protection of the gods, and were not to be harmed or persecuted. Interestingly enough, in many countries, people are still able to seek legal refuge in churches. In a 2006 case in Chicago, Illinois, Elvira Arellano took sanctuary in a Church to prevent her from being deported away from her American born son. She was able to stay there for almost a year, and now resides in Chicago, awaiting the verdict on her asylum case. This idea of seeking refuge under a greater power or in a safe place has followed us through the centuries.



If we are choosing to work with the definition political leaders and the United Nations Refugee Agency use today for refugees, the first

refugees were the French Huengots, a religious group forced to flee fifteenth century France because of the Catholic Church's Edict of Fontainebleau. Many different organizations have been created, and many different plans have been put into effect, to try and discover an effective way to manage these refugees. The first of many notable efforts came after World War I, when countries attempted to form a League of Nations.

The League of Nations (pictured below) served as a kind of attempt at the United Nations we know today. After World War I, the League of Nations successfully returned 500,000



refugees and prisoners of war home and set up refugee camps for those they couldn't get passports. After the 1922 Turkey VS Greece War, the League of Nations returned 400,000 people home and set up even more refugee camps. The work the League of Nations did during both of these crises was monumental to its time. In 1946, after the League of Nations failed to prevent the Second World War, it permanently disbanded. Despite its disbandment, the impact of the League of Nations served as a template for the United Nations.

As you should know (you're literally in Model United Nations- If you don't, I have a lot of questions), the United Nations is an international organization which was formed shortly after the Second World War. Its purpose was to achieve greater global unity and prevent another future world war. As of today, they have been mostly successful in achieving their goals. The United Nation's most prominent organization that works to regulate, protect, educate, and house

refugees is the UNHRC, which is short for the United Nations Human Rights Council. The United Nations Human Rights Council works to make sure that no human rights violations are committed in refugee camps, making sure that they are safe living spaces. Its main mission statement says that its job is "is to work for the protection of all human rights for all people; to help empower people to realize their rights; and to assist those responsible for upholding such rights in ensuring that they are implemented." Qualities they try to provide are clean drinking water, food access, and well lit areas to try and prevent any GBV, or gender-based violence.

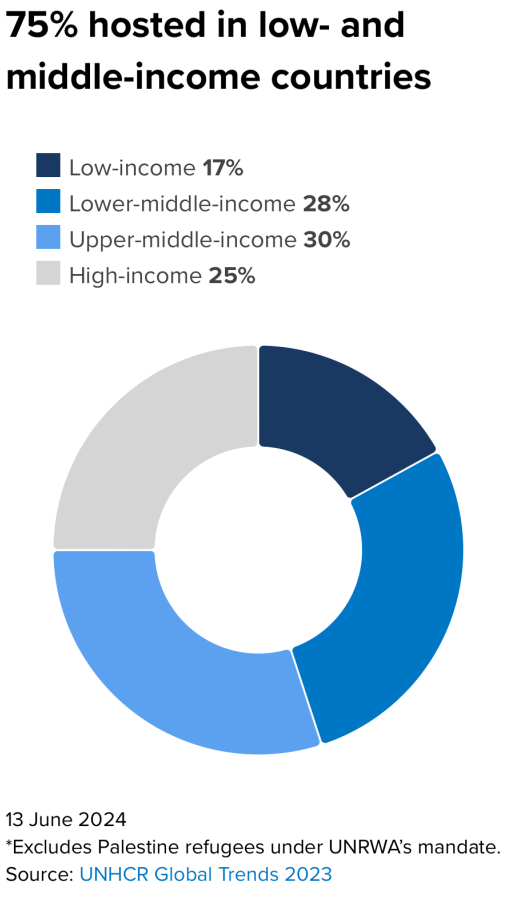
One of the most important things that has been done for refugees was the 1951 conference on the status of refugees. It was the cornerstone of refugee protection and along with the 1967 protocol, formed the key legal documents that form the basis of UNHCR's work. At this conference, members worked together to provide the internationally recognized definition of a refugee and outline the legal protection, rights and assistance a refugee is entitled to receive. Eventually, they reached a consensus that a refugee is someone who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country". That's a lot of words, I know. The simplified version of this is a person who has a justified fear of being attacked or incarcerated because of their identity, who is outside of their home country, and is unable/unwilling to go



back to said country. This definition is still used today to decide who a refugee is and what they are entitled to.

