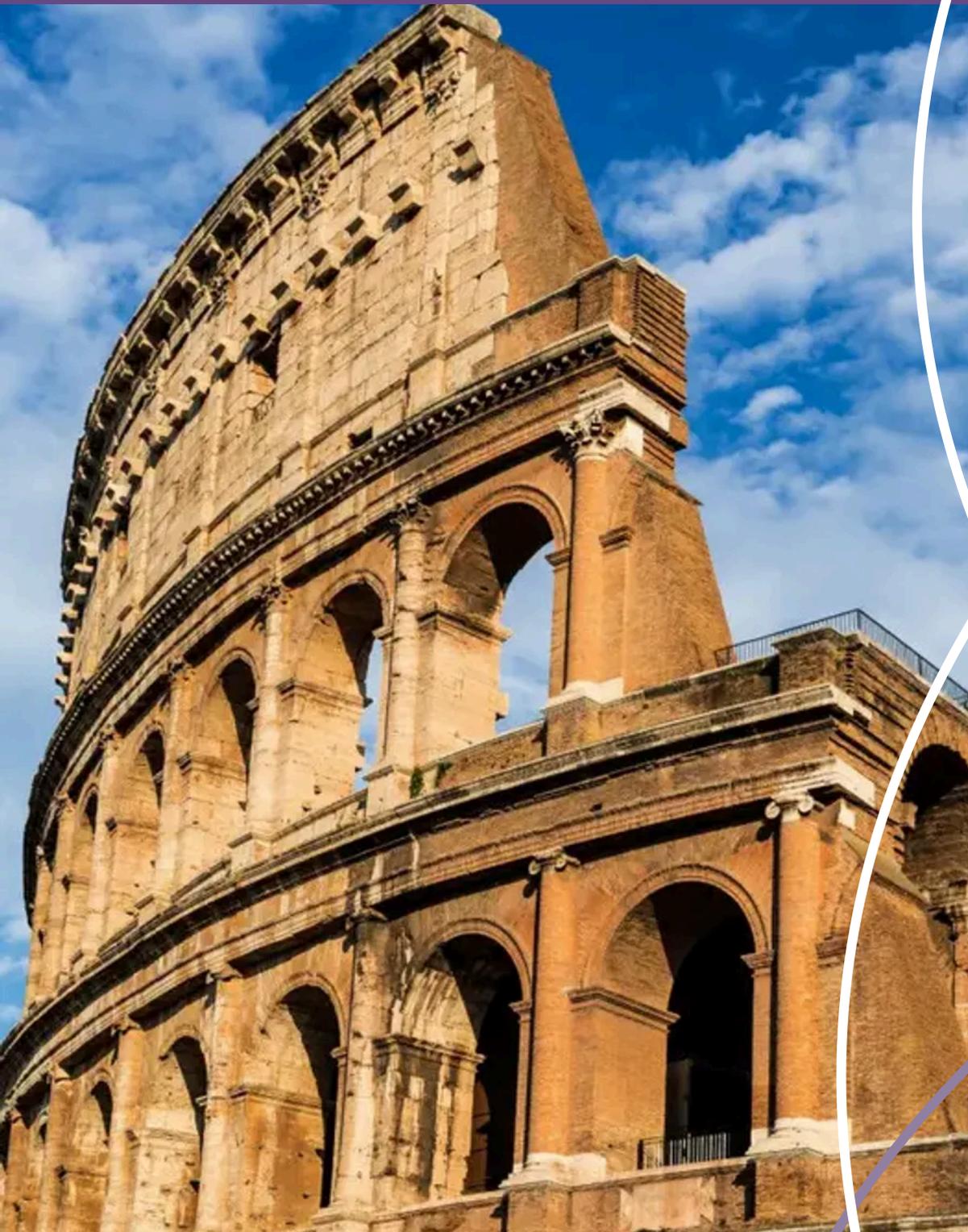# UNESCO

Topic A: How can UNESCO protect and preserve cultural heritage sites that are at risk due to armed conflict or terrorism?

