

COMMISSION GUIDE

SOCHUM



CCB MUN XVIII

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

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President's Letter

Dear delegates,

Greetings, and welcome to this year's SOCHUM commission! We hope you are as excited and committed as we are to this model. Our names are Manuela Paz and Juan Fernando Castaño, we are both from Colegio Hispanoamericano and we have worked together as presidents several times during the past two years, enjoying every single moment. We really love working together because we have different ideals and backgrounds, and these differences always help us to understand unusual perspectives. Apart from enjoying being partners, we also love to connect with the topics, the debates and the commission itself. As students, we are committed to learning and gaining knowledge and experience, especially by interacting with local and external issues in today's world. That's why we hope you get engaged and immerse in the topics we've proposed. We have made sure they are current issues that affect our generation and also stimulate your future leadership potential. CCB is a great experience to grow and expand your horizons, so take the opportunity to get the best out of it. As presidents, we want to help you find the best version of yourself as a leader, speaker and student, but especially as an excellent human being.

Our own experience has been extremely varied in all areas of UN models. Fernando has been participating as president since sixth grade and has been an excellent delegate as well. Manuela has been part of the press team, president, and is the current secretary general of our school's model. We consider ourselves open-minded and understanding people, whose future we are building together, and we hope you can take the ideas from the model and implement them in your future projects because, in the end, the goal of this model is to help you develop the willingness to listen to new perspectives and opinions, as long as they are presented with excellent arguments and innovative solutions.

We expect transparency, accountability, and respect towards everyone in the commission; even though strong opinions will be debated, we must not forget that the UN's principal statement is to discuss and share perspectives in a diplomatic way. We expect you to really assume a vigorous position, backed up with concrete facts and memorable interventions. However, remember that to be able to persuade and help other delegations, you need to listen carefully, taking into account that the world depends on tolerance, alliances, and teamwork. Always keep in mind that the aim of the United Nations is to prevent war from happening, to restore security, to protect people, and to advance human development and social progress.

Remember, anything you're not sure about or questions you might have, feel free to ask us at any moment. We will be constantly available and also open to suggestions; any comments will be taken as constructive criticism to make us better and level up our skills, not only as presidents but as citizens of the world.

In conclusion, thank you all for being part of this commission. Remember to have fun and to have confidence in yourself so that you can offer your best effort during the model.

Our best wishes, Manuela & Fernando.

1. Commission Information

i. History

The General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the third of six committees. As the name suggests, SOCHUM addresses the social and cultural consequences of humanitarian emergencies. The abundance of issues and topics on the General Assembly's (GA) agenda made it extremely inefficient in addressing specific humanitarian calamities. That is why, one year after the historic creation of the United Nations, the GA assigned items pertaining to social, humanitarian, and cultural challenges to the SOCHUM agenda. In 1950, it became an official working body of the UN and was established as the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

At first, it only had 51 member nations; nowadays, there are 193 permanent participants. Given that SOCHUM is an organism under the General Assembly's control, it does not have the autonomous power to pass resolutions. The Committee has been an influential power in arrears many milestone pieces of normativity. Perhaps most notably, SOCHUM can be recognized for the recommendation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was accepted by the General Assembly in December 1948. Presently, the Committee is dealing with a variety of interrogations concerning human rights, including gender, racial, and indigenous rights' violations. Although the Committee also discusses suitable measures to overcome impediments to social development, its focus for the past few years has been on protecting human rights and promoting fundamental freedoms.

(Information Platform: Swiss Human Rights Portal, 2011)

ii. Structure

All of the member states of the General Assembly, participate in SOCHUM's meetings, discussions, and voting procedures. Each nation has a vote; all votes hold the same value during voting procedures. SOCHUM has systematic sessions that start in September every year. Special and emergency conferences can also be held if a majority of member states reach an agreement.

Furthermore, SOCHUM's strength is in its capability to submit recommendations regarding issues of peace and security to members of the General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and other bodies and agencies. While recommendations focused at member states are not lawfully obligatory, they have historically helped to encourage members of the General Assembly to adopt specific positions. SOCHUM can also command studies or demand reports from special rapporteurs from the Human Rights Council.

iii. Bibliography

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2. Topic 1: Regulation of freedom of speech and circulation of false information in the new era of mass media

i. History/Context

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Freedom of the speech is the right to express and circulate one's opinions without censorship from the government. On December 2, 1766, the Swedish legislative parliament passed legislation that is acknowledged as the world's first law supporting the *freedom of the press and freedom of information*; the law stated the principle that citizens of a state should be able to express information without fear of punishment.



