Ending the first day of the conference, the opening ceremony inspired us with words and art. In the Cheng Yi Auditorium, students from the school presented a drum dance coupled with Kung Fu moves. President of the General Assembly Eugenia Lin introduced all four speakers from Hwa Chong Institution: Principal Pang Choon How, the Co-Chair of the THIMUN Foundation Ms. Frances Laughlin, Mr. Duarte Marques from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Secretary General Remco Holstege.

After astonishing the crowd with their faultless choreography, Hwa Chong students left the floor to their Principal proud to celebrate THIMUN’s 50th anniversary, and Hwa Chong’s 100th anniversary next year.

“We, as citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves to forget differences of race, language or religion and become one united people; to build a democratic society where justice and equality will prevail and where we will seek happiness and progress by helping one another.”

Singapore’s National Pledge was mentioned by Mr. Pang Choon How as he commenced his speech. As he declared, our multifaceted world is increasingly divided by conflicts of ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality and even age. This is often seen in the media with the proliferation of hate speech, support for discrimination and brutality against minorities, or fake news overall.

Nevertheless he insisted there is a glimpse of hope we should all hold on to when faced with such dark facts. This is why the role of delegates today is crucial: building the foundation of mutual understanding and cooperation to sow the seeds of our international community.

The MUNITY EAST team offers their sincere apologies to the Deputy Secretary General, Stephanie Kohnimmel from Mont’ Kiara International School, for misspelling her name in the previous issue.
Remco Holstege was awed, during his first conference in 2015, when he saw people from so many different backgrounds work together to reach comprehensive solutions for global issues. He highlighted the fact that Model United Nations helped him better understand himself and the people around him and has equipped him with tools of eloquence and argumentation to confront the future.

Mr Pang Choon How also quoted a Malaysian phrase, “gotong royong” which translates to “cooperation as a community”. Our aim should be to fulfill a so-called “global village”, a world in which all can work hand-in-hand toward peace. It is not about building a pitch-perfect world where all individuals are equal and identical, but rather about creating meaningful systems in which the community as a whole benefits - not just the individuals. “No man is an island, and when we act we must think of others.” This idea was also shared by Confucius who said that “a virtuous person is one who helps others to obtain what he would have wished to obtain, and help others succeed in the way he would like himself to be.”

The United Nations strives to put into place solutions to consider the whole world as one community; to practice tolerance and live with one another as neighbours. The power of the UN is indeed limited, recognized Ms. Laughlin in her talk, as it does not have an army and it is not a sovereign government. Instead the international organisation’s strength lies in its communicating, discussing, agreeing, and striving towards consensus. Words are the most important weapon, as she quoted Thomas Kyd, who said in 1589, “where words prevail not, violence prevails”. And this is precisely what we should strive to avoid.

For this Mr Pang Choon How would like us to keep in mind the three “S’s”: Service, Sacrifice and Selflessness. During lobbying and debating, delegates should bear in mind that they are working in the interest of the “global village”. Whatever role we may assume, we must make sure we inform ourselves of all the issues going on, because everyone’s voice is important.
"Harmful Traditions" are practices involving acts of violence or violations of human rights. As traditions, they have been woven into the cultural roots of communities and deemed by their perpetrators as acceptable cultural practices. Today, commonly recognized prevalent harmful traditions include female genital mutilation and child marriages.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the practice of partial or total removal or alteration of the external female genitalia, or any other injury to female genitalia that is done for non-medical reasons. FGM is practiced in 30 countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Approximately 30 million adolescent females, usually aged 10-15, undergo this procedure annually. For many communities, it is a ceremonial tradition that marks a girl's rite of passage into womanhood. However, a number of health problems can occur due to FGM, including fatal bleeding, inability to conceive, and numerous complications during childbirth that pose significant risk to the mother's life.

