



BACKGROUND GUIDE

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

DPSIMUN

CONFERENCE THEME

“Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in an Age of Volatility”

DAIS

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COMMITTEE

SOCHUM

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1.1 Welcome Message

Esteemed delegates,

It is with great joy and pleasure that we welcome you to the **Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)** at DPSIMUN 2026. This year, our committee will focus on two of many global issues:

- *Strengthening Youth Resilience: Addressing the Social, Cultural, and Institutional Factors Influencing Mental Health in an Age of Global Uncertainty*
- *Building Resilient and Inclusive Societies by Combatting Racism, Xenophobia and Religious Intolerance*

These topics reflect a broader concern with building resilient, inclusive societies that are capable of protecting human dignity and social cohesion during periods of instability and uncertainty.

As delegates, you would be expected to move beyond simply identifying the existence of these problems and instead develop practical, inclusive and sustainable policy solutions that strengthen societies before, during and after periods of crisis and turmoil.

We look forward to your contributions and the impactful resolutions that will emerge from this committee!

1.2 Chair Messages

Emmanuela Frimpong **CHAIR**

Hiii delegates,

My name is Emmanuela, and it is truly an honor to serve as one of the chairs of SOCHUM at DPSIMUN'26. It is my second time chairing a committee and I am so thrilled to embark on this three-day journey with all of you! Personally, MUN has always been about more than just debate- it is an opportunity to learn, grow and meet like-minded people, an avenue to appreciate diverse ideas and build confidence. I look forward to substantial debates, diplomacy, collaboration and fun. So I urge all of you to come very prepared and well researched so we have a memorable MUN conference. I can not wait to meet each and everyone of you, good luck!

Seyram Alves **CHAIR**

It is my greatest pleasure to welcome you to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM). My name is Seyram, and I am deeply honoured to serve as one of your Chairs for this committee. I am delighted to have the opportunity to guide you through this conference and create a space where everyone feels encouraged to participate, express their ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions. I encourage you to participate actively, respect diverse opinions, and engage in debates with confidence. I hope your time in SOCHUM is rewarding and memorable. I look forward to your ideas, your debates, and the solutions you will bring to the committee.

1.2 Chair Messages

Xara Kilba CHAIR

Hi hi!

I'm Xara and I'm delighted to be one of your SOCHUM chairs at DPSIMUN '26!

This is my first time being a chair and I hope to play a role in an enjoyable and diplomatic conference. I believe MUN is not meant to be three days of straight talking but MUN is an opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and meet new people. I strongly urge all of you to seize this opportunity as you could build strong relationships. I look forward to meeting you all. I strongly urge all of you to seize this opportunity as you could build strong, potentially rewarding relationships. I look forward to meeting you all, and hope to have an unforgettable three days full of fruitful debate and parliamentary fun!

1.3 Committee Overview

Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Established in 1945, its primary mandate is to address global human rights violations, social development, and humanitarian affairs. This Committee discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination among many other issues.

In accordance with this year's conference theme, "*Radical Resilience: Engineering Stability in an Age of Volatility*," SOCHUM invites delegates to develop policies that strengthen community resilience before, during, and after crises. Delegates are encouraged not only to address crises as they arise but also to design adaptive, inclusive systems that enhance long-term stability. The committee will examine the role of international cooperation, sustainable development, and human rights protection in fostering resilient societies.

Strengthening Youth Resilience: Addressing the Social, Cultural, and Institutional Factors Influencing Mental Health in an Age of Global Uncertainty.

| Background Information

Youth mental health has emerged as a significant global concern and a key issue within the work of the United Nations General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee. . Young people today are growing up in an environment shaped by rapid social change, economic uncertainty, technological development, and global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and public health crises. These factors influence how adolescents and young adults understand, manage, and respond to emotional and psychological challenges.