The internet is a tool for mass distribution of information, the data published on the world wide web is available to everyone, anywhere in the world. That's why the internet is, perhaps, the most difficult media to moderate. The universalization of information carries a series of consequences and new challenges for nations. Misinformation and fake news are

the main problems the commission is going to debate, as the globalization of false information can be spread around the world with one simple tweet.

There is a conflict between the right of freedom of speech and the spread of false data; whereas everyone has the right to freely express their concerns on public matters, the spread of false information and fake news is a threat to national security, stability and even to public health. The circulation of fake news has generated concerns about the regulation of the internet and of published information in general. This is why there is a need to find a justified balance between the appropriate expression of opinion and free speech through the internet, and the regulated content which is to be restricted without falling into straight censorship.

Key terms:

- **Fake news:** *"False stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views."*
- **Censorship:** *"Censorship, the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good. It occurs in all manifestations of authority to some degree, but in modern times it has been of special importance in its relation to government and the rule of law."*
- **Globalization:** *"Globalization is the spread of products, technology, information, and jobs across national borders and cultures."*
- **Internet:** *"Internet, a system architecture that has revolutionized communications and methods of commerce by allowing various computer networks around the world to interconnect."*
- **Social Media:** *"The term social media refers to technologies, platforms, and services that enable individuals to engage in communication from one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many"*
- **Hate Speech:** *"speech or expression that denigrates a person or persons on the basis of (alleged) membership in a social group identified by attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical or mental disability, and others."*
- **Click-Bait:** *"articles, photographs, etc. on the internet that are intended to attract attention and encourage people to click on links to particular websites"*
- **Populism:** *"political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want"*
- **Artificial intelligence (AI):** *"The ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings"*

Definitions according to:

(n.d.). Britannica. Retrieved August 05, 2020, from <https://www.britannica.com>

ii. Current Situation

New technologies, however, have created new challenges to media freedom; hate speech, fake news, clickbait and populism are making it harder for people to understand the real matters of today's society. In fact, according to The Washington Post "Almost 60 percent of false claims about coronavirus remain online without a warning label" Misinformation is a threat to social security and stability, which is why many states are questioning the importance of regulations in the diffusion of information. Currently, there are issues with nations spreading misinformation, sometimes their own people and sometimes foreigners. Social media is used a lot to spread false information, and this is where get false data as "news" or even "facts". In order to illustrate the issue, some of the most important **current** situations will be explained below.

Fake news during COVID-19 pandemic

During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic fake news represented a risk to human life on a global scale. Experts are referring to this new avalanche of misinformation as "pollution" or even as "The Second Pandemic". There were so many pandemic headlines with COVID-19 "treatments" trending on platforms such as Twitter that, according to a *Nature Research Journal* study, when an expert team analysed 225 pieces of Fake News, they found that about 60% of the information involved recontextualising or reframing real facts and situations in a way that meant these facts were no longer true. The main problem with misinformation during an epidemic crisis is that individuals make the decision whether to believe it or not, whether or not to share it, and some people even change their behavior or confidence in reliable sources such as the WHO, potentially putting themselves at higher risk of catching and spreading not just false information, but the disease itself.

"We are not just fighting an epidemic; We are fighting an infodemic"

-World Health Organization (WHO)

Fake News and Politics

Illegal groups and political agents are using social media to spread rumors and false information in order to use them as tools for persuasion tactics. A study from the university of *SUNY (State University of New York)* states that neither the left nor the right has an exclusivity on sharing misinformation, with both of them incorporating truth in totally invented narratives. Reflecting the *Nature Research Journal* study, during the United States 2016 elections, from the 30 million of tweets preceding the election day, more than 25% of them were referencing fake news or totally biased data. The EU Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya Gabriel said:

“Fake news is a direct threat to the very foundations of our democratic society... At the heart of my action lies the defence of citizens’ right to quality information which is a cornerstone of our democracies. I want to have an open and broad discussion about fake news to address this complex phenomenon in order to overcome the challenges ahead of us.” Said by the EU Commissioner for digital economy and society Mariya Gabriel, 13 November 2017 at a conference on fake news in Brussels.

Celebrities and public figures and the spread of fake news

One of the quickest ways that fake news is spread is through the social media accounts of celebrities and public figures. If a celebrity has many followers, they will tend to believe the information that the celebrity posts. The problem during the Coronavirus pandemic became so big that social media companies started to delete or label posts as misinformation, including posts from Donald Trump, the president of the USA.

