

# TORCH



## Issue 1

### **Editor-in-Chief Weighs In**

On how social media and the youth will shape the future of news

### **SMUN 2021**

#### **Opens**

Opening Ceremony and Secretary-General's Address

### **Press Corps Off to A Rolling Head Start**

Read every agency's press release today

### **Today's Feature: The Secretariat**

Interviews with the Secretary-General and Head of Conference Management

Monday, 7 June 2021

An SMUN 2021 Publication

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## **Press Editor-in-Chief's Welcome Letter**

In my national service, one of my duties involves sitting in a control room for 12 hours. In this room, I can decide to watch two things: security footage or the television provided. You might think that the decision is simple - of course I would watch television over the security footage.

But here's the catch: the television only tunes to one single news channel, and I am on the night shift, when the news channel is off the air, looping pre-recorded content from the day before every 30 minutes instead. Thus over time, I began to find the footage of bare ocean waves more interesting than the news.

At this point it would seem fitting for me to segue into the similarities between my anecdote and the youth of today, who find meaningless content on Facebook, or rather, TikTok more interesting than news. But I will not do that. For one, TikTok isn't meaningless. But more importantly, youths are equally invested in news today as they were before. Throughout the pandemic, my friends and I were always on top of the latest developments, number of cases, and emergent clusters, both locally and abroad. Amidst the recent Israel-Palestine conflict, many friends have also spoken against hostilities in Gaza, sympathising with the plight of innocent civilians.

*"The youth will always be invested in issues that concern them, but we don't necessarily see traditional media as the only way to do this anymore. The way in which news is delivered and the speed in which new content is generated has changed."*

Similarly, the topics debated in this year's iteration of SMUN are pertinent. Amid conflict in Gaza, the UNSC is discussing the use of ceasefires. Amid covid-19, the ICAO is tackling disruptions to the aviation industry. The list goes on. And by being a part of this conference, delegates have shown that they truly care about what is going on in the world around them.

Why then is there this perception that youths do not engage as critically with the news as before? The difference in news consumption today lies not in the amount of news in which we consume, but in the mode in which we consume news content. The youth will always be invested in issues that concern them, but we don't necessarily see traditional media as the only way to do this any more. The way in which news is delivered and the speed in which new content is generated has changed.

Behold, social media has become the predominant medium in which the news experience is optimised to meet our demand for quick, concentrated and accessible pieces of information. News is presented through videos and interactive infographics, not only catching our attention but providing us with the option to react to, comment on and share them in real-time. It marks a shift from news consumption to news **participation**.

*“It marks a shift from news consumption to news **participation**”*

This year’s press corps aims to model the real-world paradigm shift towards new multimedia formats of news presentation. Look forward to seeing not only news content from a range of multinational agencies reporting on exciting committee happenings, but a diverse range of multimedia news content ranging from the press website, to video and social media posts. Expect to be featured on polls and forums too. Our flagship publication, TORCH, is here to stay of course, but with new columns that hope to reel you in. Expect to see two delegates representing the same agency as well - not only to produce better content, but to simulate the dynamics of a real press agency.

If you’ve made it this far into my letter, at least I’ve succeeded in avoiding the same fate as the television set in the control room. And I hope that this year’s Press Corps will do so too.

Here’s wishing everyone an enjoyable SMUN 2021!



Yours sincerely,

**Gabriel Miju Yap**

**Editor-in-Chief**

On behalf of the Press Corps

# Opening Ceremony

**By Keerthana Reddy, Editor**

This year's opening ceremony was vastly different from SMUN's previous editions but despite so many inherent differences, some things remained the same - the dialogue session at the start was as informative as always while Ms Valen Yo, our secretary-general's, opening speech was what formally opened the conference. Moreover, today's screening of an incredibly sentimental video made to chart the event's progress throughout the years reminded everyone watching of how far the conference had come since its start.

Given his position as the Deputy-Director General of ASEAN Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), today's Guest-of-Honour, Mr Harry Goh spoke about ASEAN's move towards a new normal amidst COVID-19. He started by noting how, similar to this year's edition of SMUN, many of the ASEAN meetings and discussions had also been shifted online because of COVID-19 and how the pandemic negatively affected communities and corporations all across the world. Still, he asserted the importance of face-to-face meetings for it allowed for better conversation and discussion, especially with regards to the discussion of sensitive and intricate topics. He also noted how despite the problems that the pandemic created and continues to create, ASEAN was slated to grow and reward its member states with time, economically and socially. Following his speech, Mr Goh engaged the delegates in a Q&A session moderated by the conference Secretary General, Ms Valen Yo. Delegates and chairs alike took the valuable opportunity to raise pertinent questions regarding Mr Goh's opening speech, with queries spanning from the motives of negotiators of economic agreements and the South-China Sea dispute.

All in all, COVID-19 did take away the possibility of having a physical conference but it definitely did not take away the passion to understand an issue from multiple perspectives and to find lucrative and largely beneficial solutions to these issues while making your voices heard that as delegates, you possess. In an unprecedented time like this, your voices and opinions are more valuable than ever so keep raising those placards!





Press  
Releases

## **Press Releases**



### **Saudi Arabia and Its Issue With Accountability in the Volatile Oil Market**

In its inaugural discussions on the oversupply of oil, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has seen an overwhelming number of delegates call for the unification and collaboration of countries in ensuring a stable oil market. However, despite the widespread support for political unity, the delegate of Saudi Arabia failed to recognise its role in the Saudi-Russian price war, going against the ideals of diplomacy amongst OPEC.

As elegantly described by the delegate of China, "A single tree does not make a forest, a single string cannot make music". This sentiment was reflected in many other delegates' opening speeches, as delegates of Algeria, Venezuela, and more, urged OPEC countries to come together to stabilize the oil market. A few observer states, such as the delegate of Mexico, even pledged his commitment to helping OPEC states achieve a stable oil market. This pledge of harmony and cooperation has never been seen before amongst OPEC countries and brings hope to the future of the oil industry.

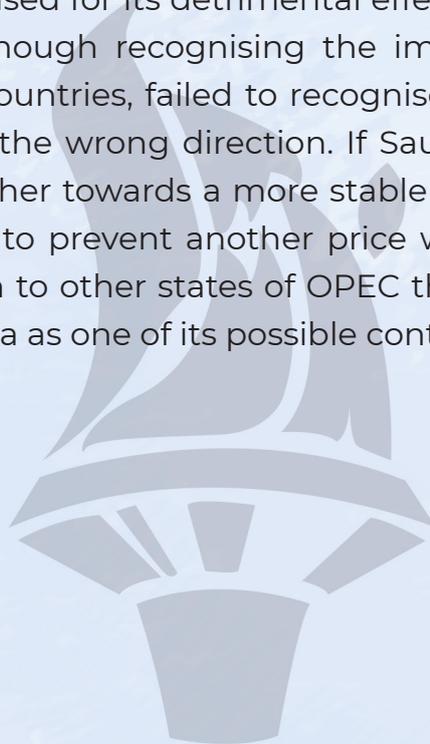
Countries were also quick to address a root cause of the volatile oil market, pinning the blame on price wars; specifically, the year-long price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia. Delegates of Kazakhstan and Equatorial Guinea stated that the price war was detrimental to the price of oil worldwide, urging countries to learn from Russia's and Saudi Arabia's mistakes, and to never let history repeat itself again. Russia was sincere in admitting her mistakes, recognising that its actions were interlinked with the global economy, and that its economy was heavily dependent on oil exports. Russia promised to find a better way of ensuring sustainable oil prices, and this was met with approval from other countries as it was in line with their ideas of unity.

However, Saudi Arabia acted as the antithesis to OPEC's direction and vision for harmony and collaboration. The delegate, in his opening speech, failed to recognise Saudi Arabia's

role in plunging oil prices around the world, choosing to use his opening speech to criticise OPEC's proceedings, calling the organisation "slow and inefficient".