According to UNICEF, approximately 1 in 7 adolescents worldwide, representing around 166 million young people, experience a mental health disorder. The WHO further estimates that mental health conditions contribute to about 15% of the global disease burden among adolescents. Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among individuals aged 15–29, highlighting the urgent need for effective prevention and support systems. Recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have intensified these challenges by increasing social isolation, disrupting education, and worsening anxiety and uncertainty. Despite growing need, many young people still lack access to adequate mental health services, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Social factors play a crucial role in shaping youth mental health outcomes. Family relationships, peer interactions, socioeconomic conditions, exposure to violence, and discrimination can either protect or harm well-being. The expansion of digital platforms has created both opportunities and risks. While social media can raise awareness and build supportive communities, it can also contribute to cyberbullying, social comparison, and excessive screen use, increasing risks of anxiety and depression.

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Poverty, inequality, displacement, and limited education further place vulnerable groups, including refugees and youth in conflict-affected areas, at higher risk.

Cultural factors also influence how mental health is understood and addressed. In many societies, stigma prevents young people from seeking help due to misconceptions that mental health struggles reflect weakness. Cultural expectations around gender and emotional expression can further shape experiences, with some young men discouraged from showing vulnerability and some young women facing pressure related to appearance and behavior. Addressing these issues requires culturally sensitive approaches that encourage openness and understanding.

Institutional factors remain central to improving youth mental health worldwide. Many countries face shortages of trained professionals, limited funding, and weak policy frameworks. Schools often lack sufficient counseling services and mental health education. International efforts led by WHO, UNICEF, and UNESCO, alongside Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being, aim to strengthen systems, expand access to care, reduce stigma, and integrate mental health support into education and healthcare.

Historical Context

The recognition of youth mental health as a global priority has developed alongside broader changes in public health, human rights, and social development. Historically, mental health received significantly less attention than physical health, with psychological struggles often misunderstood, stigmatized, or viewed as individual problems rather than issues influenced by wider social, cultural, and institutional environments. Over time, international organizations and governments began to recognize that mental well-being is essential to human development and overall quality of life.

Following the creation of WHO in 1948, global approaches to health expanded beyond simply treating physical illnesses. The WHO emphasized that health includes physical, mental, and social well-being, establishing a foundation for recognizing mental health as a fundamental aspect of public health. Throughout the late 20th century, research increasingly highlighted adolescence as a crucial stage of development, during which family relationships, education, social environments, and economic conditions can significantly shape mental health outcomes.

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) marked a major step in protecting the well-being of young people. The Convention recognized children's rights to health, protection, education, and development, encouraging governments to create systems that support young people's physical and psychological well-being. This shifted the global perspective from viewing youth only as vulnerable groups requiring protection to recognizing them as individuals with rights and the ability to actively contribute to society.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, globalization and technological advancement transformed the experiences of young people worldwide. Increased access to education, communication, and information created new opportunities for connection and learning. However, these developments also introduced emerging challenges, including social pressure, cyberbullying, and increased exposure to harmful online content.

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At the same time, persistent issues such as poverty, inequality, conflict, and displacement continued to negatively affect the mental health of many young people, particularly those from marginalized communities.

In the 21st century, youth mental health became increasingly recognized as a critical component of sustainable development. The adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, particularly Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being, reinforced the importance of improving mental health services, reducing stigma, and ensuring access to care. Organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, and UNESCO have since worked to promote mental health education, early intervention, and stronger support systems within schools and communities.

Recent global challenges have further emphasized the need to strengthen youth resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education, social relationships, and access to support services, contributing to increased anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty among young people. Beyond the pandemic, climate change, armed conflicts, economic instability, and rapid technological changes continue to create pressures that affect youth mental health worldwide.

Today, youth mental health is understood as a complex issue shaped by interconnected social, cultural, and institutional factors. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that not only expands access to mental health care but also builds supportive communities, reduces stigma, promotes inclusion, and strengthens institutions capable of helping young people adapt and thrive in an uncertain world.

| Current Situation

Youth mental health is a growing global challenge, driven by conflict, economic uncertainty, climate change, and the lasting effects of COVID-19.

Many young people continue to face significant barriers to accessing mental healthcare. Mental health services may be unaffordable and unavailable in rural and underserved communities, or limited by shortages of trained professionals. Stigma and fear of judgement can also prevent young people from seeking support, particularly in communities where mental health is misunderstood or discussing emotional difficulties is discouraged. As a result, many young people may only receive support once their difficulties have become severe.