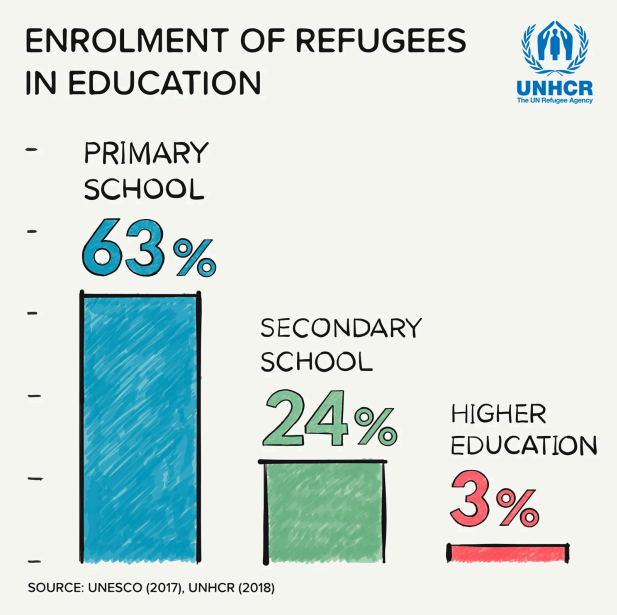
Refugees don't have a lot, but because of the 1951 conference, they are entitled to basic human rights. Refugees are not allowed to be forced back into their home country if they have a reasonable fear for their life or freedom. Refugees are not allowed to be discriminated against, regardless of identity or ethnicity. Similarly, all refugees have a right to freedom of religion. Refugees also have a right to access justice and a right to move freely within their host country. Most importantly in the context of this committee, refugees are entitled to an education. All of these important rights were first detailed in the 1951 Refugee convention. In return, refugees are required to abide by the laws and regulations of their country of asylum and respect measures taken for the maintenance of public order.

Living conditions have never been particularly good for refugees. After fleeing their native home country, refugees are usually placed in refugee camps. Interestingly enough, these refugee camps are almost always located in Low or Middle income countries. One might think that high income countries would take in the refugees, as they obviously have the resources to do so, but that is not the case. Seventy-five percent of refugees are housed in



these middle/low income countries. Because the aforementioned low income countries don't have the resources to house these refugees, they oftentimes end up in overcrowded, dirty camps, relying on the kindness of nonprofits or international charity organizations. Since these people struggle to have access to basic necessities along the lines of things including food, water, and toiletries, their education, especially higher education, is not often provider organizations' biggest priority.

Although children represent 30% of the total world population, they represent 40% of the world's refugees. The UN's sustainable development goals specifically outline how they must educate children, including refugee children, stating that UN member states should strive to "inclusive and quality education for all and to promote lifelong learning". However, they haven't historically achieved that. A 2019 United Nations Human Rights Committee report (achieved with the help of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization research) released a graph (which is pictured to the right), detailing just how few of these child refugees were receiving necessary education. Since 2019, that number has actually decreased to only 48% of refugees being in school. These surprising statistics shed more light on the quality of life in refugee camps.



When refugees do receive an education, it is not always of the highest quality. (Hi! If you're reading this sentence, awesome job! Email me a really bad pun so I know you've made it this far. Good luck!) In the past, very few refugees

were able to read and write. Although literacy statistics have certainly improved as of today, the lack of secondary education received in addition is extremely subpar. To have a job in almost all more developed countries, adults need at least a high school diploma, if not an undergraduate degree. Because these refugees are not currently able to attain these kinds of quality higher education, they are stuck not being able to make a living wage for themselves or for their families. Then, after refugees are able to return to their home countries or settle in a new country, this severe lack of education creates a vicious cycle of poverty for disadvantaged people and children.



All in all, the centuries long struggle of refugees has a deep history of unhealthy dependence, prosecution and turmoil, and unsafe environments. Although the priority should first be their protection and safety, It's still extremely important to recognize that refugees will not be able to have a safe future outside of refugee camps without education. If countries do not provide refugees with proper education, they become a part of this extremely pressing issue- in essence, they are keeping refugees safe, but they aren't truly setting them up for a self sufficient future. It's only through providing refugees with accessible, high quality education that we can ensure their futures will be as bright as they have the potential to be.

Current Issues and Solutions:

Even though refugee struggles are as old as recorded history, we're still not done today. As stated in the topic background portion of this background guide, there are almost 43.4 million refugees. That's an astonishing number- it's more than the entire population of Canada. With the rising amount of violent conflict today, the amount of refugees is noticeably rising- the United States stopping their occupation of Afghanistan and causing the Taliban to come into power, the Russian Federation invading Ukraine, and the Israel-Palestine crisis being some of the main causes of these refugee influxes.