Furthermore, the delegate urged countries to recall the mission of OPEC, and work together to resolve the issue. The delegate even went ahead to call for diplomacy amongst countries. The words of Saudi Arabia are hypocritical in nature. In the General Speakers List, its delegate employed schoolyard-style tactics in defence to other countries' accusations of its role in the worsening oil price market, stating that Russia had "started the price war first", before abandoning the topic and moving to other points of interest.

Instead of justifying himself, the delegate of Saudi Arabia should have taken accountability for the price war and apologised for its detrimental effects on the global economy. The delegate of Saudi Arabia, though recognising the importance of collaboration and teamwork amongst OPEC countries, failed to recognise that deflecting the blame for the price war was a step in the wrong direction. If Saudi Arabia truly wishes to see a unified OPEC working together towards a more stable oil market, the delegate needs to begin reflecting on ways to prevent another price war from happening. If not, his hypocrisy could be a caution to other states of OPEC that another oil price war would soon ensue, with Saudi Arabia as one of its possible contenders.



# ARAB NEWS

*The Voice of a Changing Region*

## **Countries Unite to Fight Against Price Slump**

*By Foo Jia Le*

Today, 7th June 2021 marks the day the delegates of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are gathered to speak about the rising issue of the drop in oil prices.

It was evident upon the attendance of all the country's representatives that there were rising tensions between OPEC countries, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and the all so mighty United States of America.

Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is a success." Delegates of less economically developed countries (LEDC) like South Sudan and Kuwait urged OPEC countries to work together and to leave no man behind. The delegates of these countries which are highly dependent on oil, came face to face with oil-producing superpowers like China and the United States of America to solve the nerve-wrecking issue, the dropping of oil prices.

Despite the majority of oil production in OPEC countries' coming to a standstill as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as internal disagreements, the USA shamed OPEC countries, quoting from the committee meeting earlier, "USA's oil production has sought to high prices as of June 2021", showing signs to not work closely with OPEC countries, judging by the statement given.

Oil production in OPEC countries is highly reliant on geopolitical developments and economic events. For example, the 1973 Arab Oil embargo and the 1980 Iran-Iraq war. ('How OPEC (and Non-OPEC) Production Affects Oil Prices,2021) Although these events seem to be from a while ago, history always seems to repeat itself as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic.

To give readers a better perspective on how detrimental the effect of the drop in oil prices can be, OPEC countries make up to about 40% of the world's crude oil. If we consider the

oil exports made by OPEC countries, OPEC's oil exports represent about 60% of the total amount of petroleum traded in the world.

### **Saudi Arabia**

During the conference, today, Saudi Arabia, along with other OPEC countries, mentioned the stagnancy of their oil exports. Upon looking at the feedback from the different country's representative, Saudi Arabia made a bold statement, saying that the country would consider freezing productions if other major production companies felt the same way. (Oil prices slump on Saudi comments,2016)

### **United States of America**

Although the USA had claimed earlier today that their economy has improved and was doing "better than pre-COVID levels", research says otherwise. Earlier today, the USA stated that based on the GDP growth rate calculated as of June 2021, the economic condition of the USA had improved, however, the actual result of the GDP has not yet been officially released. Hence, the USA's statements can be considered merely a hoax, just to seem more superior than the others. As of the last quarter of 2020, the USA's GDP reached a record low of -31.4%, (United States GDP Growth Rate, n.d.) thus, "doing better than before" is impossible judging by previous statistics

### **What to look forward to?**

Nevertheless, this conference has yet to come to an end. Judging by the direction of the conference as of this afternoon, it seems that it is likely that the OPEC countries will work with major oil producers, Russia and China which has asked for cooperation between the countries to work for the moderation in the supply of oil. Hence, we can look forward to seeing Saudi Arabia and Russia working out their differences from the 2020 Price War to seek a better arrangement for all the countries involved.

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## **Partial agreements on ceasefires; US delegate dominates conversation**

*By Isaac Ong and Cao Jingyu*

Amid today's chorus of diverging voices and opinions, came a common consensus amongst delegates in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC): ceasefires play a fundamental part in the establishment of international peace and security. Despite seemingly widespread agreement, the council began to splinter over deciding the trajectory of the discussion.

Confusion was abound as various delegates took a wide gamut of positions; some were in support of interventionist measures whilst others were staunchly opposed to heavy-handed approaches, opting to respect national sovereignty instead. In keeping the dialogue from meandering off-topic, the US delegate asserted himself as the central player in the conversation, drawing the ire of some.

### **Agreement across-the-board on the importance of ceasefires in global peace and security**

In underscoring the urgency for effective ceasefires, delegates from Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Columbia shared historical precedents for the loss of human life in their own domestic conflicts, citing the inability to enforce ceasefires as a central reason for the continuation of said conflicts. The delegate of Sudan stated that the aforementioned nations had "valuable insight" to offer to the council -- their tragic pasts serving as solemn reminders.

Overall, all delegates agreed on ceasefires as a pressing issue in need of much discussion, and launched into an 18-minute long unmoderated caucus to further discourse. Most notably, the delegate of China said that "(they) were happy" to coordinate peacekeeping efforts with the US. This comes despite Beijing's fierce competition with Washington on the world stage, exemplifying the high regard the delegates today held towards the value of human life.

## **Rifts among Security Council begin to take shape**

Although all delegates emphasised that ceasefires were imperative as a step towards safeguarding civilian lives, there was much internal debate regarding the proceedings of the sessions. While the delegate of the US reiterated the necessity of establishing a standardised framework for peacekeeping, the delegate of Mexico questioned the viability of such coercive measures.

“Each country is different , we should take various countries’ contexts into account.”, she quoted, voicing her concerns on the ability of different parties to conclude peace settlements.

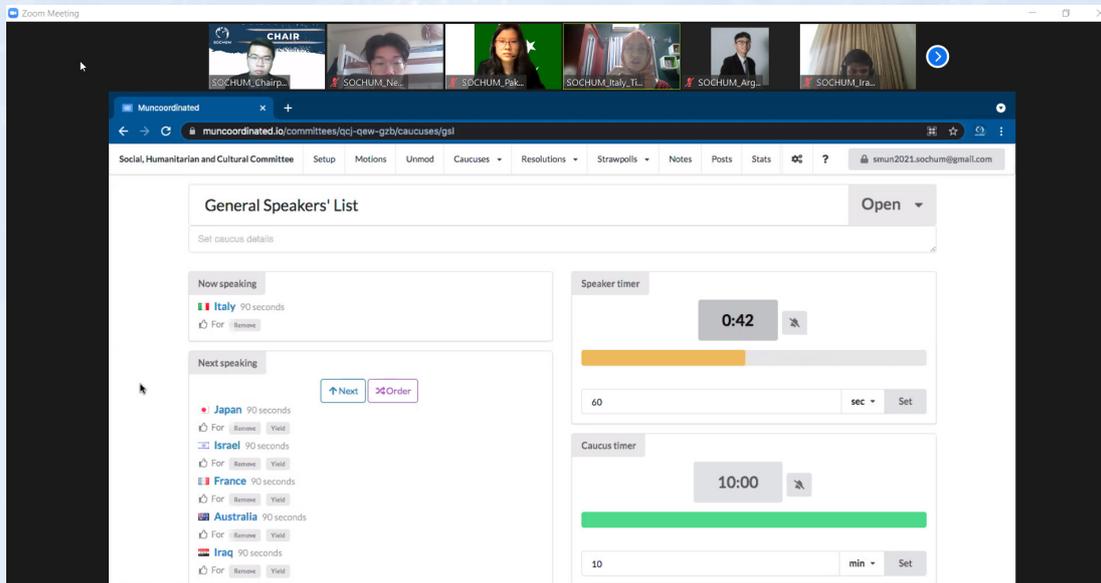
Similarly, in response to the US delegate’s suggestion in the immediate imposition of sanctions on belligerent actors as a measure to ensure efficacy of ceasefire agreements, the delegate of Vietnam pointed out that this proposal was “one size fits all”; every country has varying socio-economic, military, and financial conditions -- thus rendering this blanket measure .Substantiating this, the Ethiopian delegate pointed out that one factor fueling the ongoing Tigray Conflict was economic disparity. In this situation, imposing sanctions would only “exacerbate tensions” and cause conflict to spiral further.

