

# Hilton 2023 Chair Letter

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

## *Committee Overview*

*The Targeted Destruction of Ukrainian Culture and Heritage*

*Filipino Children Falling Behind in Education*

*The Lasting Impacts of COVID-19 on Education*

*Effect of Pseudoscience on National Policy and Culture*

### **COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION:**

This committee will be run Harvard Style, meaning that resolutions are not to be written until the date of the conference itself. Additionally, it is highly suggested that every delegate write at least one position paper on a topic, as doing so will be necessary to be considered for an award. Position papers must be emailed to the chairs through personal emails prior to the start of the committee, or can be turned in at the start of the committee as well.

All delegates are expected to come to the first day of the conference with a working knowledge of all or most of the topics, as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. As the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, it is imperative that delegates keep in mind that their purpose is to promote global peace and security through international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication and information. Above all, remember that Model UN is not solely about awards and competition, so please have fun, do some good research, and come prepared for intriguing debate!

### **ABOUT US:**

Rose Swatek

Hello delegates! My name is Rose Swatek and this is my first time chairing! My first delegating experience was Hilton 2021 and since then, I have attended 5 conferences as a delegate. I am currently a Senior at Brighton High School. At Brighton, I am the President of FriendinMe, a Link Leader, and a proud member of the Brighton Model UN Leadership Team. I am looking forward to chairing and I am beyond excited for Hilton 2023! Let's work hard to make this the best conference ever! If you need anything, feel free to email me or Emily at the emails provided.  
Email: [roseswatek204@gmail.com](mailto:roseswatek204@gmail.com)

Emily Yu

Hi delegates! I am Emily Yu and I'm a Junior at Pittsford Mendon High School. This is my first time chairing and I've been doing Model UN for 2 years. Outside of MUN, I am a captain for my school's math team, and am on the track team. Please reach out to me or Rose if you have any questions, and I am super excited to be one of your chairs for this conference! I'm looking forward to meeting you all!  
Email: [emilyyu375@gmail.com](mailto:emilyyu375@gmail.com)

### **Topic 1: The Targeted Destruction of Ukrainian Culture and Heritage**

Recently, there was a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War due to the invasion of Ukraine. Since then, UNESCO has verified damage to 270 sites, including religious sites, museums, historical and artistic buildings, monuments, libraries, and even sites that are shelters for local residents. Other assessments reported over 1000 incidents of damage towards cultural and heritage sites. Institutions and objects of cultural significance are continually targeted for destruction and many have already been damaged or destroyed by military attacks. These attacks are largely fueled by hatred towards Ukrainian culture and is seen as an attempt to erase Ukrainian culture. Many of these cultural attacks take place in the exact same places that Russia has attempted to take control of, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol, and Luhansk.



These cultural sites should have been protected under Article 1 of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, however they continue to be damaged. Many writers, artists, and cultural workers have attempted to protect these sites, but many have been killed or injured for doing so. Those who speak out against the eradication of Ukrainian culture have been arrested or harassed.

There have been attempts to protect Ukrainian heritage using satellite imagery to document damage. These satellites were able to identify and provide detailed images of potential damage to cultural sites, and the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab already has 28,000 sites in its inventory. However, targeted damage remains a serious issue that must be addressed to protect these sacred cultural objects and sites.

*How can the UN help prevent the future destruction of these cultural sites, without infringing on national sovereignty? What are some ways the UN can help ensure the reparation of already damaged cultural sites? How can this committee protect Ukrainian cultural workers and educators?*

**“Targeted Destruction of Ukraine’s culture must stop: UN experts”**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/targeted-destruction-ukraines-culture-must-stop-un-experts>

**“Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO”**

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco#:~:text=As%20of%2020%20July%202023,12%20libraries%20%2C1%20Archive>

## Topic 2: Filipino Children Falling Behind in Education

There are around 2.8 million Filipino children out of schools, and those who are enrolled do not receive sufficient and quality education. Barely half of children 3 to 4 years old are enrolled in daycare, and only 78% of children complete basic education. Additionally, many of the teaching methods are outdated, with limited attention towards a child's social and emotional skills due to a poor amount of funding. Teachers are also assigned heavy workloads and time-consuming administrative tasks, not giving them the support to grow as educators. Private schools are focused more on making a profit than educating and their graduates often end up unemployed.

The Philippines ranked at the bottom of 79 countries when assessed in reading literacy, and also scored poorly in math and science. The World Bank reports that 90.4% of Filipino children aged 10 suffer from a learning deprivation (children who read below the minimum proficiency level by the end of primary school).

Many schools do not have clean water or toilets, and are often located in inadequate environments. For example, only about a third of the school buildings in the country are in good condition, and a third either require major repairs or are set for condemnation.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Filipino schools were closed for over a year, much longer than other schools which were closed for an average of 79 teaching days. This led to large amounts of learning loss, heightened risk of dropping out, child labor, and child marriage. Many of these children did not have the technology or learning environment necessary for remote learning, with at least 29% of primary school students not reached. Only about 18% of households had an internet connection, as families were struggling economically.

These Filipino children are already struggling with inadequate schooling, and many are falling behind the curriculum. They now find themselves falling even further behind after being out of schools for so long due to COVID-19. It is essential that we address this issue to help bridge the educational gap and give these children a brighter future.