Topic B: Is the rise of international tourism beneficial or detrimental to host countries?

Introduction to Committee

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) was founded in 1945 after the two world wars to help create lasting peace based on the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." Its goal is to strengthen our shared humanity by promoting education, science, culture, and communication. UNESCO works to achieve this by developing educational tools, preserving cultural heritage, promoting equal dignity among cultures, addressing social and ethical challenges, and running scientific programs and policies. UNESCO plays an important role in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: ensuring inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning for all. Over the years, UNESCO has carried out projects like literacy campaigns in Italy, creating tsunami early warning systems, and setting ethical standards for scientific research. The organization helps shape policies, set international standards, encourage cooperation, and build the capacities of member states in education. UNESCO is committed to building peace, ending poverty, and promoting intercultural dialogue through education, science and culture.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is responsible for fostering international cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication, and information to promote peace, security, and sustainable development, they do this by improving quality of education and teacher training, protecting world heritage sites, promoting cultural dialogue and advancing freedom of expression across borders.

UNESCOs past: UNESCO's history began with a 1942 Conference of Allied Ministers of Education and was formally established in 1945 in London by 37 nations, with its constitution taking effect in 1946. Its core mission was to build a more just and lasting peace by fostering "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" through education, science, and culture following World War II. Key milestones include the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 1982 Mondiacult Conference which redefined culture, the 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, and recent actions like the 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.

Present:

Currently UNESCO is tirelessly working on multiple projects, including:

·Regulatory framework of creative activity in Chile

·The quality of higher education in LAC

·Pre-Primary education in South Sudan

·Cost of secondary education in Oyo,Nigeria

·The current and future changes occurring in glaciers in Peru

·The cultural policies in Gambia, since 1988

 And countless more, as seen here:

UNESCO's future plans focus on leveraging the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024-2033) to promote global scientific collaboration for a sustainable future.

Introduction to Chairs

Hello Delegates, My name is Sally Rodier Luengo and it is my pleasure to chair the 2025, KCSOTOMUN III, UNESCO committee alongside my co-chair, Andrés Santiago Martínez Leshukov, who will be open to any questions regarding the MUN at andres.mar.les@kcpupils.org or sally.rod.lue@kcpupils.org , please do not hesitate to contact us if any doubts arise.

Concerning my MUN experience, I have participated in five previous MUNS, all as a delegate, and won prizes in two of these, one for most improvement and one honorable mention. I have discovered that the MUN world is a truly enriching one, where people grow and learn about themselves, MUNs allow you to develop your public speaking skills, your critical thinking and overall knowledge, and hopefully find passion and meaning in the work that we do here, all while participating in captivating debates, as I certainly have and trust you will as well.

While this Study Guide contains some general knowledge on this topic, I urge you to do your own investigating and searching on the internet, without the help of CHATGPT, in order to ensure that you can accurately represent your country, and recommend printing out a position paper, as I find that key points often escape the mind in heated debates, and having the information in front of you can prove an extremely valuable tool, as you might not be allowed devices during the debate. Stay informed!

Dear delegates, My name is Andrés Santiago Martínez Leshukov and I am going to be one of your chairs of UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the third edition of KCSOTO MUN. Regarding my experience in debating, I have participated in a handful of MUN's. However, this year is my first time chairing. Throughout this MUN I will aim to help you understand, grow, learn, and most importantly enjoy yourself.

Reflecting on my prior experiences in MUN, I had the chance to engage in tense but exhilarating debates where I managed to discuss with fellow delegates who excelled in negotiation, problem-solving, and tackling complex global issues. Furthermore, I understand that speaking in front of everyone may seem daunting at first. However, this is a feeling that will fade away since people engage with you in fierce debates which will make you want to counterattack them and prove your point in businesslike manners.

I hope this study guide serves you well in your research for this topic. I would advise you to conduct further research and not limit your research solely on this study guide. If you have any doubts do not hesitate to contact me or my co-chair at andres.mar.les@kcpupils.org or sally.rod.lue@kcpupils.org.