The environments in which young people live, learn, and communicate also significantly influence their mental well-being. Schools may lack sufficient mental health education and counselling services, while social media and digital platforms can expose young people to cyberbullying, harmful content, social comparison, and unrealistic expectations. Young people in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings face greater risks due to trauma, displacement, and disrupted education.

These challenges are particularly severe for young people affected by conflict, displacement, and humanitarian crises. Exposure to violence, loss, instability, separation from family, and disrupted education can have lasting effects on mental well-being, while access to psychological and social support is often limited during emergencies. Despite these challenges, mental health is frequently treated as a secondary concern in crisis responses. Governments, the United Nations, and NGOs have introduced mental health and resilience programmes, but significant gaps remain, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Strengthening youth resilience through improved mental health services, education, and international cooperation remains a global priority.

Subtopics

1.4.4.1 Expanding Access to Youth Mental Healthcare and Reducing Barriers to Support

Despite growing awareness of youth mental health, many young people still face barriers such as cost, stigma, a shortage of professionals, and limited services in rural or underserved areas. Delegates should consider how governments and international organisations can make mental healthcare more accessible, affordable, confidential, and culturally appropriate through approaches such as school-based services, community programmes, and telehealth.

[1.4.4.2 The Impact of Digital Platforms, Social Media, and Cyberbullying on Youth Mental Health

Digital platforms can provide connection, education, and access to support, but can also expose young people to cyberbullying, harmful content, social comparison, and pressure to maintain idealised online identities. Delegates should examine the responsibilities of governments, technology companies, schools, parents, and users in creating safer digital environments while balancing online protection with privacy and freedom of expression.

1.4.4.3 Strengthening Mental Health Education and Early Intervention in Schools

Schools are important environments for promoting mental health awareness and identifying early signs of emotional distress. Delegates should explore exactly how education systems can reduce stigma through mental health education, train teachers to recognise warning signs, strengthen counselling and referral systems, and ensure that students can access support before their difficulties escalate.

Subtopics

1.4.4.4 The Influence of Gender Norms, Family Expectations, and Cultural Pressures on Youth Mental Well-being

Gender expectations, academic and career pressures, family expectations, and cultural norms can significantly influence young people's mental well-being and willingness to seek help. Delegates should examine how policies can address harmful pressures while respecting cultural diversity and recognising that families and communities can also provide important sources of identity, belonging, and support.

1.4.4.5 Protecting Youth Mental Health in Situations of Conflict, Displacement, and Humanitarian Crisis

Conflict, displacement, and humanitarian crises can expose young people to trauma, violence, loss, instability, and disrupted education and support networks. Delegates should consider how mental health and psychosocial support can be integrated into humanitarian responses, with particular attention to the long-term, culturally sensitive needs of refugees and displaced youth.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- 1 What are the primary social, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to the decline in youth mental health globally?
- 2 How can governments and institutions improve access to affordable, inclusive, and high-quality mental health services for young people?
- 3 What role should schools, families, communities, and digital platforms play in promoting resilience and preventing mental health challenges among youth?
- 4 How can Member States reduce stigma, discrimination, and barriers that prevent young people from seeking mental health support?
- 5 How can the international community strengthen cooperation to support youth mental health through funding, capacity-building, research, and the sharing of best practices?
- 6 How can governments ensure that youth mental health policies are inclusive of young people from different socioeconomic, cultural, gender, and geographical backgrounds?
- 7 What forms of international cooperation are necessary to create sustainable, preventative, and youth-centred mental health systems capable of strengthening resilience before, during, and after crises?

[Useful Sites and Documents]

Global Youth Mental Health Study 2025

WHO & UNICEF Joint Guidance (2024)

WHO Constitution (1948):<https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

WHO – World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All (2022):

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>

United Nations – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

UN Sustainable Development Goal 3:

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

UNICEF – The State of the World’s Children 2021: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021>

UNICEF State of the World’s Children Report

[Glossary]

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

WHO: World Health Organization

Building Resilient and Inclusive Societies by Combatting Racism, Xenophobia and Religious Intolerance.

| Background Information

Racism, xenophobia, and religious intolerance are persistent global issues that undermine social cohesion, human rights, and the development of inclusive societies. These forms of discrimination stem from prejudice, fear of difference, and long-standing historical inequalities that continue to shape relations between communities. In an increasingly interconnected world, ensuring equal participation and protection for individuals of all ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds remains a major challenge.