Celebrities and public figures can also be affected in a negative way as fake news is often spread about them, whilst hate speech and threats are becoming commonplace. In some cases, the insults become overwhelming, resulting in the person committing suicide.

Fake news may be spread about public figures, but also about ordinary members of the public, sometimes in revenge or in an attempt to extract money from the person. An example is when a photograph is copied from a victim’s social media page and then re-posted with a message saying that the person is a thief or a child molester. The photograph may be distorted to put the victim in a compromising situation, and many people share the message without knowing who the person is or whether the “facts” are true.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a possible solution

The expanding nature of the internet and it’s growing complexity make it even more difficult to deal with fake news issues, which is why a purely human response to the problem is almost impossible to achieve. Some people believe that responses such as the improvement in artificial intelligence and machine learning will help to fight the spreading of misinformation. With the development of extremely useful algorithms, fake news and hate speech are being reduced in social media (Instagram, Twitter, TikTok etc).

The fine line between censorship and regulation of the internet starts a moral dilemma - how can states establish correct regulation of the internet without falling straight into strict censorship in the new era of technology? In an attempt to protect national security, governments are adopting many systems in order to regulate the media and the internet, however, two main systems should be highlighted.

CONSTITUTIONAL REGULATIONS	STRICT CENSORSHIP
These governments and social media companies come to an agreement regarding the type of user content that should be allowed to be posted on their sites, and the ways in which they may promote certain content. These sites prohibit harmful, offensive, or false content. However many people state that social media companies are not doing enough to counterattack harmful or false information.	The state constantly regulates what is published on the internet. <i>"The Great Firewall"</i> uses technology and software to constantly censor organizations and individuals. Usually these states censor opposition news, to avoid offences that could lead to political disobedience, creating an extremely censored internet.

Conclusion

Fake news and misinformation represent a threat to society in all of its facets. Clearly regulating social media is an issue that needs rapid responses due to the nature of the technology. However, the proposed systems and tools most advocate in favor of freedom of speech and basic human rights. Social media is a powerful tool that can be easily manipulated; a balance between one's right to access truthful information and one's right to freely express opinions must be found in order to establish a useful regulation policy.

iii. Key points of the debate

The following are important points you must take into account during the debate, these can help you land your ideas and guide you throughout the debate.

- Up to what point news should be regulated with the intention of protecting national security.
- How international organizations like the UN can ensure the protection of human rights if media regulations come into force.
- How to ensure that regulation bodies are transparent.

- The role of journalist's organizations and the owners of media industries in combating fake news.
- Consensus among member states to ensure that each state is following its obligation to protect individuals from false data.
- Regulation of social media regarding misinformation, fake news and hate speech.
- Agreement between corporations and states in order to regulate the media.

iv. Participating Organisms

- OpenNet Initiative (ONI)
- Reporters without Borders
- Freedom House
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- Amnesty International (AI)
- National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC)
- WikiLeaks
- International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)

v. Guiding Questions

1. Does your country regulate social media posts/data posted online? If so, how and why does it do this? If not, why is there no regulation?
2. What has your country done to combat the spread of fake news and false data through the internet and social media?
3. Should states have the right to review user information in order to protect national security?
4. Is fake news a threat to national and international stability?
5. How can social media companies and governments help to stop the spread of misinformation and fake news? Who should have control of this regulation?

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Topic 2: *Fast fashion and its effects on society and the environment*

vii. History/Context

Many aspects of modern life are well known for causing environmental and social damage, and the world of fashion can be included in these problems. Fast fashion is a contemporary term, used to describe the phenomenon of mass-production of cheap, disposable clothing. Fast fashion offers customers a higher range of products than were available in the past, and often the price is lower than it was 20 years ago. 50 years ago brands sold only two collections, spring and fall, but now, with the emergence of fast fashion, brands offer nearly 50 collections a year and 80 billion items are made every year. As the demand for new trendy and cheap clothes grows, the industry will provide them even quicker, creating the sense that if you don't buy it now it will not be available later. This cycle of over consumption has created an unsustainable model.



(Picture retrieved from "elije mexico" <https://www.eligemexico.org/acciones-sociales/el-lado-oscuro-del-fast-fashion/>)

In 2014, the average consumer purchased 60% more clothing than in 2000 and kept them for half as long. In general, the production increased 400% in only 20 years. Today, the average woman uses about 20% or 30% of the items in her closet and only 20% are used on a regular basis.