Introduction to Topic A

UNESCO defines a cultural heritage site as a cultural or natural place that has been recognized by UNESCO for its "Outstanding Universal Value" – significance that is exceptional and transcends national boundaries, benefiting all of humanity and requiring protection for future generations. These sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List to ensure their safeguarding and preservation, serving as vital reminders of our shared past and natural beauty.

In our Committee, one of the two topics at hand regards how we can protect these cultural heritage sites, particularly those facing risks, due to acts of violence such as armed conflict or terrorism. These cultural heritage sites remain a top priority for UNESCO as they burst with history, culture and knowledge that cannot be replicated, therefore their protection is of utmost importance.

Armed conflict and Terrorism are, indisputably, one of the crucial,pressing crises across the globe, particularly those occurring in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. These actions cause immeasurable damage and regression to all UNESCO represents, which is why we aim to achieve progress, with a solution that most nations can find agreeable, as these two pressing matters coincide.

Topic A : Context and Current Issues

Context

UNESCO began addressing at-risk cultural heritage sites due to increasing threats from human activities and natural disasters, such as armed conflict, climate change, uncontrolled urbanization, and pollution, as well as a lack of public awareness of heritage's intrinsic value. These threats were highlighted by past disasters and ongoing challenges, which underscored the need for international cooperation to protect these irreplaceable assets for present and future generations, as recognized by the World Heritage Convention.The Topic at hand has been at the forefront of the UNESCO committee's priority for some time now, due to its severity and urgency, some examples of past actions taken are:

The Key Event that began this movement and shone light on Cultural Heritage Sites under risk occurred in Hague in the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. It focused exclusively on the issue of Cultural Property which was at risk in the case of Armed Conflict. The conclusion was later expanded twice, once in 1954 and again in 1999, two more protocols supplemented and the whole Provision clarified. The guiding principles of the convention and the motivation for its conclusion, dissemination and respect are summarised in the preamble, which states, among other things:

... that any damage to cultural property, irrespective of the people it belongs to, is a damage to the cultural heritage of all humanity, because every people contributes to the world's culture

The following countries gained enhanced protection to their Cultural Heritage Sites from the Hague Convention:

- Czech Republic: Tugendhat Villa in Brno
- Georgia: Historical Monuments of Mtskheta
- Italy: Castel del Monte, National Central Library of Florence, Villa Adriana
- Lithuania: Kernavé Archaeological Site
- Mali: Tomb of Askia
- Mexico: National Museum of Anthropology
- State of Palestine: Monastery of Saint Hilarion / Tell Umm Amer (provisional)
- Ukraine: Various properties including those in the Struve Geodetic Arc (some provisional)
- Lebanon: A number of archaeological sites and historical complexes, including Baalbek and Tyre (many are under provisional enhanced protection)

In 2014, various Cultural Heritage Sites across Belgium and Azerbaijan (5 in total) were granted Enhanced Protection in the event of armed conflict. This was one of the first times our problem was brought to light, it was a tremendous advancement for the UNESCO committee, and the world, as each.

Topic A : Context and Current Issues

Another Key step towards the preservation of Cultural Heritage Sites occurred in 2015 the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova met with the Director-General of ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), Yves Daccord, to strengthen cooperation for the protection of Cultural Heritage Sites in countries affected by terrorism. They agreed on the imperative to join forces and work hand in hand to address the pressing challenges that stem from numerous armed conflicts in the world, where the cultural heritage and identity of people are under attack and threatened. During the meeting, it was agreed to reinforce efforts for joint collaboration, including the future establishment of an agreement of cooperation between the two organizations to focus on the areas of mutual interest and concern.

Current Issues

As of early 2025, UNESCO's International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection includes 34 properties, though this number is subject to change with ongoing additions.

At the moment, Cultural heritage sites are protected through a combination of international cooperation, national legislation, emergency response, and community engagement. International bodies like UNESCO advocate for preservation and provide funding, while national laws establish different levels of protection for cultural assets. Emergency rapid response teams and satellite technology help safeguard sites during conflicts and disasters. Furthermore, community involvement, capacity-building programs, and initiatives like Interpol's database of stolen cultural property also contribute to the protection efforts. These measures however, strive for the protection of these, rather than their preservation, or elimination of the risk all together.