While female genital mutilation is illegal in many countries, such regulations are often not enforced by the government. As affirmed by Tak Woo (Delegate of Ethiopia, Beijing World Youth Academy), “it is [stated] in the Declaration Laws of Ethiopia that any permanent bodily damage, including FGM, is illegal.” However, because the tradition has already been firmly integrated into communities' societal norms, “there have been no actual regulations in terms of enforcing these laws.” In another case, Egypt is working to put an end to this harmful practice. Didi Kolawole (Delegate of Egypt, Webber Academy) pointed out that, “Egypt is reaching out to religious officials and leaders and letting them know that [FGM] is in no way a religious practice, but a cultural one.” Unfortunately, in most countries, most efforts have ultimately failed because communities are unwilling to let go of their traditions and girls are afraid of being shunned or cast away by their communities if they do not undergo genital mutilation.

Another harmful tradition is child marriage where one or both parties are under the age of 18. Because child marriage harms girls' rights to health, education, equality and a life free from violence and exploitation, it is considered a violation of human rights. Child marriage has continued to be widely practiced in 117 countries. Unfortunately, technology has also been playing a role in this detrimental violation of human rights. A recent case involved a young girl in South Sudan who was auctioned off for marriage using Facebook. Although child marriage rates have declined over the last decade, with one in five girls instead of one in four girls being married off, over 12 million girls are still being subjected to this atrocity.

While efforts are made and some communities have begun letting go of harmful traditions, there is still much progress to pursue. We must keep moving forward.
Day two in the ICJ is over, and the first case has been completed. The case for the past two days? The Marshall Islands vs Three Respondents: India, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. But what's the fuss all about? Why do the Marshall islands wish to carry out a case against such countries?

The Marshall islands filed an application to the court concerning their opinion that “[many nuclear states] were not complying with their obligations for nuclear disarmament [under Article Six of the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)] and were not acting in good faith”. Although the Marshall Islands contacted several nations, from this application, only three nations accepted the case (India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom).

The Marshall Islands may be particularly interested in the NPT, due to the fact that they have a history of being used for nuclear testing, as the Advocates for the Marshall Islands, Anna Metz and Sophia Rhoer (Yew Chung International School) stated that “in the 1950s, the US conducted [67] nuclear tests on the Marshall Islands, which caused great devastation… That's why the Marshall islands are big advocates for nuclear disarmament.”

Taine Te Haki and Kristine Hsa, (Mont’ Kiara International School) the Advocates for the Three Respondents, stressed that, “...we are of the opinions that [the UK, India and Pakistan] are actually fulfilling their obligations under the NPT and Article Six in particular, and therefore, there should be no dispute, as the Marshall Islands and the Three Respondents are on common ground on this issue.”

When asked what they hope to achieve by winning this case, the Applicants responded with, “Although our chances of winning this case are slim... the Marshall Islands just want to... prove that that the three respondents were not following what they were obliged to do”. However, the Respondents had a different agenda, and, “...hope that the true disarmament of many nations will finally be recognised, and that Marshall Islands will be able to realise this, and perhaps take this into account... when seeing the world as a truly denuclearized place... as many countries have denuclearisation at it's heart.”

With the court still deliberating who is the winner of the case, there’s no knowing who will be vindicated. All the Applicants, Respondents (and ourselves as observers) can do is sit back, hold tight, and hope for the best.
START OF DEBATE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Nathalie Phongsavanh and Elise Tsai
LAYOUT BY Emily Jacobs
The “Internet Era” describes the momentous period in the 21st century characterized by a heavy reliance on the Internet and digital devices overall. Although people of all ages are impacted by an increasing dependence on such tools, young people have arguably been affected more than any other age group, earning them the name of “screenagers”. That is not to say the influences are all negative, as the effects of Internet use on youth today have been more or less mixed. However, it is undeniable that online activities pose a degree of risk for teenagers: for instance, online addiction, which could result in poor physical health, and lack of cybersecurity.

Online activities also carry the risk of cyber insecurity. One of the most popular social media outlets, Facebook, has recently been subjected to an information leak scandal. Worse, almost 71% of U.S. teens use Facebook, and even more around the world, stated Pew Research Center. Considering this, young people constitute a vulnerable group in terms of cyber insecurity.

A concrete symbol of the growing concerns about the safety of youth, especially in their online presence, THIMUN Singapore this year includes the “question of digital and cybersecurity on search engines and social media” to be debated in General Assembly 1, as well as “Promoting physical exercise in the Internet Era” in General Assembly 6.