The throwaway society/culture we live in today started after the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Before that, clothing was handmade at a slow speed and was more carefully done for the richest, whilst for the rest of the population, the goal was to wear clothes for as long

as possible until they became unusable. As the industrial revolution progressed, the usual production for a month could be produced in a day, allowing for mass production at a much cheaper price. In the 20th century, the population grew at an exponential rate, increasing the demand for clothes, until eventually the fashion industry became a global phenomenon.

Key terms

Mass consumption: In a society of mass consumption, the level of consumption is really high, as a result of higher purchasing power, and social struggle. (Museum Agropolis,)

Mass production: Term invented by Henry Fords in 1926 and explained the ability to boost production and maximise output. (Ford, The Henry Ford Story)

Fashion: Popularity of a particular style at a given time characterized by change. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Trendy: Very fashionable, up-to-date marked by a superficial appeal. (Cambridge dictionary, Trendy)

Child labour: Work that deprives kids from their childhood, dignity, and development. Emotionally and physically harmful. (United Nations)

Disposable: Intended to be thrown after a minimal amount of use. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Throwaway culture: Society deeply influenced by consumerism and disposability. (Glosbe)

Luxury brands: A brand from which a greater part of its products are luxury goods. (Eunjo Co, John Costello, Science direct, July 2019)

Circular fashion: Can be defined as clothes, shoes or accessories that are designed, sourced, produced and provided with the intention to be used and circulate responsibly and effectively in society for as long as possible. (Green Strategy, 2020)

Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS): Textile standard for organic fiber including ecological and social criteria (Sustain your style, 2020)

Greenwashing: When a company offers a product making it look ethical and eco-friendly when in reality it isn't. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Landfills: The disposal of waste by burying it, by filling in excavated pits. (Cambridge dictionary)

Workforce: People engaged in work for a specific industry. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Low wage: Someone who earns less than two-thirds of the median hourly wage for full time workers. (Working for dignity)

viii. Current Situation

The accumulation of cheap garments is a result of the constant reduction of production costs, and the expanding middle class and emerging markets in different countries. This had led to negative consequences for our health, the planet and for the lives of the workers who produce the clothes. Everything from production to sales has an impact.

According to the Economist magazine it's expected that for 2050 global clothing sales will triple and that the quality will get even worse. ("The true cost of fast fashion" in The Economist", November 29, 2018)

Social/political impact

Many of the main brands of fast fashion are sold in developed nations. The top countries with a per capita expenditure on apparel include Australia (average \$1,050 annually), Canada (\$831), Japan (\$814), and the U.S. (\$686). (WWD 2015). These companies hire contractors that set up their factories in developing countries, taking advantage of globalization and the growth of international trade. These countries usually have a cheaper workforce due to lower wages, and less strict environmental and health and safety regulations. According to the World Trade Organization, the main countries for clothing exportation are China, Vietnam and Bangladesh. This has led to a decrease of jobs in the clothing production sector in North America and Europe in favor of developing countries.

The working conditions in many of these developing countries are deplorable, with workers having to work from 14 to 16 hours daily, seven days a week. During peak seasons they might even have to work until 3 or 4 am. Conditions in many factories are inhumane; no ventilation, breathing toxic substances, fiber dust, and unsafe buildings prone to fires, accidents and even collapses like the one in Rana Plaza Bangladesh in 2013 killing 1134 workers.

Before 1995, quotas controlled trade in the industry, which prevented globalization, but in 2005 the textile and clothing industry was included in the General Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade. As a result, the implementation of Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) took effect, leading to liberalization and permitting companies to produce items across the globe more freely.

Poor working conditions not only affect workers in developing countries. Recently, in England, the brand Boohoo, an online fast fashion retailer, was recently exposed in an undercover report by the newspaper *The Sunday Times*. The company was receiving goods from suppliers, whose factories were paying the workers £3.50 an hour instead of the minimum wage of £8.72 an hour for workers over the age of 25. This factory was also operating at the end of June 2020 during the Covid-19 lockdown in Leicester, forcing the workers to work in unsafe conditions. Although Boohoo said they were not aware of these factory conditions, the company had already faced allegations of using illegal suppliers in 2018.

