Change the World MUN Paris 2026

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BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNESCO

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CHANGE THE WORLD ACADEMY

The Biggest Model United Nations in the World

Distinguished Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 Change the World Model United Nations (CWMUN).

As your committee Dais, we are looking forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas about how to solve international problems.

The United Nations (UN) depends on the cooperation and goodwill of its 193 member States. Because each State has unique interests and concerns, it is challenging to write, negotiate and pass resolutions. Every stage of the process demands creativity and diplomacy.

By reading this Background Guide, you are taking the first step in a journey that goes far beyond preparing for a conference. Over the coming weeks, you will analyse one of the most pressing global challenges of our time, understand how governments and international organisations respond to it, and learn how diplomats transform ideas into international action.
This guide is not meant to provide all the answers. Its purpose is to help you ask better questions, because diplomacy is not about knowing everything. It is about making responsible decisions with the best information available.

Remember: every solution begins with informed leadership.

You will be discussing this topic:
AI Sovereignty vs Global Knowledge Sharing: Should Educational AI Systems Be Regulated as National Strategic Assets or Global Public Goods?

While we may all lead different lives and face different struggles, we have to bear in mind that we all share the same world and the same resources. Whether it is environmental problems or political unrest, what is happening in the world concerns all of us. Only through mutual understanding, unity, and collaboration can we lay the foundations of a worthier world.

As your committee Dais, we will work to keep the committees running smoothly. We will do our best to help you understand the procedures and to ensure that the perspectives of all delegates are heard and respected.

Sincerely,

The CWMUN Staff Board



What is this activity about?

The Change the World Model United Nations is a role-playing game. Your task is to impersonate a diplomat of the assigned Country and present the perspective of this Country's current government.

What should you do now?

Before the Simulation, you should:

☐ Create your handbook, a collection of relevant UN resolutions, reports, academic studies, and news from reliable media.

☐ Write the Position Paper, describing the position of your country on the topic you have been assigned to.

☐ Prepare some topics for Moderated Caucus debates, i.e. short formal debates which cover narrow aspects of each topic. For example, within the topic "Violence against women"; delegates can hold a caucus with the subtopic "Ways of preventing genital mutilation".

☐ Think about some ideas for the Resolution, at least two or three clauses that your State would like to include in the main body of the Resolution.

☐ Learn and practice the Rules of Procedure.

Why does this Background Guide Matters?

The strongest delegates are not those who memorise the greatest number of facts, but those who understand the issue from different perspectives.

As you read this guide, challenge yourself to think critically: ask why different countries defend different positions, identify competing priorities, question assumptions, and begin developing your own strategic understanding of the topic.

Remember: You are not preparing to pass an exam; you are preparing to participate in an international negotiation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this experience, you should be able to:

- Understand the international context surrounding the topic
- Explain your country's official position
- Develop evidence-based policy proposals
- Negotiate with other delegations
- Build consensus
- Translate ideas into diplomatic action
- Think like an analyst, not just a reader.

Tips (!)

Before attending the simulation, go beyond this Background Guide. Explore official UN documents, government statements, reports by international organisations, academic research, reliable news sources. Ask yourself: has the situation changed since this guide was written? Real diplomacy requires continuous learning. Learn about your Country from the official website of your State's permanent mission to the United Nations, and from other government websites (for example, the website and social media profiles of the Royal Family or President, Prime Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs...). Make sure to know as much as possible about the foreign relations of your Country! Consider that at the United Nations, Countries generally lean towards their own geopolitical blocs: Western, Former Soviet, African, Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin American... Consider also organisations such as the European Union (EU), the African Union, the Arab League, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Union of South American Nations (USAN)...

REMEMBER!

Your task is to present the official position of your assigned Country. Misrepresenting this position and/or representing your private views is against the rules, even if you do not agree with your Country's position. In any case, you must not hyperbolize nor satirise the position of your Country. Humour, and especially sarcasm, is generally not typical for formal writing nor formal debates. Although MUN welcomes wit and smart puns, please always be extremely considerate when using humour.