## **US takes a leading role in discussions**

During the unmoderated caucus, the US delegate additionally supplemented his peacekeeping strategy proposal, pointing out that there were no current overriding authorities to adjudicate disputes and penalise noncompliance (Sosnowski, 2020). Most of the delegates agreed with this opinion, while the delegate of China expressed his concerns, adducing the “non-interventionist” stance of UNSC as a sticking point.

Throughout the committee session, it seemed apparent that the US delegate exerted influence and control over the discussions, experiencing the most airtime amongst other candidates present. Besides conducting and setting the scope of the discussion, the US delegate was quick to dismiss the Ethiopian delegate’s proposition to allow delegates who took different positions to move to another breakout room.

In general, the meandering discussions made it difficult for the delegates to come to concessions on the specifics of enforcing peacekeeping and ceasefire operations. Notwithstanding the agreements on the immediacy of ceasefire initiatives, the council has yet to come to a concrete conclusion over which approach to take. The Associated Press will continue to deliver reports as the situation develops.



*Delegate of Italy discussing about the issues of education*

## **Education: To the future, or stuck forever**

**Singapore.** The delegate of the Republic of Indonesia, along with delegates from 51 other countries, gathered today, under the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee, or SOCHUM for short, to discuss the future of education in the world, and the necessary reformation of education infrastructure and practices.

This is not the first time the world has come together to solve this issue. It was first brought up in the UN General Assembly, in 1948, stating that “Everyone has the right to education” and that it shall be “free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages”. However, as of 2018, “one in five youths, children and adolescents” are still out of school (UNESCO, 2018). The situation has worsened, since COVID-19 struck, with 1.6 billion children out of school (World Economic Forum, 2020). In Indonesia, the problem is not any better given its poor infrastructure, lack of resources and manpower in remote areas, as well as poor management. As such, many children in remote areas of Indonesia are unable to access the internet and continue their education.

Of course, steps have been taken to ensure that these problems are mitigated such as the Teacher Law in 2005, the School Operational Assistance Grant and the Smart Indonesia Program. (The World Bank 2018). Nonetheless, while the standard of education in Indonesia has improved, it is still far from perfect.

“The main issue of the education system in Indonesia is the poorly designed curriculum. As Indonesia’s curriculum mainly focuses on rote learning, there is a lack of focus on application of learning,” The delegate of Indonesia said, in a recent interview with The Jakarta Globe adding on that, “the conference will help Indonesia’s education system by being able to work with other delegates to look into creating an education system that is able to ensure that Indonesian students receive not only an education, but a quality education.”

She posited that with increased budgets being allocated to education and education spending, the future of Indonesia now relies on the response of the Indonesian government, in the face of COVID-19, which is one of the main topics being discussed in the conference.

“Indonesia’s belief is that quality education should be a basic human right for all children up to the age of fifteen” she stated, adding that Indonesia would like to see more effort going towards raising the quality of education being provided to students.

Moving forward, the conference aims to solve these problems through a variety of solutions such as digitalisation of education, increased international cooperation, and aligning the curriculum with specific industry and regional requirements.

“Possible solutions would be to work together with other countries, such as Singapore, to link the construction of vocational facilities with wider infrastructure development” the delegate of Indonesia stated.

“Previous measures, such as developing a programme to promote access to education aimed at the underprivileged, now struggle as the crisis has forced the government to adjust its plans. However, the government intends to continue to move forward in implementing some of its education strategies, such as introducing a training programme for educators to continue to improve the quality of education”, she added.

However, despite the heated discussion throughout the conference, the delegates kept having to come back to square one, often trying to define the main issues in the

global education system, similar to previous conferences. Some of the main issues are the financial barriers in society, cultural stereotypes, and differing opinions among the international community. The conference will carry on for the next four days, along with the discussion on the use of government surveillance in times of crisis.

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## **The Right to Education?**

“Education [should] become a human right for all, and no longer a privilege.” This was declared by the delegate of the United States in the Social, Cultural, & Humanitarian Committee in today’s debate. The council struggled to come to a common consensus on the definition of an Inclusive and Equitable Education for all in its progress to achieving SDG Goal 4.

The needs of education systems in developed and underdeveloped countries are vastly different in terms of their fundamental circumstances as a nation, such as their economic development and physical safety. Developing countries face multiple hindrances in the education sector that have conspired from a scarcity mindset, while wealthier countries, on the other hand, manage issues that are multifaceted and advanced. To name a few that was discussed today, developing countries mentioned the impacts of child labour motivated by poverty, as well as the cultural, physical and financial barriers that children face in their right to education. The lack of proper infrastructure further diminishes the quality of education in these countries. In contrast, many developed countries brought up the issue of elitism, inequalities in the domain of higher education, as well as the digitalisation of education, which arrives from the perspective that access to education has already been gained (which is not the case for the children of many developing countries in the council). They aspire to collaborate in making e-learning more accessible and more affordable in the Covid-19 situation, but the delegates of underdeveloped countries were unable to contribute actively as a result of their existing poor economic development as a country.

The delegates of developed countries do display awareness of the needs of underdeveloped nations. Many of these delegates did push for the recognition of unmet basic needs (such as the need for water and shelter) of students in underdeveloped countries towards the end of the debate. Blocs have already begun to form among countries of varying interests. However, it is unclear if the delegates of developed countries do possess genuine altruism in providing aid for the improvement of infrastructures and access to education in underdeveloped countries. Modern-day problems of education

have blinded the eyes of these delegates, distracting them from the dire conditions of children without access to education in underdeveloped countries. This leaves the delegates of underdeveloped countries rather helpless as delegates from wealthier countries push for more advanced concerns and reforms in education systems worldwide.

Scaling the issue down to South Africa, the SABC recognises that efforts must be made to improve the physical security of schools here. However, we do emphasise that the Republic of South Africa has already made measures to combat these insecurities in our education system. An anti-bullying campaign was launched to encourage learners to report bullying and be more aware of drug use at schools. Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Regina Mhaule says that bullying is deeply rooted and it needs to be addressed at homes and schools, highlighting the importance for our country to increase the safety of our learning environments (SABC, 2021).

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新华社  
XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

## **Delegate of the USA pushes the use of economic sanctions as a solution to ceasefire breaches**

*By Zelene Lam and Ashmi Chatterjee*

On the first day of the UNSC council, there were discussions on economic sanctions as a possible penalty for the violation of ceasefire agreements. Some nations believed that they would be suitable deterrents for such violations and some others believed that they would achieve the exact opposite effect, hence exacerbating the problem.

The delegate of the USA proposed economic sanctions as a basic guideline before further measures are taken such that it would be “a one size fits all solution”. It was proposed that economic sanctions could deter countries from breaching ceasefire agreements by acting as a potential penalty and by safeguarding the interests of both nations.

However, the delegate of Ethiopia disagreed, reasoning that “different countries have different economic standings”, thus it would be merciless and unfair to enforce these rules on poorer countries who may not have the means to pay these penalties, given that many of these disputes occur specifically due to wealth gaps present in certain areas.

Furthermore, the delegate of Russia raised a point that if countries were aware of the possible penalty, it might deter them from agreeing to a ceasefire in the first place. Should the war rage on, there would be severe consequences including unrest and instability. Innocent lives will be lost and a downsurge on the quality of life in affected countries would follow.

A possibility was raised pertaining to whether economic sanctions should be made

customisable to fit the needs of the specific countries involved. Nevertheless, in order for this to become a reality, delegates in the UNSC will need to come up with guidelines to ensure that the extent of reparations that the country needs to make is indeed proportional to its economic state.