Regarding the link between online addiction and poor health, the delegates in GA6 (a committee focusing on health and youth) discussed how adolescents are almost always connected and communicating via social media applications. This is extremely engrossing and could consume every part of their lives, even offline. One integral part of a healthy lifestyle - exercise - may be especially neglected. Specifically, Ethan Lee (Delegate of Haiti, Australian International School Malaysia) and Enzo Gouliardon (Delegate of U.S.A., French School of Singapore) stressed in unanimity that “obesity levels are getting higher in the Internet era”, which is consistent with the BBC’s finding, with obesity being the new norm and 124 million obese young people around the world.

Another aspect of online activity is the lack of cybersecurity. Specifically, Leen Armouti (Delegate of Chad, Newton International Academy of Qatar) and Chloe Chang (Delegate of Colombia, Shekou International School) expressed concerns regarding how social media accounts could cause “leakage of personal information, sensitive data...”. Chang also mentioned that “cyberterrorism has massively increased... which may affect many young people.” When asked what solutions they plan to propose, the trend across the delegates’ answers appeared to be the emphasis on government measures to decrease the negative effects of online activities. Concretely, in GA6 most delegates agreed on the positive effects of physical education and encouragement of voluntary workouts to combat online addiction. This is where the government comes in. Arya Kumar (Delegate of Costa Rica, Jerudong
International School) specified that the role of the government is to do “as much as they can to help their countries”. Kumar also added on how the government could help in promoting workouts, such as setting “PE lessons [that] must happen every week to promote exercise among young people”. While most delegates agreed on the effectiveness of PE classes, they remain hesitant regarding the question of compulsory physical education.

Meanwhile, in GA1 most delegates focused on how governments could require social media sites to increase advertisements or friendly reminders to increase awareness on the issue of cyber insecurity. However, as Armouti and Chang said, that alone may not be enough, and suggested additional measures, such as “enforcing updates for apps so that all the systems are up to date which would make it harder for hackers to enter”.

As illustrated by the delegates’ responses, it is without doubt that the government plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety of young people online. Passionate delegates were eagerly awaiting the commencement of debate, ready to defend their resolutions, argue for the duty of governments, and ultimately reduce the negative effects of the Internet on screenagers.
Youth empowerment is the gradual process wherein young people take action to take charge of their lives and improve them. They develop decision-making skills and create opportunities to unlock and practice new abilities. Utilising their newfound skills, youths are able to control the course of their lives, while gaining confidence and molding the mindset necessary to become conscientious, adult citizens.

Now the question arises, how do we achieve youth empowerment?

In 2016, less than half of 18 and 19-year-olds in the US were registered to vote. Possible causes included the lack of encouragement to vote from their community or the belief that their vote could not make a difference. In response to these causes, Romir Williams (Chair of General Assembly 6 from Yew Chung International School) countered that he would vote because “it is important to make an impact and communicate [his] personal views” and try to help improve the world around him. For Asher Nyhoff (Delegate of Egypt, Webber Academy Canada), social media has played a huge role in empowering teens due to the abundance of information “from information sharing [platforms like] Facebook to more sophisticated sources of analysis [such as] The Economist.” Sherrick (Admin, Hwa Chong Institution) elaborated that social media provides youths with “first-hand information of current happenings” by constantly discussing and presenting current affairs. This is also affirmed by Alice Jeong (Chair of General Assembly 6 from Shekou International School) who asserts that social media has “helped [youths] to be more aware and up-to-date with many global issues,” while providing the platform to voice their own opinion. In turn, youths have a platform to become more politically aware and active.

Continuing the subject of social media, there have been numerous campaigns launched by social influencers to empower youths. One of these is the Generation Unlimited campaign, launched by BTS, a world-renowned Korean boy-band. On September 24, BTS delivered a speech at the United Nations urging young people to voice their truths: “No matter who you are, where you’re from, your skin colour, your gender identity, just speak yourself.” The campaign is aimed to ensure every young person is in education, training or employment by 2030. Becoming the first Korean group to speak at a United Nations conference, their speech went viral with the hashtag #BTSxUnitedNations trending worldwide. With their expansive reach across various social media platforms, their words have encouraged, inspired, and most importantly, empowered youths from all over the world.