*How can the UN ensure that these Filipino children are given adequate resources for learning and are staying in schools? What measures can we take to make sure these children are learning effectively? How can we work to close the learning gap caused by COVID-19 and help those with learning deprivations?*

**“Filipino children continue missing education opportunities in another year of school closure”**

<https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/filipino-children-continue-missing-education-opportunities-another-year-school>

**“The rich access quality education as the poor suffer’: Learning crisis as Filipino schools stay closed.”**



<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/rich-access-quality-education-poor-suffer-filipino-schools-close/>

### Topic 3: Lasting Impacts of COVID-19 on Education

Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of the lives of millions of people. One of the largest aspects it has affected is the education sector. It has transformed every part of schooling, from nursery to university.

The most apparent impacts are the digitalization of education and the gap between where students are in their education and where they are supposed to be. Between 2020 and 2022, almost 150 million students missed more than 50% of their in-person education. This meant many had to resort to online learning, whether it be asynchronous work or learning over Zoom. While many students already had access to the technology necessary to do this, many didn't. People without access tended to be from low-income and/or rural areas.



The gap in education for the average student is astonishing. UNICEF estimated that students all around the world will take seven years to learn what should have been two years of foundational reading skills and 11 years for foundational mathematical skills. Low-income and disadvantaged students are feeling the brunt of this effect. For example, in the US, it has been found that students from homes with lower incomes had a 200% larger gap in their mathematical education than children from more affluent areas. Countries in Asia and Africa have reported similar patterns.

The academic gap is not the only aspect of education that has been delayed. Social and emotional learning has taken a large hit too. Reports of anxiety and depression in teens and children have reached an all time high, along with many other mental illnesses. All around the US, the rates of disciplinary problems such as fighting and racism are skyrocketing. In South Africa, verbal abuse, harassment, and physical altercations (fights, stabbings, etc.) have been reported more than ever before. This pattern holds up all over the globe.

While many students have a gap in their education, some have ended theirs altogether. In Liberia, almost half of students did not return to their schools after their reopening at the end of 2020. In Uganda, nearly 10% of their students didn't return to school. This problem has also exacerbated the already humongous issue of women dropping out of school. In Malawi, the female dropout rate increased by 48% between 2020 and 2021. All together, the impacts that COVID-19 has had on education globally has been disastrous and needs to be addressed swiftly.

*How can the UN work to help return the children who have dropped out back into education? What are some ways that the UN can help those with mental and social issues due to the effects of COVID-19? How can we ensure that the students are caught up in education following the pandemic?*

**“Here's how COVID-19 affected education – and how we can get children's learning back on track”**

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/covid19-education-impact-legacy/>

**“COVID-19 has hit children hard. Here's how schools can help”**

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/08/behaviour-covid19-school-children-psychology-wellbeing/>

**“The Pandemic Was a ‘Wrecking Ball’ for K-12, and We’re Still Tallying the Damage”**

[The Pandemic Was a 'Wrecking Ball' for K-12, and We're Still Tallying the Damage \(edweek.org\)](#)

#### **Topic 4: The Effects of Pseudoscience on National Policy and Culture**

There is much debate over what is and what isn't pseudoscience but the scientific community has generally agreed that to be considered pseudoscience, a few criteria need to be met. The first is that the topic or conclusion is not scientific, the second is that the topic or conclusion is being falsely portrayed as scientific, and the third, which causes some debate, is that it is purposely delegitimizing the general scientific consensus on the topic at the time. There are many subjects scientists have considered pseudoscience over the years, from astrology to homeopathy, both of which are tied to different cultural practices throughout the world.



Some pseudoscientific practices have greatly benefitted the cultures they thrived in, despite having no scientific evidence behind them. Eastern medicine (acupuncture, taichi, reflexology, etc.) which has been practiced since ancient times, has no real backing in the scientific community. Despite this, many people swear by its healing abilities and it has deep roots in cultural practices and traditions within Eastern Asia. Although this and many other pseudosciences aren't harmful, many others are.

One of the most dangerous pseudosciences is climate denialism. The scientific community has generally agreed that climate change is a very real and hazardous threat that humanity has played a large part in causing. Despite the infinite amount of evidence that supports these ideas, many people continue to deny the existence of climate change. This denial has taken extreme hold in countries that play the biggest role in contributing to climate change. For example, in Australia, 39% of people believe that human beings have had no impact on climate change and almost 10% believe that the climate is not changing at all. These beliefs create a culture that distrusts science and facts. This culture has begun to seep into the government, with multiple Senators in Australia stating their disbelief in climate change and their doubts in the trustworthiness of scientists. The former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott has followed suit, denying the threatening impacts climate change has on humanity.

Another pseudoscience that has taken hold of many people is the downplaying or complete denial of COVID-19. COVID-19 is a serious disease that has killed nearly 7 million people globally as of July 2023. Since the start of this disease, there have been many people, including government officials, who have spread pseudoscientific beliefs about it. For example, former President Donald Trump spread the idea that hydroxychloroquine, which is used to treat malaria, would treat COVID-19. Although this had no scientific backing, ideas like this began to spread throughout the country like wildfire. Many political figures and commentators made claims similar to the ones President Trump made about other “wonder drugs” like Ivermectin, again with very little true scientific backing. In situations like COVID-19 and many others, true science is vital to keeping people safe and healthy. Pseudoscience, while sometimes helpful, can have catastrophic effects and needs to be addressed immediately.

*How do we stop the spread of pseudoscience into policy without infringing on national sovereignty? How can we distinguish between harmful and safe pseudosciences? What are some ways we help ensure that pseudosciences do not interfere with medical and climate treatment?*

**What Is Pseudoscience?**

[What Is Pseudoscience? - Scientific American](#)

**Pseudoscience is taking over social media – and putting us all at risk**

[Pseudoscience is taking over social media – and putting us all at risk \(theconversation.com\)](#)