Meanwhile, in order to ensure that ceasefires will remain desirable, further negotiations have yet to be seen in the UNSC council.





## **Glasnost: A Plan in Progress?**

### **Protests led by Russian civil rights activist**

A peaceful protest in Pushkin Square, Moscow led by Russian civil rights activist Alexander Yesenin-Volpin aimed to persuade the Soviet authorities to grant public access to the controversial Daniel-Sinyavsky trial. With reference to the Article 111 of the revised Code of Criminal Procedure which stated that judicial hearings should be conducted in public. Will the Soviet government grant this request from the protestors?

### **A significant power outage in Pripjat, Ukraine**

The Chernobyl Power Plant is the major source of power in the region. Pre-reports found out that there were no disruptions in power output at Chernobyl. There were speculations that the Chernobyl Power Plant had caused the power outage, but the Soviet Union had yet to confirm the cause of the outage. Civilians were then spotted witnessing an explosion at the Chernobyl Power Plant. Families, workers and residents living next to the power plant were seen rushing to seek shelter. The Soviet government has yet to issue a statement.

### **Glasnost's role**

"Glasnost", coined by Mikhail Gorbachev as a term representing transparency, has become a point of debate in today's 1985 Presidium of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) committee session. Glasnost is considered a medium to the start of enhanced freedom by many ministers of the Politburo. Quoting Procurator General, Alexander Rekunkov: "Our court hearings are vital to us sustaining the upkeep of the sentencing of criminals, political or otherwise," In accordance with the protests, making the hearing public will help to mitigate the public's craving for justice which in this case, fulfils the purpose of the justice system. However, as to all things, there is another light we have to look at.

### **What can Glasnost mean to everyone?**

We have covered how Glasnost is a tool for freedom. Many ministers have highlighted in today's debate that Glasnost can reduce the centralised power of the Politburo,

shattering the fragile fabric of the communist society under the current circumstances. It can also allow more direct foreign influence, especially from countries such as the United States of America, over domestic matters. This may lead to the downfall of the sovereignty of the USSR which is something that we should dread for the future of our comrades!

### **Future of Glasnost**

Weighing the impacts of Glasnost, how much benefits will it bring to citizens, and how much will the Soviet government benefit from this? With everyone having a different perspective and stance towards the extent of Glasnost, will the Politburo satisfy the public with their form of Glasnost, the truth, a lie, a half-lie, or a half-truth?

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# Sovetskaya Rossiya

## **Glasnost: Beneficial or Detrimental to The People?**

The “Era of Glasnost” has allowed for greater contact between Soviet citizens and the Western world, particularly the United States. What does Gorbachev want to achieve?

Western infiltration which may jeopardise the safety of the USSR?

It is clear that Glasnost is detrimental to our people. All these policies introduced by Gorbachev were just decorations for the gullible people.

Glasnost provides increased transparency within government institutions and activities within the Soviet Union which may in turn lead to the eventual downfall of the communist government. The public would come to know about the government’s failure, purges and atrocities which have been suppressed in the past. Moreover, the greater contact between Soviet citizens and Western radio stations would expose them to life outside of the communist bloc, especially the supposedly better life in the West. Therefore, it would cause Soviet citizens to start to lose faith in the communist government, instead of rallying up their support of the communist government.

Since Glasnost is only implemented after the riots and protests of unhappy Soviet citizens, it encourages citizens to believe that protest is the only way to rally for change in the Soviet Union. When the government satisfies the demands of citizens when they protest, this leads to people wanting more from the government and resorting to more protests to achieve it. Hence, Glasnost will promote more aggression amongst Soviet citizens to protest and riot for more reforms in the future.

People are unhappy with the government due to their unfavourable livelihood. So what does Gorbachev do? Allow increased transparency in order to please the people such that the economic reform allows for trust with the government. However, there will be potential repercussions of satisfying the people, which will result in the loss of political influence. Implementing glasnost takes away power from the government and gives too much power to the people. People will ultimately demand more from the government and take advantage of their freedom to publish attacks on the government.

The communist party has power to bring upon what the people want, while sticking to our socialist beliefs. Right now, Glasnost will not lead to the improvement of socialism, but capitalist restoration. Instead, the government should set up boundaries in setting up glasnost and relax the glasnost policies, by allowing a controlled voice and state sanctions. Protests need to step down, but without stripping off their rights. Lastly, the government has to strengthen the military, so that we will not be infiltrated by others and somewhat allow contact with the western world. This will thereby ensure that we reap the benefits of the policies without introducing new problems which may result in the destruction of the USSR.

All in all, Glasnost is too radical and would be detrimental to the Soviet Union. Implementing Glasnost will take away power from the communist government and give too much authority to the citizens. Hence, Glasnost will cause the communist government to lose their influence on the Soviet citizens which may lead to total collapse of the government.



# Charleston Courier

## **The Annexation of Texas: More Harmful than Beneficial?**

By Enya Samuelle Oh & Nabilah Saiful

In the first council session of the Historical U.S Senate Committee, senators expressed their opinions on the issue of the annexation of Texas into the Union. There were many points brought to the floor, both in support of the action and against it.

Multiple senators, mostly from southern states, were in support of the annexation of Texas. Senator David Rice Atchison, representing Missouri, brought up the advantages that the annexation of Texas would bring. He said that “The annexation of Texas is line with the idea of *Manifest Destiny* and *Westward Expansionism*... [and] is extremely popular among members of the union ... due to the importance of slavery to the agricultural economy in Texas.” The idea of Manifest Destiny was used to validate continental acquisitions in the Oregon Country, Texas, New Mexico and California (Britannica, 2021).

The idea of the annexation of Texas improving Texas’ economy was mentioned multiple times by various senators during the first council session, one of whom was Senator Ambrose H. Sevier, who represented Arkansas. “Certain aspects of Texas, such as it currently holding an estimate of 30000 slaves and the fact that agriculture is the primary industry of the region, an industry that is heavily benefitted by slavery, depends on [agriculture],” highlighted the Senator, who was in support of the annexation. During this period, the Texan economy did indeed depend on the cotton industry and the development of railroads, which were only possible due to tens of thousands of slaves brought in. (The Texas Politics Project, 2016)

One of the key disadvantages that was pointed out by the senators was the possibility of rising tension between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South. As Senator John M. Clayton had stated during the council session, “[The Annexation of Texas] destroys the balance between free and slave states, sowing conflict between the northern and southern states.” By annexing Texas into the union, the delicate balance of free and slave states in the Senate would be compromised, giving the slave states more

leverage in the Senate. "The rapid expansion of the United States intensified the issue of slavery as new states were added to the Union, leading to the outbreak of the Civil War." (History.com Editors., 2010) By annexing Texas into the Union, the Senate would be risking the chance of a civil war, which would be highly disadvantageous to the American economy. Hence, annexing Texas into the union would be a disadvantageous action, as it would strain further already tense relations between the North and South.

The Annexation of Texas would also bring about drastic effects to international relations, especially to its relations with Mexico. Mexico, having previously had control over Texas when the country gained independence from Spain, still regarded Texas as part of its territory. To annex Texas would be to possibly intrude on Mexican territory, risking conflict and perhaps war. Being such close geographical neighbours, the conflict would have dire consequences. However, we do not believe the U.S.A has reason to fear conflict with Mexico. Firstly, there are many other ways to resolve this issue. Negotiations and Tribunals can be held to discuss these matters in a civil manner, so there is no guarantee that conflict would arise at all, much less arise to the point of an outbreak of war. If, however, conflict does occur, the U.S is militarily capable of defeating Mexico. Our military capability is not to be underestimated. Hence we believe that although annexing Texas would give rise to the possibility of conflict with Mexico, it is nothing the U.S is incapable of handling.