Other campaigns includes the “Ice Bucket
No matter who you are, where you're from, your skin colour, your gender identity, just speak yourself."

Kim Namjoon, Leader of K-pop Band BTS
While recent reports from the World Bank have detailed unprecedented GDP growth in various Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), the question of whether sustainability should be a priority in economically-disadvantaged regions remains controversial. In comparison to More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs), many LEDCs still struggle to support their population as they have a lower standard of living and are often affected by poverty.

Faced with increasing pressure to present themselves on the world stage, LEDCs may prioritize economic productivity over environmental concerns, hence, resorting to ecologically-harmful practices with the aim of generating profits. Yet, simultaneously, LEDCs are confronted by environmental conservation policies of affluent nations and pressured to implement similar policies in spite of their inherent economic disadvantages. In the midst of this Catch-22 situation, how should LEDCs reconcile these competing influences?
Along with other members of the ECOSOC committee, Ishwarya Krishna and Akhilan Singam (Delegation of the United Kingdom, Australian International School Malaysia) reflected on how the exploitation of resources can seem necessary and “irreversible,” but ultimately concluded there “is no excuse for being an environmentally harmful country.” They emphasized the importance of “slowly [moving] into a sustainable environment” through the incentivization of “renewable energy sources.” Lin Qianru (Delegation of Nigeria, Cedar Girls’ Secondary School) echoed Krishna’s sentiments, adding that LEDCs must focus on sustainability to “prevent debt towards more developed countries” in the future.

Amidst the modern world’s push to raise environmental awareness, there is no question that LEDCs will inevitably invest in sustainability. Although the allure of short-term economic stimulus can, at times, be overpowering, LEDCs should recognize the significance of contemporary environmental issues. Regardless of their economic situation, all countries will affected by environmental issues such as climate change and resource depletion in the coming centuries. In fact, LEDCs may even be subjected to greater environmental stress than their MEDC counterparts. Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, is poised to be stricken by drought and crop failure at a rate far higher than countries in the Northern Hemisphere.

Thus, short-term solutions to economic disadvantage in LEDCs must be designed with long-term goals in mind. Without a clear vision, LEDC policies will be unable to support their future, even if they temporarily alleviate suffering. For instance, an LEDC with untapped oil resources may extract as much oil as possible in a short period of time to pay off foreign debt and support its population. As tempting as it may be, complete extraction of this resource isn’t the ideal solution. Such a measure will ultimately fail in a long-term economic specialization due to the eventual devaluation of oil as renewable energy sources become more prevalent.

As Ashley Ye and Kevin Meng (Delegation of the Russian Federation, ECOSOC, Shanghai American School Puxi) pointed out, designing long-term solutions not only “helps conserve resources” but also “aids the country in the long run.” Arianna Borromeo and Gabby Uy (Delegates of Moldova, ECOSOC, British School Manila) reiterated this notion, asserting that “sustainability is important from both an economic and environmental perspective – one cannot survive without the other.” Urging LEDCs to embrace sustainability, they worry that ignoring environmental issues could “compromise the livelihoods of future generations” and represent a “selfish [failure] to consider long-term implications.”

Though we cannot expect LEDCs to sacrifice possible economic growth at the behest of MEDC idealism, we can work to incentivize and support “green” initiatives, whether this means that MEDCs offer trade advantages to LEDCs, invest in LEDC infrastructure, or even go so far as to reduce LEDC debt. Affluent nations simply cannot expect LEDCs to spontaneously adopt sustainable practices of their own accord. Without international stimulus, there may be no hope of LEDCs embracing sustainability. Although this transition will invariably be painful at first, it will leave LEDCs well-positioned to lead the world into a new age of green energy and environmentally-conscious development.
If one comes up with three words to describe the preparation of the THIMUN conference by our hosts, the Hwa Chong Institution, beforehand they would be stress, stress, and stress. Holding an event is not for everybody; you have to be organized, calm under pressure, responsible, and most important of all a good team player.