The home secretary Priti Patel took action by asking the National Crime Agency to investigate allegations about modern slavery in clothing factories. However Nasty Gal stated that they ***"do not allow any of our suppliers to pay less than the minimum wage"***. (*Forbes*, July 2020)

Romania is another European country heavily involved in the fast fashion industry. Half a million people work in the fashion industry, and almost 10,000 factories exist, making Romania the biggest workforce in the clothing industry in Europe, and one of the most long-standing production countries in Western Europe. Here, workers often have below-standard working conditions and receive extremely low wages, in some cases as little as 14% of the living wage in the country. Many workers require loans to deal with their expenses, meaning that they are heavily in debt.

"I am paying back a loan while earning €150 per month. We did not borrow the money for some fancy purchases, but to pay for my medical treatment." (Clean Clothes Campaign research, 2019)

Aside from low salaries, half of the workers are usually unpaid for extra hours that they work (overtime), and work in places with non-functioning ventilation or air conditioning. They also report cases of forced overtime, limited access to water, as well as verbal and physical abuse.

Environmental impact

“Nearly 70 million barrels of oil are used each year to make the world’s polyester fiber, which is now the most commonly used fiber in our clothing. But it takes more than 200 years to decompose.” – Forbes

The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world after the oil industry. According to the UN, it contributes to 20% of water pollution globally and 85% of the production ends up in landfill sites every year. This is \$450 billion worth of the profits the global industry makes according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothes is burned or dumped in landfills every second according to UNEP.

In the majority of the countries where garments are produced, toxic wastewaters are dropped directly into the rivers (22,00 litres) and eventually end up in the ocean. These wastewaters contain mercury, lead, arsenic and others, these are extremely harmful to aquatic life and the health of the local population. 20% of industrial water production comes from textile treatments and dyes, and 200,000 tons of these dyes are lost to effluents every year. The numbers are massive, it takes 8,000 liters of water to make one pair of jeans and a simple cotton shirt takes up to 3,000 liters.

“Furthermore, increased consumption patterns have created millions of tons of textile waste in landfills and unregulated settings. This is particularly applicable to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as much of this waste ends up in second-hand clothing markets. These LMICs often lack the supports and resources necessary to develop and enforce environmental and occupational safeguards to protect human health.” said Christine Ekenga, assistant professor at the Brown School and co-author of the paper “The Global Environmental Injustice of Fast Fashion,” published in the journal Environmental Health.

Mass produced clothing also affects the environment by releasing 500,000 tons of microfibers into the ocean each year, the equivalent of 50 billion plastic bottles. The majority of those fibers are polyester, a plastic material found in 60% of garments, making up 31% of plastic pollution in the ocean. In addition, its production releases two to three times more carbon emissions than cotton, and it's not biodegradable.

“The industry consumes more energy than the aviation and shipping industries combined,” calculates the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, if the production sustainability doesn’t improve the greenhouse gas emissions are expected to increase 50% for 2030. Furthermore, the industry produces 10% of carbon emissions and it could increase up to 26% by 2050 according to a 2017 report by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, A NEW TEXTILES ECONOMY: REDESIGNING FASHION’S FUTURE, May 14, 2017)

Brands in the fashion industry that contribute to fast fashion

Nike: This brand sells 25 pairs of shoes every second, meaning 2 million pairs a day, in addition to the rest of their products. According to Greenpeace, Nike not only uses harsh chemicals for the environment but also damages the workers.

Victoria’s Secret: The same Greenpeace report mentioned Victoria Secret for using harsh chemicals and not providing a living wage to their garment workers.

Zara: Zara’s founder Amancio Ortega is the 6th richest person in the world, estimated by Public Eye: on a €26.67 sweater, the company makes €4.20 pre-tax profit, while only pays €2.09 per day to the garment workers.

H&M: Various opinions come along with this brand due to greenwashing and fake promises of change. This brand has a recycling campaign, but the problem is the bad quality that doesn't allow the clothes to last enough to be recycled. It also copies designs from luxury brands.

Topshop: Topshop is a brand that is currently fighting to survive and that is collapsing. Its owner Philip Green who’s also the owner of Topman, Dorothy Perkins, Miss Selfridge, and Evans. Green is the 1001th richest person in the world with a net worth of 2.1 billion dollars and pays even the cleaners less than the living wage.



Child labour

Child labour is notable in the fashion industry due to the complex supply chain and high demand (168 million children have to work). Some of the countries with the highest rates are: Egypt, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Bangladesh and China. This industry requires low skill activities like cotton picking, spinning yard, cutting thread, and sewing, which are easier with small hands.