To accommodate the influx of refugees, different countries have presented different approaches. For example, Lebanon took in over one million refugees, most of which were from neighboring Syria, which was going through a violent conflict at the time. This solution may be functional in the short term, but countries can't take that many refugees, for fear of overpopulation and lack of resources to support them.

Another issue for refugee hosting countries is how little motivation they have to educate these people. It may seem depressing, but the main goal for some of these countries isn't to integrate them into their countries, but more to contain them, with just enough resources, until they can transport them to a different country or return them to their home country.. To combat

this, Kenya recently created the new refugee act, which allows refugees to find work and become active members of the Kenyan economy during their stay. The desire to find higher-paying jobs will bring with it a desire to access higher levels of education.

One of the main issues facing refugee children for their education is simply access. Many times, the education systems in place are either inaccessible or nonexistent. UNESCO itself recently passed a global initiative that aimed to "Improve equitable inclusive education access and learning outcomes for children and youth affected by crises" and "Build inclusive, crisis-resilient education systems that ensure protection of the right to education for children and youth, address the needs of all learners in a holistic way, and include information and tools related to safeguarding health, wellbeing, nutrition, water, sanitation and protection from violence, sexual exploitation and abuse." (Education in Crisis Situations, 2024). These goals are certainly noble, but just goals don't always do enough.

There are plenty of issues in the way of refugees' education today, and many unique ways to try and combat them. Although not all solutions are totally effective, trying and failing is better than not trying at all.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is your country's relationship with refugees? Are people fleeing your country or seeking refuge there?
2. What kind of resources does your country have to support refugees? Are they actually putting these in use?

3. What are the current education rates in your country and how does that compare to those of refugees?
4. What are your country's attitudes towards foreign peoples?
5. How does your country house refugees and/or IDPs?
6. Has your country been following the UNHCR's guidelines towards refugees?
7. Would your country benefit from welcoming refugees as citizens? How and why?

Topic B: Protecting World Heritage Sites

Topic Background:

World Heritage sites are one of the most influential projects that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has put into action. So many important historical landmarks have been destroyed or defaced before the World Heritage Site program was put into effect, and so this form of protection for historic sites is mandatory for the preservation of human history. Today, there are about 1,223 world heritage sites. UNESCO's influence spans over around 168 countries. In protecting these world heritage sites, the United Nations Educational,



Scientific, and Cultural Organization is protecting human history.

Many, many different monuments, historical, and cultural sites have been desecrated over time. Personally, one of my most favorite historical sites was the Library of Alexandria. The Library of Alexandria housed much of the medieval world's knowledge. People who worked for the library were said to travel the lands looking for books and more information to add to the library's stacks. The Library itself was said to be a wonderful place full of scholars and intellectuals, learning together. And then Roman Emperor Julius Caesar burned it down. Someone should really stab that guy. But regardless, if the Library of Alexandria had been under the protection of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it would likely have been around today.

It's not only tragedies of centuries ago that people have destroyed prominent heritage and cultural sites. This terrible practice still happens today, both by accident and as a weapon. In March of 2001, the Taliban was in power over Afghanistan. The Taliban group is an extremist group that is affiliated with the religion of Islam. Because of their extremism, on March 1st, they decreed that they would destroy any statues of humans or others that went against their religious values. On March 2nd, they desecrated a Buddhist site- the Buddhas of Bamiyan. This cultural site was located in the desert, housing multiple different large statues of the religious figure Buddha. Now, 23 years after their destruction, the Taliban started



trying to sell tickets to see the ruins to boost their economy. This absolute disrespect of Buddhist culture and landmarks actually happened when the UNESCO world heritage site program was in effect– it simply did not consider the Bamiyan Buddhas a world heritage site. It did, eventually! Just two years too late.

World heritage sites were first thought of by one singular inciting incident- The Aswan High Dam. The Aswan High Dam was a damn set to be built in Egypt. However, by creating this dam, the Egyptian government was also flooding the historic valley containing the Abu Simbel temples, an important part of Egyptian history and Ancient Egyptian civilization. In 1959, after an appeal from the governments of Egypt and Sudan, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization started taking action. Research on the particular area was sped up, and the Abu Simbel and Philae temples were dismantled, moved to more stable land, and reassembled.



When the Aswan High Dam issue was occurring, countries around the world worked together to preserve their cultural heritage. Inspired by this action, UNESCO continued to carry out similar projects, and eventually spent some time creating the conventions that were presented at the United Nations conference on Human Environment in Stockholm. Eventually, a single version of the document was agreed upon. The Convention concerning the Protection of World

Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in November of 1962.