UNESCO is making very good progress in the protection of the Cultural Heritage Sites, our mission is to take into account UNESCO's values and dive into the key roots of the issues, as well as finding solutions that uphold Cultural Heritage Sites, and reflect their importance within the plethora of cultures that the Sites stand for, currently 34 Sites have been granted enhanced protection, our mission is to find a way to grant Cultural Heritage Sites globally protection, of course for this to be obtainable all countries involved must be in accordance with each other, which means collaboration in order to succeed.

Topic A : Main Parties

Please, make no mistake in believing that the countries not on this list cannot make an impact, for this committee work, we need all delegations to share and come together to agree upon a solution. In my case, most of the Delegates who have earned prizes in my committee's were not part of the list, all delegates will be given an equal opportunity to debate and earn prizes, however the countries on this list have an obligation to debate and take an active role, for example on the general speakers list.

The Main Parties of this Topic are:
- **USA -** As a very important country in regards to global affairs.
- **China -** Has countless World Heritage Sites, will seek action of the issue.
- **Russia** – Military involvement in Syria and Ukraine has directly impacted heritage sites.
- **UK** – Colonial legacy, UNESCO member with an active role in heritage protection work.
- **France** – Colonial legacy, UNESCO member with an active role in heritage protection work.
- **Saudi Arabia** – both target and protector of Islamic heritage; sensitive role given past site demolitions.
- **Qatar** – Has provided funds in order to aid protection of cultural heritage sites but is also accused of fueling conflicts indirectly.
- **India** – Huge number of World Heritage sites, affected by uprising in Kashmir.
- **Japan** – Provide funds and are active members regarding heritage protection.
- **Germany** – Provide funds and are active members regarding heritage protection.
- **Spain** – History of heritage protection, terrorism experience (eg. ETA).
- **Brazil, Mexico, South Africa** – Global South voices, often have deep involvement in UNESCO debates.

Topic A : Bibliography

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Introduction to Topic B

International tourism has become one of the fastest growing developing industries in the world, with over 1 billion people crossing borders each year for leisure, culture or adventure. Moreover, for many countries tourism is a vital source of income, foreign exchange, and to create job opportunities. In addition, this allows cultural exchange, to fund heritage preservation and infrastructure development to foster. However, its rapid expansion also brings challenges: excessive amounts of tourism can damage fragile ecosystems, strain public services, erode local traditions, increase crime rates and over-crowding. Economic benefits of tourism may be unevenly distributed, leaving countries vulnerable to exploitation and to be dependent on a volatile tourism industry.

As UNESCO is dedicated to education, science, culture, and communication, UNESCO plays a central role in addressing the impacts of international tourism. The organisation is tasked with the role to ensure that tourism contributes to the preservation of heritage sites, respect for local cultures, and environmental protection. Therefore, within the context of UNESCO, this debate extends to the protection of cultural heritage sites, sustainable tourism, and rational development goals; raising the question: does the rise of international tourism serve the best interests of host countries, or does it cause more harm than good?

Topic B : Key Definitions

International tourism: Travel by individuals across the world for leisure, cultural, or recreational purposes. While excluding those employed in the visited country.

Overtourism: The situation in which the volume of tourists exceeds a destination's capacity to manage them sustainably, leading to environmental, social, and economic pressure.

Host country: The country receiving international tourists, responsible for managing tourism's economic benefits and mitigating potential negative impacts(the country that holds a cultural event which others are invited to- providing a service).

Sustainable tourism: Tourism that considers its current and future economic, social and environmental consequences. It aims to minimize negative impacts while maximising benefits for both visitors and host countries. This includes protecting natural resources, respecting local cultures, and fostering economic opportunities that benefit residents.

Cultural heritage: The traditions, beliefs, practices, and objects that a society inherits from the past and passes on to future generations, which are often central to tourism appeal.

Tourism dependency: An economic condition in which a country relies heavily on tourism as its primary source of revenue, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in tourism.