A report from the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations and the Indian Committee of the Netherlands show that families are recruited by selling fake promises of high wages for their kids, 3 meals a day, schooling and training. As many of these families live in acute poverty, these offers are almost impossible to turn down.

Child labour is hard to stop, because of the complexity of the supply chain. Some brands don't even realise that child labour occurs in their production processes, and actually do have ethical guidelines for their suppliers. However, the demand for fast fashion is so high that manufacturers have to deal with the pressure of speeding up the production process; a result of not being able to deal with this demand leads to child labour.



(Picture retrieved from Dhaka Tribune
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/11/17/33735/>)

Sustainable alternatives

Sustainable alternatives, can lead and comply with the Sustainable Development Goals, made by the United Nations to ensure a better future for everybody, they are intended to be reached by 2030, addressing climate change, social inequalities, peace and justice.



Some of these goals can be deeply impacted by a change in the fashion industry. like goal number 6, clean water and sanitation, by mitigating the use of harsh chemicals and the release of micro fibers in the ocean, goal number 8, decent work and economic growth, by giving better conditions to the workers, goal number 12, responsible Consumption and production, by applying regulations and fighting throwaway culture, goal 13, climate action by reducing gas emissions, and goal 17, partnership, by supporting countries with less regulations and bigger social impact.

Some of the alternatives are recycling and buying second hand clothing; there are thousands of thrift shops where good quality clothing is available for reasonable prices. It is also a good idea to repair clothes when they are broken; Patagonia is an online retailer which will take back and repair clothes bought on its website for a small fee.

Renting clothes that are intended for one use is a great alternative to buying, “Rent the runway” for example is a huge company dedicated to renting luxury items from 4-8 days.

The English parliament made 18 recommendations to the ministers with the intention of improving the working conditions and decreasing the environmental impact of fast fashion.

“The plans came from the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC). The MP who leads the EAC, Mary Creagh, says that the UK sends 300,000 tonnes of clothes a year to be burned or to landfill and more needs to be done.” (BBC UK)

Some of the suggestions were:

- A 1p charge per garment on producers to fund better recycling of clothes
- A ban on burning unsold stock or putting it in landfill
- Environmental targets for big fashion retailers
- Rewarding reuse, repair and recycling projects to support responsible fashion companies

Similarly, in France, Brune Poirson, one of the three secretaries of state, within the ministry of “Ecological and inclusive transition” has been addressing different issues about pollution created by the country’s fashion industry. She works to prevent fashion brands from destroying unsold merchandise, and started a zero-waste law, which includes the production of washing machine filters to stop micro plastics from getting into the water stream.

In conclusion, with all the research and data that is now available, governments have the capacity to write laws about the conduct of the fashion industry. As the policies in France show, there are many regulations that can be implemented, for example, brands are known for wrapping their products in single use plastic, so governments could force labels to use recycled plastic or biodegradable options. Another idea is to prohibit brands from using virgin plastic, now that high quality recycled polyester is available.

Stella McCartney

Stella McCartney is a well-known fashion designer, and her company is often called one the first “eco-friendly” business in the industry. McCartney embraces a sustainable attitude in her collections, also the company is taking care of their social impact respecting workers’ rights in the production chain.

“The future of fashion relies on people. The people who make clothes, the farmers who grow the crops for our materials, our employees, and our customers. We want to have a positive impact for everyone that we depend on and for those who depend on us in return...” - Stella McCartney

ix. Key points of the debate

The following are important points you must take into account during the debate, these can help you land your ideas and guide you throughout the debate.

- The impact of globalization on the fashion industry.
- Fast fashion as an important factor in growing economies.
- Protection of workers’ rights in the fast fashion industry.
- The environmental impact of fast fashion and its subsequent effects on people’s well-being.
- Sustainable solutions to mitigate the impact of fast fashion on child labour.
- Promotion of consciousness among consumers to put an end to the “throwaway” culture.
- Legislation and policies to reduce the negative impacts of fast fashion.

x. Participating Organisms

- UNICEF.
- Zara.
- H&M.
- Forever 21.
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- Sustainable Apparel Coalition

xi. Guiding Questions

1. How has your country been affected by the globalization of the fashion industry and fast fashion?
2. What is your country doing to mitigate the negative social impacts of fast fashion?
3. How does your country regulate the negative environmental impacts of fast fashion?
4. How can nations and companies find a middle point between economic growth and sustainable (social/environmental) development?
5. How can the international community support sustainable alternatives?

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