In conclusion, The Charleston Courier is in support of the motion to annex Texas. It would bring about many economic prospects, and as a slave state, it would benefit from the manpower that could be used in the agricultural field that so greatly makes up Texas' economy. Although there are some possible downsides to the annexation of Texas into the Union, we believe they are far outweighed by the benefits that annexing Texas into the Union would bring.

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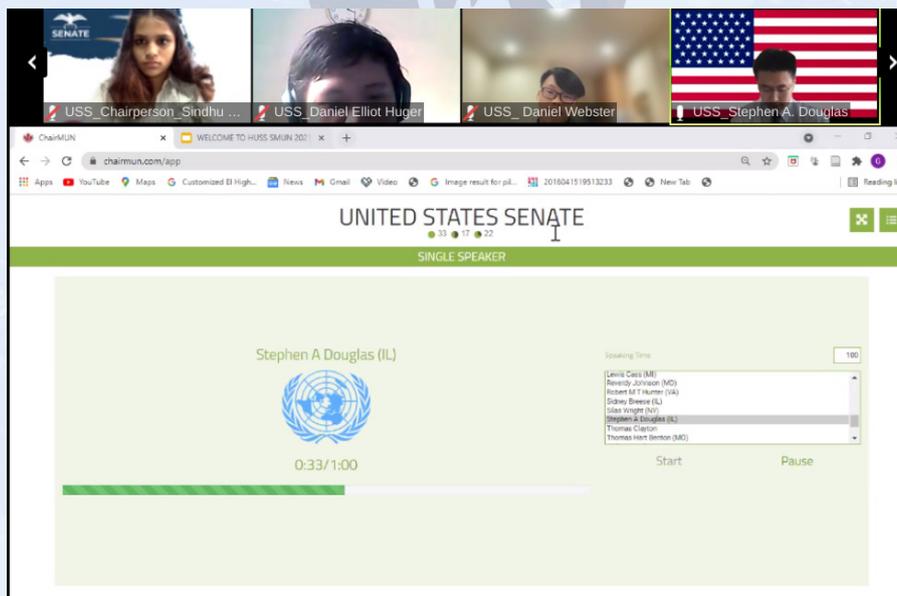
# New-York Daily Tribune

## To annex or not to annex?

By Blaise Hwang & Parijaat Jain

*“It is definitely not a black and white matter.”*

As the US Senate held their first committee session for this term, an intensely polarised debate ensued over the annexation of Texas. As of the time of writing, the senators of the Whig party and the Democratic party are still locked in fierce dispute over the possible annexation of Texas.



*Senators making their opening speeches regarding the annexation of Texas*

### **A Slow Start**

While there were various solutions raised by senators on how exactly the annexation of Texas ought to occur, it seems that the US Senate is unable to compromise on whether or not said annexation should even occur. Furthermore, many proposals from the Democrats faced a glaring lack of concreteness and clarity. Concerns were even raised about the efficiency of the Senate in general, with Senator Jabez Huntington critiquing the fact that “the annexation of Texas has been going on for ... 8 long years of limbo”.

There seemed to be a lack of direction to the discussion with senators with most senators finding themselves stuck debating the issue of annexation as a whole, rather than seeking cooperation on smaller aspects of the issue and working their way up to a final conclusion. Perhaps in following sessions, there will be greater discussion about a compromise between parties in place of aggressive debates about fixed stances.

### **Senators & Slave States**

While there was perhaps not as much discussion about the issue of Texas being a slave state and the abolishment of slavery as there should have been, there were still some valid points brought up by senators. Senator Jacob W Miller took a strong stand, proclaiming that slavery is a humanitarian affair and the annexation of Texas as a slave state would only allow for the what he called “an expansion of a moral evil”.

However, this sentiment was not shared by many other senators. It was observed that senators simply touched on the topic briefly before moving on, showing a reluctance to discuss it in depth. Additionally, there was insufficient discussion about the political imbalance caused by annexing Texas as a slave state. This resulted in a rather aimless and tokenistic discussion.

Instead, there were various attempts by senators to divert discussion towards annexation of other states as free states so as to allow the annexation of Texas to take place. However, these were taken as suggestions due to the lack of elaboration and corporeality.

### **Worries of War**

Other than its concerning moral implications, the question of Texas brings obvious political issues as well. Many senators were quick to point this out as well, with senators such as David Webster raising concerns that annexing Texas would put diplomatic ties between the United States and Mexico at risk. It is worth noting that relations between the two countries have in fact soured significantly since the initial proposal to annex Texas.

Nevertheless, for every senator who raised these valid concerns, there was an equal number of senators who protested that the possible benefits of annexing Texas rendered these concerns unimportant. “Many of our fellow Americans are in Texas”, Senator Jabez W. Huntington argued passionately, proclaiming that the US Senate’s duty to their “fellow citizens” could not be forsaken. Some senators even went so far as to scorn the idea of worrying about war at all. Senators Arthur Pendelton and Robert MT Hunter urged the Senate to “have confidence in the US’ military strength”, with Hunter further adding that the possible economic benefits were “almost unparalleled”.

## Food for Thought

While it is impossible to deny the economic power that would be gained by the US should it choose to annex Texas, one wonders if these benefits are worth sacrificing our moral and diplomatic values over.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that unless the members of the US Senate are able to set a proper agenda, the issue of Texas and its annexation might not reach a conclusion at all. One does hope that rather than flitting from topic to topic, the senators in question will be able to focus debate on more specific segments, and work their way up to a final solution - a solution which, hopefully, keeps in mind the spirit of freedom and virtue that defines our great nation.

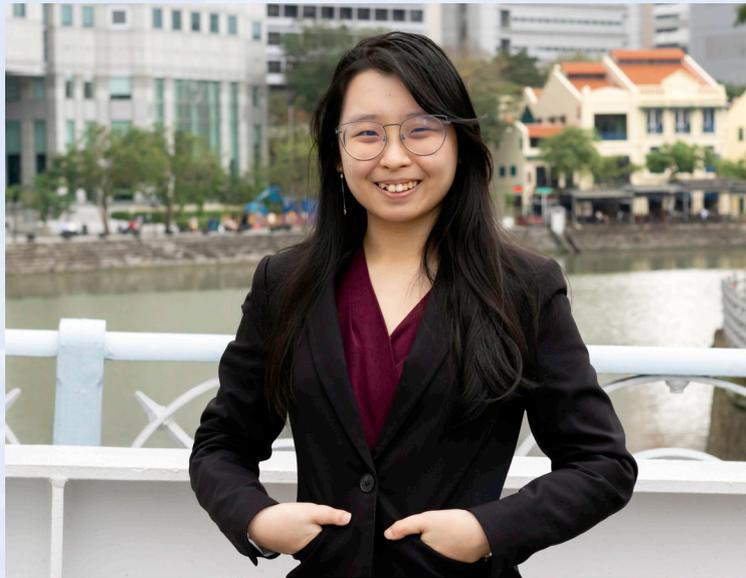




Today's Feature

**The Secretariat**

## **Interview with Secretary-General Valen Yo**



**1) Hi Valen, thank you for agreeing to an interview with us in spite of your busy schedule. Would you mind if we start off with a self-introduction and a quick rundown of your experiences in the MUN scene?**

What's an interesting introduction... Let's run with a basic one first. Name's as above in the title (have a guess at the pronunciation heh), currently half done with my undergraduate degree at NUS. Also happy to be a Sociology major, for the curiosity of those who have asked, "Have you considered political science/law/economics/etc?" As for MUN... Started in 2015 right with SMUN actually! I remember being thrown into an intermediate level, double delegate committee as part of a school delegation – I do not recommend the former. Thereafter I've kind of just been floating around the local circuit, most notably a starter conference with a white dove as its logo (is it appropriate to name other conferences?).

**2) As of this interview, it is the final days before SMUN 2021 officially commences. How do you feel?**

Preparations are more or less according to plan so that's a good start. This will be the first time we are importing over more traditional elements of a physical conference into an online one, i.e. the two ceremonies at the start and end, as well as a Socials event, so fingers crossed they go well! Our Events team have tried their hands at coming up with some interesting happenings so do keep a lookout. Besides that, it's a pity we couldn't

get the delegate packages mailed out to reach delegates in time for the conference due to tighter measures for these number of weeks, but we'll get them mailed out once the situation improves.