The preparation began in January, when Ms. Josephine Phay, who is in charge of the Admin Team this year, started to coordinate with rest of the school in terms of when this event happens and how can they make use of the school's facilities and spaces. After everything was arranged, the venues had to be booked. Then Ms. Phay began to contact the Hwa Chong students who were interested in taking part in this event. Next came contacting the teachers of performing groups to ask if they were able to help out. The next major step, which happened in the middle of the year, was selecting the head of the admin team and the executive committee. Being part of the team is not easy, candidates have to go through a rigorous application process. These procedures vary from year to year, but generally there will be interviews, sign ups, and a vetting process to consider whether the students reach the standard and are capable of handling these jobs.

Even though things are all well-arranged, everything must be double checked including the venues. "After all, we finalize the action plan. So in every minute in every single day, we have to check what are all the different team doing, who in which team, what are the procedures to follow. We are sending the list we need to borrow, for instance chairs, desks, whiteboards, etc, to our colleagues from the Estate and Media Tech departments if they can help."

Challenges are inevitable throughout the phases of preparation. "The food issue, for instance, which had cropped up several times. We want to ensure that the leftovers are disposed of in a sustainable way. Moreover, the uneaten food packs are donated immediately after lunch to charity organizations. We want to make sure that everything runs efficiently. There are many considerations. We would like delegates and directors to have a taste of Asia. But at the same time, not everyone is used to the cuisine, so we do need to have different considerations." Ms. Phay revealed.

"We have and we will definitely like the partnership to continue. We are proud of our campus, and we believe in what the Model United Nations is doing. We do enjoy showing our campus to everyone," added Ms Phay.

These preparations as a whole required a lot of effort and a huge workforce, but by the end it paid off. Special thanks and appreciation to Ms. Phay and all the staff that had been organizing and arranging THIMUN Singapore this year, it is deeply appreciated by everyone!
Delegates, ready for Gala Night? After participating in three tiring days of the conference, you are likely stressed out and fatigued. Tonight’s Dinner & Dance is then the perfect place for you to relax, indulge in good food and leave the committee room for a kitted-out event hall, with special lighting, props, and decorations! This will surely be one of the most exciting and memorable events for the hundreds of eager THIMUN participants; and as such, we examined its preparation.

Every year, the Orchid Country Club’s event space transforms to welcome 500 to 700 students, as they dance, feast and are shuttled around the island. Arranged by Tour East Singapore, the event includes, “entertainment [such as] music, and a drum performance,” and an impressive dancefloor. Lasting from seven to ten pm, this event is also a global cocktail of multiculturalism. As Tour East representative Mr. Wayne Wany stated, “Since THIMUN Singapore gathers people all around the world, we would like to see some cultural interaction [among the students] during the gala.” With this, the organization also expressed their hope to “add some traditional dance or cultural interaction in next year’s gala night.”

As for the delegates, for many it is their first time attending THIMUN Singapore, and they have yet to attend the intriguing Dinner & Dance. They do not know what the coming gala night will have in store. Most are expecting to meet new friends and interact with various people from other committees, schools, countries. Despite this, the food is what makes everyone the most excited. As Ella Hirmasto (Delegate of Kenya, Harrow International School of Hong Kong) expressed, “This is my first time. I’ve been told it’s a bit ‘try-hard’… but I’m still looking forward to the FOOD!”. Similarly, Min Ki Kim (Delegate of Japan, Surabaya International School) stated, “This is my first time as well. I’m expecting food and good music. Among these, I’m most excited to make … [great] friends.” Adeline Tham (Delegate of Amnesty International, Putai Senior High School) added, “I’ve been to several MUNs, but I had never attended a gala night before. I’m expecting a lot from the food, music and perhaps the show. I’m anticipating to have great time with my friends.” Returning delegates, on the other hand, shared that the gala night is really entertaining and were impressed by this enjoyable party.

All in all, The Orchid Country Club is an amazing venue and the food is delightful. This grand event warmly welcomes you, THIMUN participant and we wish you great fun!
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