Think Like a Diplomat

As you prepare for the conference, do not ask only: “What does my country think?”, but also ask: “Why does my country think this?”. And even more importantly: “How can different countries move from disagreement to cooperation?”.

Because diplomacy is not about defending positions. It is about building solutions.

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Historical background and establishment of the UNESCO:

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is one of the most known organisations of the United Nations, it includes a total of 193 Member States and has its headquarter in Paris, France, including several other sites around the world. UNESCO's main aim is the achievement of world peace and international security through the promotion of science, culture, education and arts. UNESCO was founded in 1945 alongside the United Nations, both organisations were meant to replace respectively the decayed International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation and the Society of Nations, in a period when old institutions and the old international system were changing into a different global scenario. UNESCO conveys a message of peace and stability and, just like the United Nations, has the goal of bringing people and countries together.

During the decolonisation period, when the old European colonial powers were forced to desert their colonial properties, UNESCO encouraged the foundation of schools, universities and other educational centres in the new independent African countries. This initiative had not only an extraordinary impact for the development of those countries, but it also carried a message of global inclusion and solidarity. At that stage, new countries whose conditions were considerably far from the western standards, were also supported and included by international organisations. They joined these organisations and they voiced not only their needs as well as their ambitions, but also their willingness to participate in global matters.

Since its creation, UNESCO has promoted education, science and culture as public goods capable of supporting peace, development and international cooperation. Its historical roots can be traced back to earlier initiatives; including the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation and the International Bureau of Education. These experiences influenced the creation of UNESCO after the Second World War, when States sought new institutions able to prevent conflict through dialogue, knowledge and cultural understanding.

The Constitution[1] is the founding document of UNESCO and defines its purpose: membership, organs, decision-making structure, budget, relations with the United Nations and legal status. The first article states that " The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to enhance universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations".[2]

The constitution, overall, includes fifteen articles:

- Article 1: Purposes and Functions
- Article 2: Membership
- Article 3: Organs
- Article 4: The General Conference (composition, functions, voting, procedure, observers)
- Article 5: Executive Board (composition, functions)
- Article 6: Secretariat
- Article 7: National cooperating bodies
- Article 8: Reports by Member States
- Article 9: Budget
- Article 10: Relations with the United Nations Organization
- Article 11: Relations with other specialised International organisations and agencies

[1] Constitution of UNESCO - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements (un-documents.net)
[2] The creation of UNESCO - Brief history - History - Permanent Delegation of Portugal to UNESCO (mne.gov.pt)

- Article 12: Legal status of the Organization
- Article 13: Amendments
- Article 14: Interpretation
- Article 15: Entry into force

Mandate, structure and core functions:

Since its foundation, UNESCO has played a considerable role in promoting cooperation between nations and representing several issues in the international debate. UNESCO has been an active promoter of gender inclusion, scientific research to end poverty and improve the living conditions for the inhabitants of worse off world regions and has encouraged initiatives to promote education as a way to improve societies. One of the most recent initiatives that have retained considerable international interest has been the International Day of Education in the case of #LetAfghanGirlsLearn.[3]

UNESCO operates through the General Conference, where all Member States are represented and meet every two years, the Executive Board, which supervises the execution of programmes, and the Secretariat, led by the Director-General. Through this structure, UNESCO adopts programmes, provides technical assistance, publishes research and supports Member States in translating international commitments into national policies.[4]

UNESCO is not only an active promoter of its core values, encouraging cooperation and dialogue, but also an important source of analysis and records for humanitarian projects and policy-making. Many international organisations and national governments often rely on UNESCO's records and investigations to justify and support their policies and programmes. Furthhermore, UNESCO has an advisory role, not only for national and regional governments, but also for the United Nations Organisation itself, and encourages Member States to implement policies consistent with the Organisation's standards. "To ensure implementation, UNESCO provides support to Member States

[3] UN News, "Afghan Girls and Women Made Focus of International Education Day: UNESCO," *UN News*, January 19, 2023, https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132637.
[4] "Committees and Organs," UNESCO, January 19, 2026, https://www.unesco.org/en/member-states-portal/committees-and-organs.

to translate their legal obligations and political commitments on the rights of education in national frameworks including through conducting research and knowledge-sharing on how to apply the specific components of this right." [5]

UNESCO also works in the protection of cultural heritage and museums, showing that its mandate extends beyond education to the preservation of culture and shared heritage.[6]

Major Actions and Historical Impact:

UNESCO's historical impact can be seen in its ability to connect cultural protection, education and peacebuilding, particularly in contexts affected by conflict or inequality. Even though the Organisation was developed during the aftermath of the Second World War and the very beginning of the Cold War, UNESCO never lost sight of its goals and principles and has pursued its objectives despite difficult historical circumstances.