**3) This is the second year that MUN conferences have been forced to be conducted online due to the ongoing COVID situation and SMUN 2021 is no different. What are your opinions on this e.g. How this has changed the way council sessions are carried out, quality of debate etc.**

In the words of our Academics team, "Our Chairs have worked tirelessly to improve upon various aspects of the committees, be it through additional mechanisms to simulate realpolitik, or to engage delegates with new points of views." (Chairs, as you can see, you are very much loved and appreciated.) We understand that an online conference presents its own sets of challenges that can affect academic quality – our Academics team and Chairs have thus been continuously experimenting with new ideas to see how we can improve from last year. This year, the pro memoria is a new feature that will help our Chairs better assess points of growth for our delegates. This will also be the first time SMUN is bringing online the Q&A sessions with guest speakers during ceremonies and, as the name suggests, social activities for Socials night to see that delegates can still have the comprehensive MUN experience even while working remotely.

tl;dr – The pandemic is not something that can be controlled, though the way we choose to adapt and manoeuvre changes is something that is within our control. We are bringing in a slate of changes this year that hopefully serves our delegates well both academically and experientially. These will then be assessed post-conference and the next team can make the necessary adjustments to improve for the future.

**4) What is the toughest obstacle you've faced so far in your many years of experience in MUN and what keeps you going?**

Genuinely... I've sat on this question for a day or two and nothing really comes to mind. Every conference brings its own set of challenges for many, many different reasons, but every conference is always a new opportunity.

**5) In all your years of experience in the MUN scene what is your most memorable event (can be funny, sad, happy, cool anything that left an impression that has changed your outlook on MUN)**

This is going to be a very cliché answer but the things that I keep closest to my heart over the years is being able to see our delegates grow over the conference as well as becoming friends with their Chairs and council-mates. We all have a fair share of the “bigger” moments like passing a resolution that was painfully debated over or for some, getting awards, etc., but the moments you remember are really just the smaller interactions as you get to know different people. For one, I recall getting a small encouraging note from the Chairs after I made the very first speech on Day 3 in SMUN 2015 – this, I believe, played a very large role in shaping how I wanted to approach subsequent conferences.

Another quick tidbit from SMUN 2015: SMUN used to last for five days back then and our committee had passed resolutions for both topics within three and a half to four days. I don't remember the details anymore, but the rest of committee sessions were used for a very wild crisis simulation that I vaguely recall involving country flags, boats, and Rohingya refugees. Feel free to imagine what were the wild changes that could possibly have occurred every half an hour or less.

**6) Moving on to more personal questions, what do you have planned after SMUN 2021?**

Ensure that I remain retired from MUN. Retirement means I get to spend more time on the whole bunch of other work in progress and then have some to spare for some things I've been meaning to pick up for some time (eg. if someone is familiar with Chinese embroidery, feel free to hit me up). Otherwise life really goes on as usual, though I'm glad to finally leave MUN behind after so many years and have other things fill up its spot in the future.

**7) Finally, anything you want to say to the delegates and chairs of SMUN reading this article?**

As much as we hope that it will be an academically rewarding experience, do also take some time to get to know the people you'll be crossing paths with. It's easy to just leave the call once debate has been suspended, but who knows what friends you may make. Someone in the local circuit used to always say, “People make a conference” – this has always rung true.

## ***Interview with Head of Conference Management Kamalini***



Kamalini is an incoming university undergraduate who strongly believes that vanilla is the essence of life. Having been in the MUN circuit since Secondary Two, she takes great pride in admiring and showing off her extensive collection of lanyards. As an “angry feminist”, she finds the unique intersection of social advocacy, politics and policy particularly interesting. When she’s not drowning in work, Kamalini can be found jamming with her band or finding new restaurants through her discount app. She sincerely hopes that delegates step out of their comfort zone to gain meaningful experiences over SMUN and stay safe during this challenging time.

### ***1) What are some of the main differences between last year’s conference and this year’s conference?***

Personally, I think one of the main differences is that we started out wanting to do a hybrid where there would be an in-person conference for local delegates and online conferences for overseas delegates or those under LOA or SHN. Obviously, as the year progressed, we had to push it to a fully online conference as MOE started ramping up their own restrictions and everything. Another difference is that we are running the full four days this time and we had a plan for this to be online, from the start itself so it was much easier to adapt as the situation, unfortunately, worsened. We also know more about running things online and are more familiar with online platforms such as Zoom and Telegram.

## **2) So, how did you end up on the SMUN planning team?**

Valen, our secretary-general, asked me to join.

## **3) How did you get into the MUN circuit in general?**

I started my MUN journey in 2016 when I was in Secondary Two. A teacher sent out an email telling us about UNASMUN and that we could debate about issues. I guess I wasn't told a lot about what it was actually about and I went in and realised that this wasn't anything like the formal 3v3 debate that I had done in primary school. At UNAS, I figured a lot of stuff out on my own but also realised that I didn't know a lot about what was going on in the world and I think that's why I continued, and that's why I'm still here.

## **4) How has the journey for your conference management team been so far?**

We essentially lost our jobs halfway because we were doing a lot of venue and catering stuff which essentially were useless when we had to shift it to an online conference. So, now it's just Zoom links and Telegram channels. I guess we're just doing what we can given how our job scope has shrunk a lot.

## **5) Apart from COVID-19 which is essentially a pretty big challenge in itself, what else would you say was your biggest challenge in planning the conference?**

When we were still trying to get a physical conference to happen, I think one of the biggest challenges was the fact that they were charging us pre-pandemic prices for a post-pandemic capacity. With the SMM restrictions and everything, we had to get more rooms for a significantly reduced number of people but I guess it all worked out in the end because we didn't have to book the rooms in the end. I think another thing was that my team is pretty busy as well because they're both university students and they have exams and their own work so it's pretty hard to coordinate sometimes but we're making it work. I think we've got a good plan for the conference.

## **6) What has your most memorable MUN experience been so far? One good and one bad.**

I would say, as a delegate, my favourite conference would be THIMUN. I went for THIMUN in 2017 and what's different about it from other conferences is that there are no awards. So, the toxicity is reduced by so much because nobody's competing for anything. I met

a lot of international delegates and people who go to international schools and I made a lot of friends. It was really eye-opening as well because I got to see so many different cultures and got to know more about how students around the world are schooled and how they do MUN. SMUN 2019, was also a memorable conference but it was memorable for very different reasons. I was stressed throughout the four days and it was really cutthroat because there were delegates that were a little hard to deal with.

**7) What is your worst fear?**

I would say that my worst fear is rejection. Being rejected by people around me and society, but just being rejected in general and being left alone.

**8) What is your worst fear about the conference?**

It would probably be zoom mishaps like we send out the wrong link and there's a whole bunch of people who can't get in and we're flooded with telegram messages from delegates. Or if we mess up with the breakout rooms and delegates hear conversations between chairs that they aren't supposed to hear but I guess this just is something that we have to deal with.

**9) If you could have only one vanilla flavoured food for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

I actually haven't found really good vanilla yet. I'm still trying to find a good vanilla ice cream despite being lactose intolerant so I wouldn't place my bets yet. Actually, Starbucks' vanilla bean frappuccino is pretty good, although it's diabetes in a cup so if I had to choose now, it would be that. (Kamalini texted me after the interview and said that coffee bean and tea leaf's vanilla bean cold brew latte would beat Starbucks' frappuccino anyday)

**10) What animal do you think represents your spirit and why?**

Cat. Cats are just better than human beings aren't they, they're such a mood. For context, my office has a cat who's the greatest thing I've ever met. I just really love cats. You have to earn respect from a cat so I'm kind of in love with the chase.