Topic B : Context and Current Situation

Context

Tourism has been a part of life for as long as history records. For instance, In ancient times, in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the wealthy would travel due to their prosperity. In Mediaeval times, political instability engulfed Europe which greatly limited leisure travel. Contrastly, the early modern period benefited from advances in navigation, opening new opportunities to visit faraway lands. For instance, people began to explore the globe through ships to discover new lands and rule them, creating empires.

The 19th-century Industrial Revolution transformed tourism. Railways, steamships, and improved roads made it possible for the growing middle class to travel not just locally, but internationally. In the 20th century, the arrival of commercial aviation, post-World War II economic recovery, and the popularity of package holidays fueled mass tourism. For instance, tourism aided Spain to get back on their feet after the Spanish civil war. Moreover, UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention further tied travel to the protection of cultural and natural treasures.

By the 1980s and 1990s, budget airlines and affordable holiday packages expanded tourism even more. The 2000s brought internet booking platforms and the rise of the sharing economy, making travel easier and more affordable than ever.

However, by the 2010s, many famous destinations- such as Venice and Machu Picchu faced overtourism, prompting global debates about sustainability and heritage protection. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 abruptly halted international travel, highlighting the economic fragility of tourism-dependent countries while also giving the environment a rare period of relief.

In the 2020s, recovery efforts have focused on sustainable tourism: finding ways to support economic growth while protecting the environment and preserving cultural heritage for the future.

Topic B : Context and Current Situation

Current Situation

Currently, international tourism has rebounded strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic, with global arrivals exceeding pre-pandemic levels and generating record revenues. The tourism industry supports roughly one in ten jobs worldwide and remains a vital economic support, especially for developing nations, while also fostering cultural exchange and producing open-mindedness amongst citizens; killing stereotypes. UNESCO has advanced initiatives like the Sustainable Tourism Pledge and the Task Force on Culture and Resilient Tourism to ensure tourism benefits local communities and protects heritage sites. However, rapid growth has intensified overtourism in destinations such as Barcelona, Venice, and Greek islands, causing resident protests over housing shortages, environmental stress, and cultural erosion. Governments have responded with measures including limits on short-term rentals, cruise visitor taxes, and tourist entry fees. At the same time, countries such as the USA, face declines due to policy and economic factors. Hence, the debate continues over whether the benefits of tourism outweigh its costs, and how UNESCO member states can balance economic gains with sustainability, community well-being, and heritage preservation.

Topic B : Points to Debate / Solutions

Previous solutions

UNESCO has advanced initiatives like the World Heritage Convention (1972- established the framework for identifying and protecting cultural and natural sites of outstanding value. This has been central to managing tourism at sensitive heritage sites through conservation standards, monitoring, and periodic reporting.), Sustainable Tourism Pledge(2021-this initiative engages tourism businesses in reducing environmental impact, supporting local culture, and improving traveler education.) and the Task Force on Culture and Resilient Tourism(2023-created to help member states rebuild tourism sectors post-pandemic with a focus on resilience, community empowerment and heritage preservation.)

Possible future solutions

1. UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Certification
   a. Create an internationally recognized system that certifies destinations meeting sustainability, heritage preservation, and community-benefit standards.
   b. Helps countries attract responsible tourists and sets a global benchmark.
2. Global Overtourism Monitoring Mechanism
3. Launch a joint UNESCO–UNWTO platform to track visitor numbers in real time at sensitive sites.
4. Enables countries to impose caps, timed entries, or seasonal restrictions before damage occurs.
5. Cultural Integrity Protection Fund
6. Establish a fund financed by a small "Heritage Levy" on international tourists to protect local culture and intangible heritage.
7. Supports crafts, festivals, languages, and other traditions threatened by mass tourism.