One relevant example is the reconstruction of the Stari Most in the city of Mostar, which was destroyed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The reconstruction of a bridge originally erected by the Ottoman Turks symbolised not only the multi-ethnic character of the region, but also the recovery of a shared cultural identity. UNESCO supported its reconstruction as a symbol of reconciliation, cultural diversity and the recovery of shared heritage. This case shows how the Organisation can use culture not only as an object of preservation, but also as an instrument for dialogue after conflict.[7]

Another important example of UNESCO's historical impact is the role in promoting global access to education. Through the *Education for All movement* and the 2000 *Dakar Framework for Action*, UNESCO helped place universal, inclusive and quality education at the centre of the international

[5] *Supporting countries in reviewing and developing education legal and policy frameworks*. (2023, January 27). UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/right-education/support
[6] *Supporting museums: UNESCO report points to options for the future*. (2022, April 21). UNESCO:https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/supporting-museums-unesco-report-points-options-future
[7] UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (n.d.). *Creating reconciliation: Mostar Bridge*. https://whc.unesco.org/en/story-mostar-bridge/

development agenda. This initiative shows how UNESCO has not only protected cultural heritage, but also influenced global educational priorities and national policy-making.[8]

Current relevance and ongoing challenges:

UNESCO remains relevant because education, science and culture continue to be central to global development and international cooperation. Current challenges such as unequal access to education, protection of cultural heritage require forms of cooperation that go beyond national borders. UNESCO contributes to these efforts through research, policy guidance, technical assistance and its participation in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), particularly the number four and eleven linked to education, equality, sustainability and cultural protection.[9]

However, UNESCO's effectiveness is limited by political divisions between Member States, unequal financial contributions and different national priorities. The Organisation can promote standards and encourage cooperation, but it often depends on States to implement its recommendations. This is particularly relevant in emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), where technological change is faster than many national and international regulatory processes.

Future Outlook and Questions for Delegates:

In the coming years, the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will likely remain a central forum for international cooperation in education, science and culture. However, its role will need to evolve in order to address new global challenges, such as digital transformation, unequal access to knowledge as well as the protection of cultural diversity. These issues may require UNESCO to strengthen its ability to guide Member States through common principles, technical assistance and international dialogue.

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[8]UNESCO, The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting Collective Commitments, UNESCO, 2000, available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000121147

[9]UNESCO and Sustainable Development Goals. (2020, January 14). UNESCO. https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals

A potential future priority for UNESCO will be to reinforce its practical effectiveness. Although the Organisation can promote standards, recommendations and cooperation, its action often depends on Member States' political will and financial commitment. Consequently, future reforms may prioritise improved coordination with national governments, increased support for developing countries, and ensuring that UNESCO's recommendations translate into concrete educational policies.[10]

Regarding educational Artificial Intelligence (AI), UNESCO may be expected to provide guidance without replacing national decision-making. Its future role could involve promoting ethical standards, encouraging knowledge-sharing and protecting the idea of education as a universal right. Simultaneously, UNESCO must respect the diverse priorities of Member States, particularly when education, technology and cultural identity are considered as matters of national sovereignty.[11]

Delegates may consider the following questions during the debate:

- How can UNESCO strengthen its role in supporting Member States without limiting national sovereignty?
- Which reforms could make UNESCO's recommendations more effective in practice, particularly for developing countries?
- How can UNESCO protect cultural and linguistic diversity while encouraging international cooperation on education and technology?