Special  
Report

## **To Delegates: Love, Your Chairs.**

*These are the messages of love and encouragement that your chairs have for you after seeing your performance for the first day of SMUN. Hope you find inspiration, laughter and love in these pages that will keep you motivated and entertained for the rest of the conference. All the best everyone!*

*"You may be speaking, when everyone else is silent. You may be standing, when everyone else is seated - but you may have that crucial voice to say what's needed."*

You miss all the chances you don't take, so why shy away from the spotlight? Raise your hand. Venture forth. You may be the shining star the world needs.

**-Jason Ong, Head Chair of ICAO**

*To IOC and ICAO dels:*

Hello IOC Dels! By now y'all would have realized that I would unfortunately be unable to embark on this journey with y'all through SMUN 2021 as I have been sent to answer a higher calling! Nevertheless, please give your full support to Yuxuan, Ethan, and Yifan and work your hardest and learn as much as you can! All the best, and I'll see all of you at the closing ceremony :)

Dear ICAO Dels, glhf lmao.

**-Wayde**

*To SOCHUM delegates:*

We are not here to fit into the world. We are here to change the world. Make this Singapore MUN Conference your avenue to learn how the world works and try to make great changes. Good luck with your conference and wish you all scale new heights in the future endeavours.

**-John Poon, Head Chair, SOCHUM**

*To Crisis dels:*

Tovarisch, Remember to use conflict as a means of exercising power :D

**-Anonymous**

*Hi dels (especially our press dels ;))*

Hope you are having fun so far even though it is just day one of the conference. For those of you who are first timers don't be overwhelmed or afraid, just do your best, make friends and have fun and approach your friendly chairs if you need help. We hope that everyone had and will have an enjoyable time today and over the next 3 days!

**-Your Press Chairs <3**

*Dear Senators,*

What a great start to the conference. The USS dais is extremely heartened by your level of participation and cooperation today. Thank you for your enthusiasm despite this being an online MUN. We look forward to even more robust and lively debate from you tomorrow.

Love,

**Your Chairs, USS**

*Dear ASEAN delegates,*

Good job on Day 1 of the conference! We could see that many of you have acted upon the feedback we have provided .

We are heartened that you have made good progress in council and you have definitely introduced many pertinent points that are highly relevant to the issue at hand.

We look forward to meeting all of you again tomorrow!

**-Ying Qi and Aloysius**

*To DISEC Delegates:*

You are all doing great! I like how you're discussing definitions now cos I wrote that section of the study guide hehehehehehehehe

Ps. To shy delegates: Please speak up more in council!

**-DISEC Head Chair: Jia Yi**

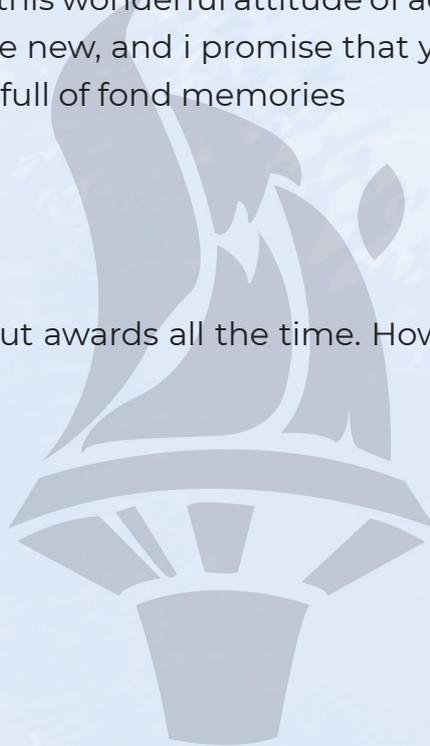
*To UNSC delegates:*

hi delegates! i know that this is a relatively complicated topic but i'd like to just commend you for taking on this challenge and for always stretching yourselves to tackle it as well as you can—please continue this wonderful attitude of active contributions even though it must be daunting if you are new, and i promise that you'll look back on the four days and find it fulfilling, fun, and full of fond memories

**-UNSC Head Chair**

Life is too short to worry about awards all the time. However, it's not too short to make lifelong friends!

**-Mr Chairman**





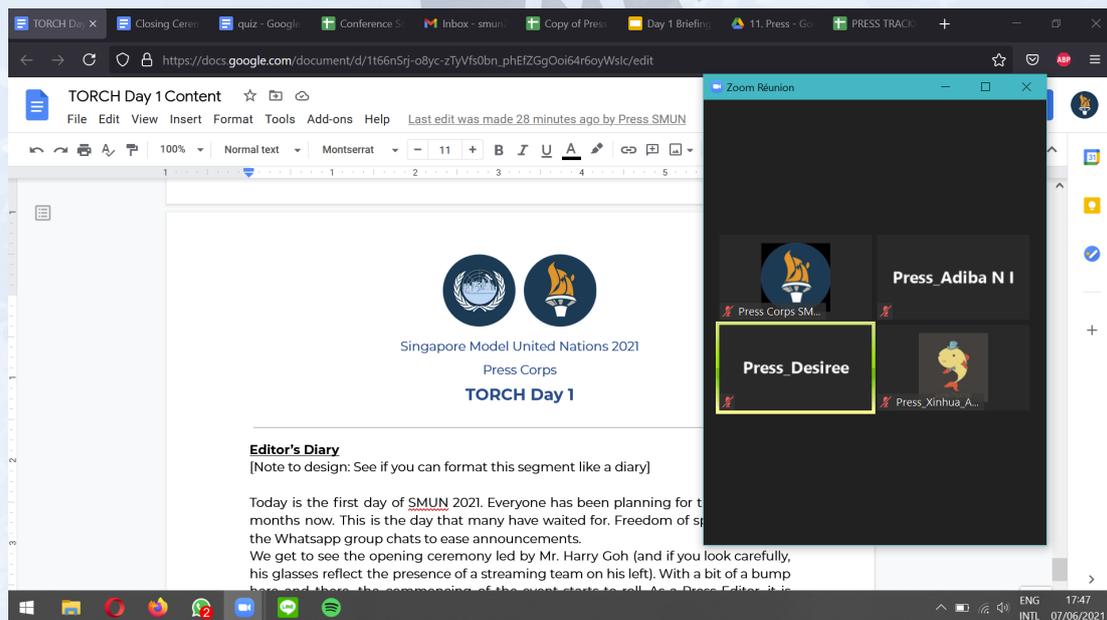
Editor's  
Diary

# Editor's Diary

Dear Diary,

Today is the first day of SMUN 2021. Everyone has been planning for this for several months now. This is the day that many have waited for. Freedom of speech has left the Whatsapp group chats to make room for announcements.

We get to see the opening ceremony led by Mr. Harry Goh (and if you look carefully, his glasses reflect the presence of a streaming team on his left). With a bit of a bump here and there, the commencing of the event starts to roll. As a Press Editor, it is exciting to anticipate the reports of all ten SMUN councils, excluding press, coming in via our journalists through the email in the form of pitches, written articles, and other multimedia formats. Good luck for all the delegates, chairs, and committees involved to have a blast during the first day!