The first World Heritage Site came to fruition in 1972, a decade after The Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted. The World Heritage site was the Galapagos Islands, an archipelago of about 13 islands off the coast of Ecuador. At that same session, UNESCO also inscribed L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, Nahanni National Park, City of Quito, Galápagos Islands, Rock-Hewn Churches, Lalibela, Simien National Park, Aachen Cathedral, Historic Centre of Kraków, Wieliczka and Bochnia, Royal Salt Mines, Island of Gorée, Mesa Verde National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. These were all some of the first UNESCO World Heritage sites and have since thrived as a direct result of UNESCO's influence.



So what exactly are the requirements for becoming inscribed as a World Heritage Site? To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of "outstanding universal value" and they have to meet at least one out of ten selection criteria (I'll talk about that in a second!). These criteria are explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, which is one of the biggest tools that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization uses. The earlier referenced selection criteria include (please note these are all paraphrased); to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; to exhibit an important interchange of human values on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts,

town-planning or landscape design; to bear a unique or original testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization; to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which displays one or more significant stage in human history; to be an example of a traditional human settlement, that's representative of a culture(s), or human interaction with the environment; to be directly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (UNESCO prefers this to be a second criteria, instead of the entire reason a site is being inscribed); to have in it a natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and/or aesthetic importance; to exemplify major stages in Earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features; to be an outstanding example that represents significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; to contain significant natural habitats for the purpose of conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species that have value from the point of view of science or conservation. Quite obviously, these are a lot of criteria. One may think that many, many different places in the world could arguably fall under



it, however, the countries themselves must nominate landmarks or places within themselves to be World Heritage Sites, which are then voted on at the annual World Heritage Committee Session to choose whether or not they are worthy of this title.

After all of the difficult work to receive the title of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site, these sites receive some special privileges and treatment from the rest of the world. Once a site receives WHS status, UNESCO provides aid to host countries in establishing management plans, as well as helping to set up any number of systems that report on the state of conservation of their World Heritage Sites. UNESCO also helps countries to safeguard World Heritage Sites by providing technical assistance and professional training, and they offer emergency financial and other kinds of important assistance for the purpose of World Heritage sites that are faced with an immediate danger at this point in time.



Many United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Sites have been destroyed due to both disaster and violence- but mainly violence. UNESCO does work to prevent this, but as the United Nations has no real military power, they were unable to make that happen. This destruction spans across almost every single continent, excluding Antarctica. Armed conflict and wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, urbanization and unchecked tourist development pose major problems to World Heritage sites. Danger can both be

happening or potential, depending on whether or not a property is faced with threats which could possibly have negative effects on its World Heritage values. Conveniently, UNESCO let out a list of World Heritage Sites that they believe to be in danger. It is called “The List of World Heritage in Danger” and it is designed to inform the international community that there are currently conditions which pose a threat to the actual reason that the World Heritage Site was even allowed to become a World Heritage site, and in response, both launches any opposing action that the United Nations can legally take, and encourages the rest of the international community to do the same.

Current Issues and Solutions:

As of when I am writing this (August 30) so far 6 world heritage sites have been destroyed or badly damaged by either violence, accident, or natural disaster. For all of these that were not sudden, UNESCO attempted to intervene, but were obviously unsuccessful. As of today, UNESCO has very very few plans in place to actually protect world heritage sites, and instead has very many that preserve them. Although preservation is extremely important, it is different and less effective than genuine protection. The most effective method UNESCO currently has in place is the List of World Heritage in Danger, when paired with the World Heritage fund. When a site is placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, it allows the World Heritage Committee to utilize money from the World Heritage Fund and allocate it to the endangered property. It also is supposed to alert the conservation community to respond to specific preservation needs in an efficient manner. Almost most importantly, Inscription of a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger requires the World Heritage Committee to create a

program tailored to the situation, working with the country concerned, implement it and monitor any progress made. All efforts must be made to restore the site's values in order to enable its removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger as soon as possible.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization clearly does not have very many programs and fast action plans that are in place to protect World Heritage Sites. They seem to only rely on their List of World Heritage in Danger, which cannot always function perfectly. This is a weak spot for UNESCO that one would hope could be fixed soon.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does your country have world heritage sites? How many?
2. If your country has world heritage sites, what condition are they in?
3. Does your country have any places that should be protected by UNESCO or that hope to become WHSs in the future?
4. What means does your country have to contribute to the World Heritage Fund?
5. What aid has your country received from UNESCO?
6. How successful has your country been in preserving its heritage?
7. What is your country’s stance on World Heritage Sites as a whole? Do they perceive them as threats to their future or monuments to their past?

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