[10]UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, UNESCO, 1945, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution
[11]UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, UNESCO, 2021, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

AI Sovereignty vs Global Knowledge Sharing: Should Educational AI Systems Be Regulated as National Strategic Assets or Global Public Goods?

Introduction and context of the topic

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming education by changing the way knowledge is produced, accessed and shared. In schools and universities, AI systems can support teachers, personalise learning, translate materials, assist students with disabilities and expand access to educational resources. However, they also raise political, social and ethical questions as they can influence curricula, cultural representation and the collection of students' personal data.[12] The topic examines the friction between AI sovereignty and global knowledge sharing. AI sovereignty refers to the capacity of States to control the development, regulation and use of AI systems within their territory, particularly when they affect national curricula, student data, public education and cultural identity. At the same time, educational AI could also be treated as a global public good, especially if it helps reduce inequalities and supports countries with fewer technological resources. This approach aligns with the mandate of UNESCO, which promotes education, science and culture as instruments for peace and human development.[13]

The main challenge for delegates will be to balance the right of States to protect their educational systems with the need for global cooperation. Within UNESCO, the debate should therefore focus on how educational AI can be governed in a way that protects national educational systems while preserving equal access to knowledge.[14]

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[12]F. MIAO, W. HOLMES, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO, 2023, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research

[13]UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, UNESCO, 2021, pp. 1-3, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

[14]F. MIAO, W. HOLMES, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO, 2023, pp. 8-9 and pp. 14-15, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research

Root causes and historical development

The debate on educational AI is rooted in the wider digital transformation of education. Over the last decades, schools and universities have increasingly adopted online platforms, digital learning tools and data-based systems. While this process expanded access to knowledge, it also increased dependence on digital infrastructure, private technology providers and the collection of personal data. The issue intensified with the rise of AI systems capable of analysing data, producing content and personalising learning. In 2019, UNESCO adopted the Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education, encouraging Member States to prepare educational systems for the AI era while promoting inclusion and equity.[15] This debate gained urgency with the rapid spread of generative AI tools, capable of producing texts, images and learning materials with minimal human input. These tools created new opportunities for education, but also raised concerns about accuracy, bias, plagiarism, data protection and the role of teachers. UNESCO's Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research stresses the need for public regulation, human oversight and protection of learners' rights.[16] For this reason, the historical development of educational AI has gradually transformed a technical innovation into a political and diplomatic issue. What began as the digitalisation of learning has become a debate on data, educational autonomy, technological dependence and equal access to knowledge.[17]

Current Situation and Actors

The rapid expansion of AI tools in education is taking place while regulation develops at different speeds across countries. UNESCO recognises AI's potential to support Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), but also warns that technological change has often moved faster than policy debate and regulatory frameworks.[18] The main actors involved are Member States, which regulate national education systems; UNESCO, which provides ethical guidance and international coordination;

[15]UNESCO, *Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education*, UNESCO, 2019, available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368303
[16]F. MIAO, W. HOLMES, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO, 2023, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research
[17]UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, UNESCO, 2021, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence
[18]UNESCO, *Artificial Intelligence in Education*, UNESCO, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/artificial-intelligence

private technology companies, which develop many AI tools; as well as schools, universities, teachers and students, who are directly affected by their use.

The main debate revolves around who should control educational AI systems and under which principles as their interests differ. On the one hand, technologically advanced States often focus on competitiveness and regulatory control. While countries with fewer resources tend to prioritise affordability, capacity-building and access to reliable tools. In addition to that, teachers need new competencies to use AI responsibly, and learners must be protected from risks linked to privacy, bias, misinformation and overdependence on automated systems. UNESCO's recent AI competency frameworks show that teachers and students are not only users of these systems, but also key actors who need training, protection and clear guidance.[19]

Civil society organisations, academic institutions and digital rights groups are also relevant actors in the debate. They often raise concerns about the protection of learners, the transparency of AI systems and the risk that educational technologies may reproduce social, linguistic or cultural inequalities. Their role is important because the governance of educational AI does not only involve governments and companies, but also the communities directly affected by those tools. UNESCO has therefore emphasised the need for inclusive dialogue and for policies that involve educators, learners, researchers and other stakeholders in decisions concerning AI in education. [20]

International Response and Committee Action

The international response to AI in education has primarily focused on ethical standards, policy guidance and cooperation between Member States.