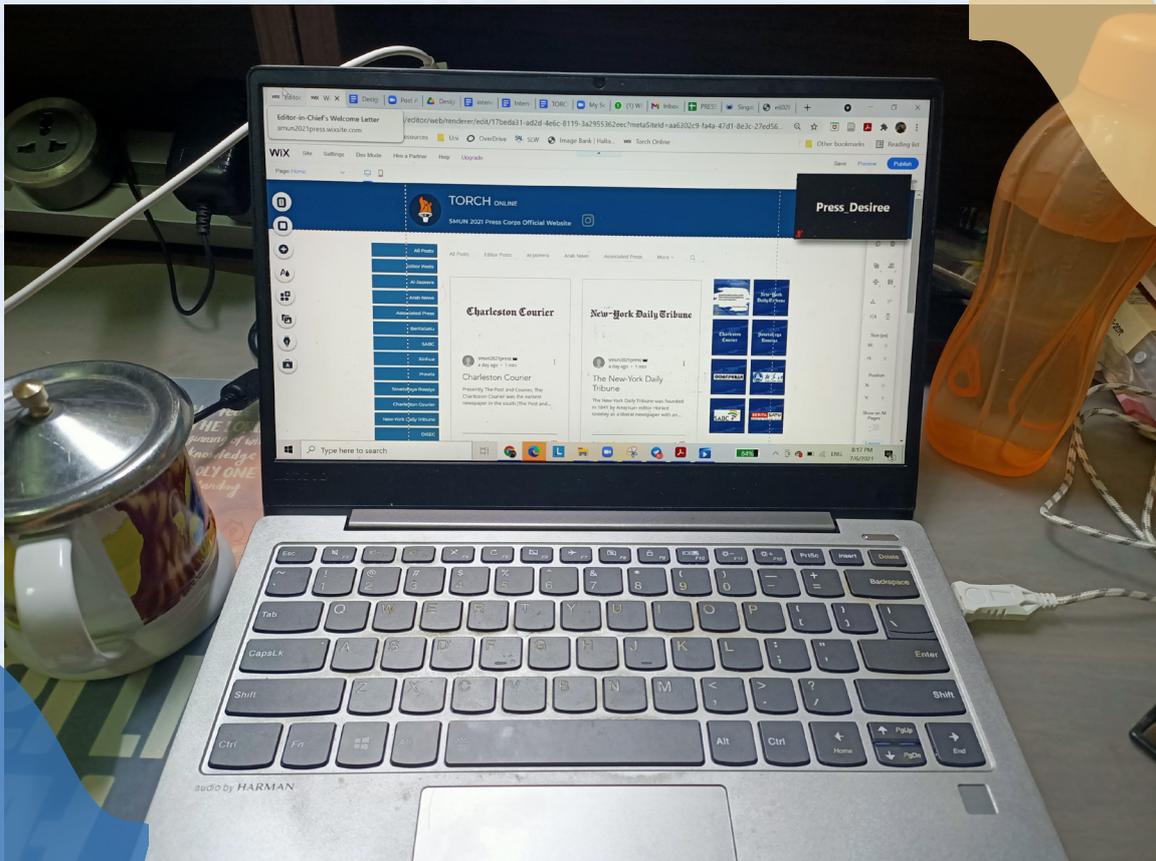


*In need to use lots of tabs and applications for running agencies !*

**To be continued,**  
Press Editor Adiba

Hey,

*The Press Corps had a slow start today as delegates were off to listen in at other committees. But oh boy was I flooded with a ton of last-minute submissions after 7pm. Here's to a fruitful day two ahead!*



*A humble set up and a free wix account*

**Goodnight,**  
*Press Editor-in-Chief, Miju*

Hello Journal,

*For far too long, the Right Honorable Chairs of the Press Corps have been overworked and underrepresented in pertinent issues pertaining to Singapore Model United Nations. For the nature of the Press Corps is fundamentally different from the other committees, being a non-centralised committee where delegates do not aggregate at a specific location or commit to a single communal activity, the roles and responsibilities of Press Chairs (heretofore known as Editors”) bear little resemblance to those of other Chairs.*

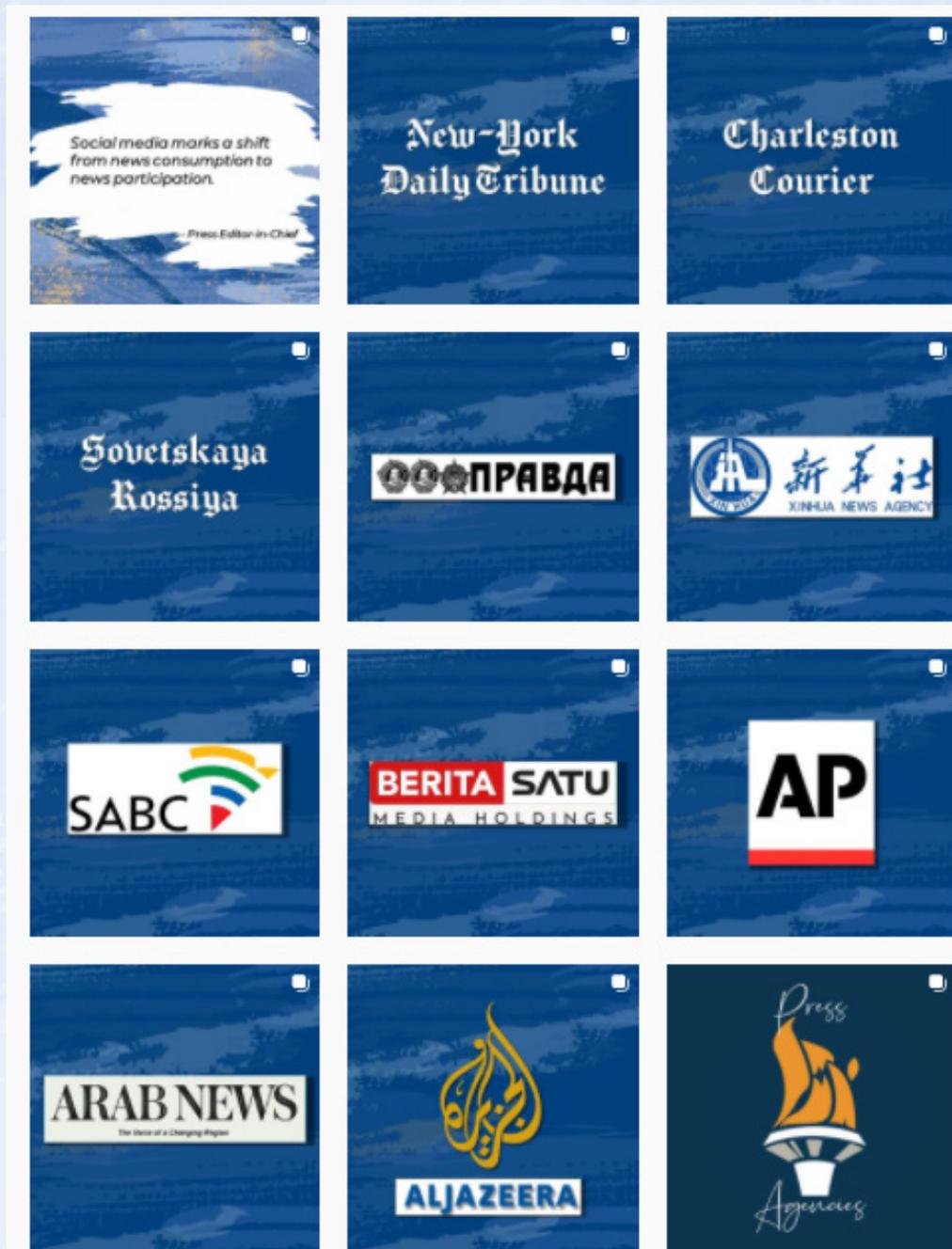
*For one, as the Editors are not involved in the administration of any particular committee, the occupancy of their time is therefore not constrained to any specific activity. A consequence of this is that an Editor has to expend a considerable amount of their time in the deciding of what actions they must do to make the best use of their situation—be it Solitaire, washing the dishes, or doing homework assignments. Not only does this place a temporal burden on the Editor, but it uses up cognitive resources that can be better spent on activities that contribute towards Model United Nations.*

*I have now proven that SMUN Editors are more overworked than conventional committee chairs. As a reparation, I demand that SMUN Editors be each given five hundred million dollars as compensation.*

JK JK

**Signing Out,**  
Editor Jaden Ong

## Instagram Spotlight



*The SMUN Press Instagram is up and running!  
Look forward to more exciting content over the next three days.  
[@press.smun2021](https://www.instagram.com/press.smun2021)*



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**SINGAPORE MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2021**