Topic A : Main Parties

ITALY:

As a top tourist destination Italy faces challenges balancing the economic benefits of tourism with threats of overtourism leading to environmental, social, and economic pressures. Moreover, tourism in Italy accounts for 13% of Italy's GDP in 2024. Italy benefits from tourism with massive revenue from international tourism, boosts preservation funding for heritage sites, and uplifts the cultural Italian heritage. However, overtourism in the major destinations in Italy including Venice, Florence, Rome, and Amalfi Coast have negative impacts. For instance, in Venice there are problems of overcrowding, damage to historical infrastructure, ship pollution, the rising in housing prices, and the displacement of the locals. Moreover, Venice has faced a declining population because of overtourism. Therefore, Italy supports tourism as an economic and cultural asset but pushes for sustainable tourism guidelines and visitor limits.

CHINA:

With iconic heritage sites including the Great Wall of China and the Forbidden City, tourism contributes to 7.3% of China's GDP in 2023. China deals with overtourism, heritage degradation from foot traffic and pollution, and commercialization risks-turning heritage from the past into "theme parks". For example, The Great Wall of China has been damaged by overtourism. However, China benefits from international tourism since it showcases Chinese heritage and culture and how it remains strong. Moreover, the creation of jobs and the development of tourism infrastructure(transportation and hotels). Therefore, China advocates for technology-driven visitor management and UNESCO support for heritage protection in countries with overtourism.

Topic A : Main Parties

PERU:

Home to Machu Picchu, Peru stands at a critical juncture: tourism fuels economic welfare and cultural appreciation, but also demands strict conservation measures. In 2024, the tourism industry contributed to 7.5% of Peru's GDP. Additionally, Peru benefits from tourism with the vital income needed to the local communities. Moreover, tourism brings international attention to Incan heritage and infrastructure development in rural areas. However, due to Machu Picchu receiving approximately 1.5million visitors annually soil erosion, littering and structural weakening at heritage sites occurs. Similarly, Peru is economically dependent on the volatile tourism industry. Therefore, Peru supports stricter UNESCO-mandated visitor caps lower than the current practices(5000 per day as of 2019) to protect Machu Picchu and eco-tourism models that spread visitors to lesser-known sites.

FRANCE:

The most visited country in the world with 100 million international visitors in 2023; tourism represents 9.7% of the GDP and supports 2.9million jobs(10.9% of employment). Moreover, tourism in France supports the global cultural influence due to French museums(Louvre, Musée d'Orsay) and monuments(Eiffel Tower), and it promotes the French language, gastronomy and lifestyle internationally. Furthermore, tourism enhances the heritage funding due to the visitor fees and taxes that help finance restoration and preservation of UNESCO-listed sites. However, France suffers from overtourism like in Paris since Paris suffers from overcrowding at major attractions, causing strain on infrastructure and resident quality of life and creating housing shortages worsened by short-term rentals. Likewise, coastal and ski resorts face environmental degradation. Therefore, France is unlikely to oppose tourism, given its centrality to the economy, but it will push for UNESCO-endorsed sustainable tourism frameworks.

Topic A : Main Parties

GREECE:

As one of the most tourism-dependent economies in Europe, with tourism accounting for 13% of the GDP and with ⅕ of the employment created with tourism, making Greece's economy is extremely dependent to changes in international tourism. Moreover, Greece benefits from tourism since tourism rescued Greece during a financial crisis by bringing foreign currency and creating jobs. Similarly, Greece undergoes infrastructural improvements thanks to the touristic demand, tourists learn about Greek culture and heritage, and the entrance fees to sites like Acropolis help fund archaeological preservation. However, the country's tourism income spikes in summer months, which means economic stability is heavily tied to global travel trends; Greece has issues with seasonal unemployment(heavy reliance on tourism means economic instability when there is a recession in tourism like COVID-19 . Similarly, Santorini, Mykonos, and Athens face overcrowding, pushing the citizens out and straining resources. Furthermore, Greece undergoes coastal erosion, water shortages on islands, and pollution from cruise ships. Therefore, Greece will likely argue that tourism is overall beneficial if regulated- push for sustainable tourism frameworks-caps on daily visitors to sensitive sites, eco-friendly infrastructure, and community-based tourism and advocate for international cooperation in protecting heritage sites while keeping them accessible.

Topic B : Bibliography

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