Racism involves discrimination based on race or ethnicity, while xenophobia refers to hostility toward individuals perceived as foreign. Religious intolerance occurs when people are denied rights or respect due to their beliefs. These issues can appear in the form of hate speech, exclusion, violence, unequal access to education and employment, and broader violations of human rights.

Historically, such discrimination has contributed to colonialism, segregation, forced displacement, and conflict. After the Second World War, the international community strengthened efforts to prevent such injustices. The UDHR (1948) established equal rights for all individuals regardless of race or religion, while the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) reinforced global commitments to combat racial discrimination.

In the modern era, globalization and migration have increased diversity but also introduced new challenges. Rising nationalism, misinformation, online hate speech, and political polarization have intensified discrimination in many societies. Minority groups, migrants, refugees, and religious communities are often disproportionately affected, facing barriers to safety, opportunity, and inclusion.

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Addressing these challenges requires both legal and social action. Education is essential in promoting tolerance, reducing stereotypes, and fostering respect for diversity. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must work together to strengthen protections, prevent hate speech, and ensure equal participation for marginalized groups.

The United Nations continues to emphasize the importance of combating racism, xenophobia, and religious intolerance through human rights advocacy and dialogue. Promoting inclusive institutions and mutual respect is key to building peaceful, equitable, and resilient societies

| Historical Context

Racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance have historical roots in slavery, colonialism, segregation, religious persecution and discrimination. These systems created inequalities and divisions that continue to affect societies today. After World War II and the Holocaust, the international community strengthened efforts to protect human rights. In 1948, the UDHR established equality and freedom from discrimination as fundamental rights.

The UN later introduced measures against discrimination, including the 1981 Declaration on Religious Intolerance. In 2001, the World Conference against Racism in Durban addressed racism, xenophobia and related intolerance and called for stronger action through education, legislation and the protection of minorities. Today, racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance continue to affect minorities, migrants, refugees and religious groups. Combating these issues is therefore important for creating peaceful, resilient and inclusive societies.

| [Current Situation]

Racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance remain significant global challenges despite decades of international efforts to combat discrimination. In recent years, hate speech and discriminatory narratives have continued to spread both online and offline, targeting ethnic, racial and religious minorities, migrants and refugees. The UN has highlighted concerns about rising racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred, as well as the use of inflammatory rhetoric to stigmatise minority communities.

Social media and digital platforms have intensified these challenges by allowing hateful content and misinformation to spread rapidly across borders. Artificial intelligence can further amplify discriminatory narratives and may reproduce racial, ethnic and religious biases through automated systems. Religious intolerance also remains a concern, with religious communities continuing to face discrimination, hate speech and violence. In response, the UN Human Rights Council adopted Resolution A/HRC/61/36 in March 2026, reaffirming the need to combat intolerance, discrimination and incitement to violence based on religion or belief.

At the same time, governments and international organizations are strengthening policies to address these issues. Current efforts focus on anti-discrimination legislation, education, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, protection of minorities, responsible digital governance and promoting social inclusion. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in protecting marginalized communities and ensuring that laws and policies are effectively implemented.

| Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- 1 How can Member States strengthen laws and policies to prevent and combat racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and all forms of discrimination while upholding human rights?
- 2 What measures can governments, educational institutions, civil society, and religious leaders take to promote tolerance, inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion?
- 3 How can hate speech, online extremism, misinformation, and discrimination on digital platforms be effectively addressed while protecting freedom of expression?
- 4 What strategies can be implemented to protect vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, ethnic and religious minorities, and indigenous peoples, from discrimination and hate crimes?
- 5 How can the United Nations and Member States strengthen international cooperation, data collection, education, and capacity-building to prevent discrimination and build resilient, inclusive societies?

[Useful Sites and Documents]

United Nations — Universal Declaration of Human Rights <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/>

United Nations — Durban Declaration and Programme of Action <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/background/durban-declaration-and-programme-of-action>

United Nations — Declaration on Religious Intolerance
https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/ga_36-55/ga_36-55.html

UN Digital Library <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/27624>

[Glossary]

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights