Forum: Action Paper II

Issue: Multiculturalism and Diversity

Student Officers: Irena Tamaresi(Head), Angelos Petrovas (Co-Head)

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Honorable Delegates,

My name is Irena Tamaresi and I will be serving as the Head of the Action Paper II in the upcoming 20th DSA MUN conference. It is a great honor and pleasure to be chairing this committee along with Angelos. I'm currently a student in the 11th grade at the German School of Athens and this will be my tenth MUN conference. Throughout my years in high school MUN has been a huge part of my life and it is something that I'm very passionate about. The topic in the Action Paper II this year is Multiculturalism and Diversity, an issue that has been present in history from when men first started forming societies and yet still is very relevant today, perhaps even more than ever before. As your Head it is my duty to aid you in understanding this topic to its core, not only through this Study Guide, but also throughout the conference. However, aside from reading this Study Guide I strongly urge you to do your own research as well. In case any questions arise or you're in need of help, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Angelos. In such a situation you can contact me via email: nattam10@yahoo.com.

I'm looking forward to working with you!

Kind regards,

Irena Tamaresi

Dear delegates,

My name is Angelos Petrovas, I am 16 years old and I attend the 11th grade at the German School of Athens. I must admit that it is a huge honor to serve as the Co-Head of the Action Paper II in the upcoming 20th session of DSAMUN. This year's topic of the Action Paper II provides delegates with the chance to discuss about multiculturalism and diversity, a very interesting – not to mention very important - topic, especially regarding modern society, with globalization being a part of our life. As a chair in this committee it is my duty to –along with the fellow chair- guide you through this issue and help you understand it better, in order to be able discuss it.

However, this study guide should not be your only source regarding the topic and I strongly urge you to read more upon multiculturalism and diversity. Should you come up with any questions, do not hesitate to contact me in my email address: aggelospetrovas@gmail.com

I am really looking forward to meeting you all in the 20th DSAMUN!

Best regards,

Angelos Petrovas

INTRODUCING TOPIC

"A multicultural society does not reject the culture of the other but is prepared to listen, to see, to dialogue and, in the final analysis, to possibly accept the other's culture without compromising its own." ~ **Reuven Rivlin** (Israeli politician and current president of Israel)

   This particular quote outlines what multiculturalism is. *Multiculturalism* as a **social phenomenon** is the existence of a cultural pluralism in which the various ethnic groups collaborate and engage in dialogue with one another <u>without having to sacrifice their particular identities</u>, whereas *diversity* is the quality of diverse and different cultures, which <u>coexist</u> in harmony by respecting one another. The aforementioned characteristics are two qualities that occur in numerous societies and while diversity is mainly regarded as the product of globalization and immigration, multiculturalism can only occur with the assistance of education, with peace and tolerance being two key factors for achieving a multicultural society.

Multiculturalism also exists as a **political philosophy**. Proponents of multiculturalism do not agree with the idea of a dominant culture, as they claim that each culture may remain intact. Hence, no cultural compromises should take place and the peaceful and fruitful coexistence of cultures should be our aim, always according to their opinion. Furthermore, the philosophy of multiculturalism does not discourage the exchange of traditions and ideas, as long as such a procedure does not lead to the exploitation of any culture. Last but not least, the position of the supporters of multiculturalism about immigrants and their integration in society is an important part of their theory. They wholeheartedly agree with this procedure and assume that immigrants help boost the level of cultural diversity and that in the meantime a multicultural society is helpful and flexible enough for them to become a part of it.

Positive aspects of multiculturalism:

It is an indisputable fact that multiculturalism provides a society with greater opportunities for development and advance. A multicultural society that respects all cultures within itself and promotes dialogue between them (with the cultural interac-

tion being a natural result) could become more flexible and adjustable, thus being able to last in time and survive in difficult conditions. The knowledge and abilities of people from around the world gathered together might bring us closer to some sought after answers we have not discovered yet.

Concerns regarding multiculturalism:

Though there are some really strong arguments in favor of multiculturalism, there are negatives regarding this matter as well. Of course, multiculturalism enables people to get in touch and understand each other's cultures and promotes the exchange of cultural characteristics, but no one can guarantee that during this very process someone's cultural identity is not damaged. Sometimes it's the belief that a culture should dominate the others or in other cases slavishness (the thought that a culture is superior than your own) that downgrade a culture in the expense of another.

What about diversity?

Diversity is one of the very few terms that have a mostly positive hue. Variety and especially cultural variety can hardly harm a society. The more pluralistic in terms of culture a society is the better it is, as this can only bring benefits, some being the elimination of racism and xenophobia, the polymorphic nature it gains and that cultural diversity opens the door for discussion and consideration of different points of view, different ways of thinking, and different ways of living.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Multiculturalism:

    i)   The **political philosophy** supporting the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or nation (as defined by www.wordreference.com)

    ii)   The **social phenomenon** of cultures that coexist and respect one another

 (Cultural) Diversity:

The occurrence of variety (in cultures throughout a specific area)

Culturally plural (multicultural) societies:

Culturally plural societies are those in which a number of different cultural or ethnic groups reside together within a shared political and social framework
(Brooks, 2002 directly quoted from
http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR2011/20_02.pdf).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Concerning the background of multiculturalism and diversity, there are some facts worth mentioning. Multiculturalism as an **ideology** has been shaped relatively recently, even though multicultural and diverse societies has existed **since the birth of communities millennia ago**. People with different beliefs, traditions and theories happened to settle in a specific area, creating a multicultural and diverse society. In those types of communities the term multicultural mostly refers to the fact that they consisted of people of various cultural backgrounds and to the exchange of some qualities that occurred, as cultures were not always respected back then, in the same way that they are not always respected and accepted nowadays. An example of such **culturally diverse communities** is the ancient city-state of Athens. As we know Athens was not only created and inhabited by indigenous people. Folks with different cultural backgrounds arrived at the area, where they met the locals and established the foundations for the city we know today. As time passed and the institution of the city-state faded, some historical empires emerged. The Babylonian, the Macedonian, the Roman and the Byzantine Empire are some of the biggest and hence most culturally diverse countries that have ever existed. Some historians allege that the Macedonian Empire was a multicultural one, supporting their claims with historic documents and further sources that refer to Alexander the Great as a leader that respected the cultures of the areas he conquered. Yet, one cannot surely speak about a literally multicultural empire as we are still unaware of some conjunctures and the motives that incited to such an attitude.

At this point it is worthwhile to refer to **the rise of the nation state in Europe**, which has actually set a barricade to multiculturalism and diversity and led to less pluralistic societies. But what about this very phenomenon? If we travelled back to time and specifically to the 19th and 20th century we would witness a really different Europe from the one we live in. Among the differences, a really fascinating one is the dozens of nowadays nonexistent countries that were succeeded by the ones we know today. Czechoslovakia, the Austria-Hungary, Yugoslavia, the USSR (Soviet Union), pose just some examples of culturally diverse states that dominated Europe throughout those years. Each and every of the aforementioned ones, was eventually split and their products were nothing but the so-called "nation states", which means that behind each state there is a dominant nation. For instance after Yugoslavia was split in 1992 Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, FYROM and Kosovo (whose status as an independent state is still disputed) were created and their inhabitants are Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Macedonian and Kosovar respectively. Hence as diverse and sometimes multicultural states were divided to smaller ones that are linked with a sole nation it is a matter of fact that multiculturalism and diversity were undermined.

In recent days the well-known phenomenon of **globalization** (since the last decades of the 20th century) along with some big **refugee or immigration waves** during the 19th, 20th and 21st century (from all over the world to the USA, from Syria to Europe, from the former USSR countries to the rest of Europe, from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to Europe, from Albania to Greece and Italy etc.) has been a great contributory factor to multicultural and diverse societies throughout the world and an excuse for the rise of both racism and xenophobia. It is beyond doubt that racist and xenophobic acts had no grounds for flourishing but there are numerous factors that led some people to treat immigrants and refugees inhumanly and neglect their cultural backgrounds.

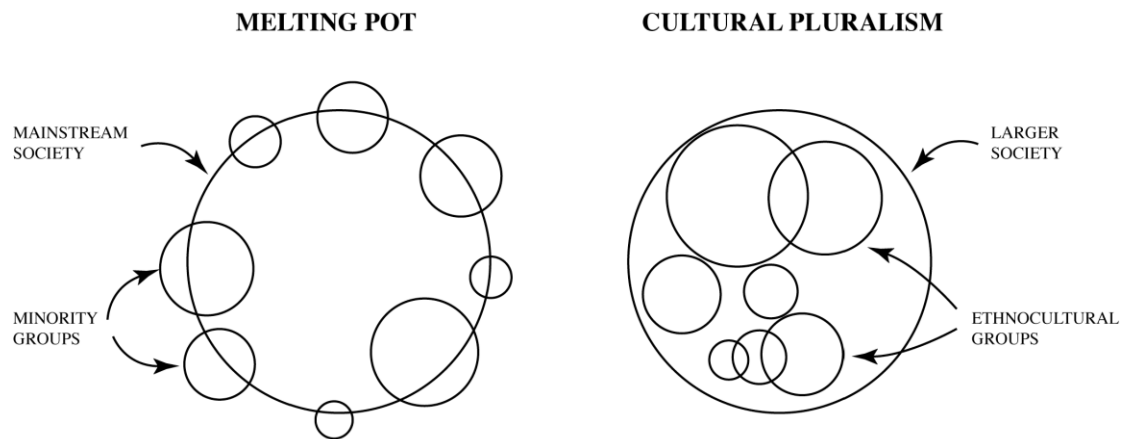The following picture shows integration and multiculturalism in a more practical way:

MELTING POT   **CULTURAL PLURALISM**

MAINSTREAM
SOCIETY

MINORITY
GROUPS

LARGER
SOCIETY

ETHNOCULTURAL
GROUPS

Figure 1   Two Implicit Models of Plural Societies

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC):

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has greatly contributed in the protection of refugee rights, as well as the inclusion and integration of refugees in the various host countries to which they migrate. The recent Syrian crisis has exacerbated their task; however a number of certain actions have been taken and resolutions have been passed in order to ensure a smoother integration in new societies. Said actions include the Regional Response Plan of December 2012, which aimed to, and successfully raised US$1bn, which were to be utilized for the protection of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries.

European Union:

If you take a look at the European Union, you will realize that it itself is a multicultural and diverse platform to its core and sets a prime example of multiculturalism, as it is a Union consisting of 28 completely different States, languages and cultures, and yet has done an amazing job so far. It has successfully combated a variety of cases regarding xenophobia, due to the legislation that has been passed, condemning racial discrimination. In an article from the Migration Integration Policy Index concerning Europe's multicultural policies, we can say that EU Member States have accepted numerous common policies on multiculturalism. However these policies mainly fo-

cus on cultural rights and do not include the participation of immigrants in the social and political life. Generally multiculturalism policies have shown that they have long term effects, but the recent rise of right wing parties in Europe are leading politicians to opt for rather short term policies with usually detrimental repercussions. Thus European Governments are temporarily leaving their multiculturalism policies behind in order to focus on controlling the rise of nationalist movements. On the other hand Europe needs multiculturalism more than ever as it is currently facing one of the greatest mass migration waves in history.

United Kingdom (UK):

Britain has a long history of absorbing people from different cultural or ethnic groups, dating back to 1066. Modern UK has also long adopted a policy of multiculturalism in relation to immigrants and continues to welcome visitors and skilled workers from abroad. One of these policies is the Movement Against Xenophobia (MAX), whose aim is to oppose federal anti-immigration policies and improve public opinion. However, in the past few years it has also set some aims for the UK immigration authorities to strengthen the country's borders, restrict the number and availability of work and student visas, implement a more structured visa application process and ensure that foreign nationals "earn" the right to acquire UK nationality. Undoubtedly these measures have been influenced by the increase in global immigration crime and terrorism and the recent terrorist attacks in Britain.

Germany:

Germany is another example of a state which aims to contribute to global multiculturalism, as they have led the way with the highest refugee reception rates from EU states, with a number of 470,000 in 2013 alone, as well as having a large 9,3% of foreign population. Almost 82.2 million people currently live in Germany and nearly 9.11 million of them hold a foreign passport – more than in any other of the 28 Member States of the European Union. Including those who have subsequently acquired German citizenship, although born abroad or to immigrant parents in Germany, over 17 million people in total have a migrant background, which practically is one fifth of the country's population. The richest multicultural society of all is to be found in Berlin and Frankfurt. Out of the 3.5 million people living in Berlin, about 1 million are originally not from Germany but rather from one of 184 countries. Additionally, as many as 47 percent of Frankfurt's population have a migrant background. Although this growing cultural diversity poses certain social and political challenges

and changes for Germany, it also provides an opportunity to continue the forging of a new and auspicious form of coexistence in the very heart of Europe.

France:

The French Republic does not differ a lot from the stance of the rest of the European Union when it comes to their treatment of multiculturalism. The "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" of May 2001 condemns any form of slavery as a crime and even became a national holiday, thus aiding in the eradication of stereotypes. Furthermore France has one of the largest Muslim populations, some claim it reaches up until 5 million, and despite the recent ISIS attacks that have taken place in the country, polls have showed that the majority of the population does not consider Muslims in general as a threat. Surprisingly enough according to French law, no form of multiculturalism exists in the country, although the multicultural character of the population is one of the accepted facts of the society. However research has shown that Muslims face discrimination in the French job market, and they make up a disproportionately large percentage of the prison population. The country has also passed laws that prohibited the wearing of full-face veils, a move that some felt singled out Muslims. Lastly a lot of inequalities still exist in the sector of the practices of their religion and their religious symbols, yet France remains one of the most diverse countries of Europe with a large number of Muslim and African people, even though there is still progress to be made.

United States of America (USA):

The United States of America have one of the most diverse and culturally variant societies in the world. The U.S. has always been and will always be a multicultural society, where people from many distinct ethnic backgrounds have come together and formed a society as a whole. Many people, including non-immigrants, do not believe they should have to fully assimilate, or give up their traditional culture or heritage from where their ancestors originated, just in order to become "American." Furthermore no matter the various ethnic groups living in the U.S., 93% of the population speaks English, aside from other languages. However, tensions between the different races of people in the country have been rapidly increasing recently, due to xenophobic tendencies, particularly towards the Muslim, Hispanic and African American population and also due to a surge in the rise of far right ideologies and nationalism. Said nationalism has contributed to the election of Republican candidate Donald Trump and his presidency, which has further increased racial discrimination and hate crimes against ethnic minorities, mainly Muslims and Latinas. Despite these difficulties however, the U.S. resumes its efforts to achieve equality.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Event
September 2 1945	The WWII ends leaving the European continent devastated and millions displaced
May 1, 1947	The Displaced Persons Movement begins, as refugees from Europe travel to Canada
December 14, 1950	The UNHRC is founded, as a response to massive numbers of immigrants and refugees fleeing Europe
1951	The UN Refugee Convention is introduced to the world, which defines the term "refugee" and the rights thereof
1954	The US Supreme Court bans the segregation of schools across the US, making a radical change in the educational system, thus prohibiting discrimination within the school system
January 1, 1956	Following the Hungarian Revolution, more than 30.000 immigrants travel from Europe to Canada
1975	Vietnamese people flee from the communist regime that controlled their nation
1990-1992	After years of severe political crisis the dissolution of Yugoslavia takes place, during which a humanitarian tragedy occurred with hundreds of thousands of losses, being evident. After the breakup in Yugoslavia 5 nation states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, FYROM) emerged.
March 15, 2011	Escalating from counter governmental protests, the Syrian Civil War begins, sparking a new wave of migration along with a heavy refugee population, in its neighboring countries and Europe
2016	Singapore reaches 74% Chinese, 13% Malay, 9% Indian and 3% other in its population
2017	The number of refugees reaches 65.3 million

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The greatest threats to multiculturalism and diversity are xenophobia, racism and nationalism. When people feel that their cultural identity, ethnicity, race and religion define them far more than their human qualities, then the multicultural agenda is at stake. In order to combat this issue the UN has passed a number of resolutions, each with varying success rates.

The Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) passed the resolution A/1993/20, a means by which to observe and report on contemporary forms of racism all around the world. This service has been updated ever since, with the resolutions A/7/34, A/16/33 AND A/25/32.

The efforts of the "International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms or Racial Discrimination", are also worth mentioning, as its goal is to promote racial justice and equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In order to ensure that multiculturalism and diversity become qualities of more societies there are some measures that can be taken. However one should take into account the fact that each country has its own legislation and policy, not to mention the fact that multiculturalism and diversity pose qualities that are adopted by some states but have yet to be respected by others. Thus we suggest some basic solutions that encounter the issue and could be implemented by most of the member states, such as the following:

Education

First and foremost the *empowerment of education* on a worldwide scale could be a way to combat racism, stereotypes and xenophobia and lead to a society which respects every single culture and belief and tolerates differences among its members. Regarding this measure, we suggest that every country modifies its educational system and adds special courses about the values of multiculturalism and diversity in all school grades, a project that could be partially subsidized by the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and carried out with the help and supervision of UNESCO. These courses could also occur in the workplaces or in public areas so that education is thoroughly spread.

Raising awareness

 Another way towards multicultural and diverse societies could be through *campaigns, leaflets, seminars, public debates and other means of spreading awareness* upon cultures and their significance, so that everyone is enabled to understand and appreciate cultures, beliefs and traditions which are foreign to them, organized by the member states with the financial support of the World Bank and the IMF and (if needed) the assistance of UNESCO and other NGOs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Topic introduction

Read more quotes about multiculturalism or multicultural and diverse societies at: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/r/reuvenrivl783796.html?src=t_multicultural

A helpful source for writing the topic introduction was the: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/ (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

www.wikipedia.com upon the matter was also a source REGARDING THE PHRASING and NOT the information it contains as it is not a totally valid website in terms of context

Definition of key terms

www.wordreference.com and http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR2011/20_02.pdf were particularly helpful in defining some key terms and the former was directly quoted for the definition of multiculturalism, whereas the same happened with the latter regarding the definition of Culturally plural (multicultural) societies.

Background

The picture included in the end of the background section depicting integration and multiculturalism originates from:

http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR2011/20_02.pdf

Further helpful websites:

http://www.un.org/en/events/culturaldiversityday/

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/16/what-france-thinks-of-multiculturalism-and-islam/?utm_term=.54df419e5042

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https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/diverse-and-competitive/201507/multiculturalism-around-the-world