Through the 2019 *Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education*, UNESCO encouraged Member States to connect AI policies with the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).[21] The later *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*

[19]. MIAO, K. SHIOHIRA, *AI Competency Framework for Teachers*, UNESCO, 2024, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-teachers; F.MIAO, K. SHIOHIRA, N. LAO, *AI Competency Framework for Students*, UNESCO, 2024.

[20]F. MIAO, W. HOLMES, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO, 2023, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research

[21]UNESCO, *Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education,* UNESCO, 2019, available at:https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368303

provided a broader global framework based on human rights, inclusion, transparency and accountability.[22] More recently, UNESCO has addressed the rapid spread of generative AI through its *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, calling for public regulation, teacher training and human oversight in educational settings.[23] At the broader United Nations (UN) level, the *Global Digital Compact* has also promoted digital cooperation and the governance of AI in ways that reduce digital divides.[24] However, the international response remains constrained by varying priorities among Member States. Some prioritise national control, data protection and technological sovereignty, while others emphasise open access, capacity-building and shared educational resources. For UNESCO, the main challenge is now to move from principles to implementation, while respecting national priorities and unequal capacities among Member States.

Future challenges and possible approaches

The future of educational AI will depend on Member States' ability to regulate innovation without limiting access to knowledge. The main challenges will concern the protection of students' data, the transparency of algorithms, the prevention of bias, the role of teachers and the risk that countries with limited digital infrastructure may become dependent on foreign technologies. These issues are particularly relevant given UNESCO's emphasis on a human-centred approach to AI development grounded in human rights, inclusion, and accountability.[25]

A balanced approach combining national regulation with international cooperation may therefore represent one possible path. Member States may protect their curricula, languages and educational data through domestic laws, while UNESCO could encourage common ethical standards, technical assistance and capacity-building for countries with fewer resources. The Global Digital Compact

[22]UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence,* UNESCO, 2021, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence
[23]F. MIAO, W. HOLMES, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO, 2023, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research
[24]United Nations, *Global Digital Compact*, United Nations, 2024, available at: https://www.un.org/digital-emerging-technologies/global-digital-compact
[25]UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, UNESCO, 2021, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

further supports international cooperation to close digital divides and strengthen AI governance, reinforcing the need for coordinated but flexible responses.[26]

During the simulation, delegates should try to avoid treating AI sovereignty and global knowledge sharing as completely opposite positions. A possible compromise could include stronger national control over sensitive educational data, together with international cooperation on open educational resources, teacher training and transparent standards for AI tools. In this way, educational AI could be regulated in a manner that respects national priorities while preserving education as a field of global cooperation.[27]

[26] United Nations, *Global Digital Compact*, United Nations, 2024, available at: https://www.un.org/digital-emerging-technologies/global-digital-compact

[27] F. MIAO, W. HOLMES, *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*, UNESCO, 2023, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research

Annotated Bibliography

Hereafter you can find some links that we think could be helpful to deepen your knowledge on both the committee and the topic you will be discussing.

- The more inspiring and complete website when talking about the UN is their own: https://www.un.org/. Especially useful is their Official Document System (ODS) https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp.

- The website of your committee is always a good place where to start, in the case of the UNESCO, it is the following: https://www.unesco.org/en/education

- The UNESCO Constitution is useful to understand the mandate, structure and legal basis of the Organisation: https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution

- UNESCO AI competency frameworks for teacher and students are useful to understand responsible AI use in education: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-teachers and https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students

- UNESCO. "Committees and Organs," January 19, 2026. https://www.unesco.org/en/member-states-portal/committees-and-organs.

- UNESCO's *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research* provides AI regulation in education: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research

- UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* essential to understand the ethical framework on AI: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

- United Nations, Global Digital Compact concerns digital cooperation and AI governance: https://www.un.org/digital-emerging-technologies/global-digital-compact

- UN News. “Afghan Girls and Women Made Focus of International Education Day: UNESCO.” *UN News*, January 19, 2023. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132637.