Country: The United Kingdom

Committee: UNICEF

Agenda Item: Practicing Freedom of Religion with a Special Emphasis on Forcible Imposition of Religion on Young Children

Having a specialised committee called UNICEF UK that works and raises funds for the enhancement of UNICEF’s actions throughout the globe in order to provide children with the requisite and viable support, which is also one of 33 UNICEF national charitable organisations based in industrialised countries, we, as the delegation of the United Kingdom, would like to, initially, declare our supports for the tremendous endeavours to ramp up the adequacy of children’s lives, and state with paramount significance that we feel obliged to facilitate the solutions that will be presented at the conference as a developed country. Furthermore, due to our country being a multi-religious country that has a majority of 59.5% of its population believing in Christianity, 4.4% of its population believing in Islam, 1.3% of its population believing in Hinduism, 0.4% of its population not having a religion, 7.2% of its population not stating their religion and 27.2% of its population believing in other religions, as it is announced according to a census organised in 2011; we deem the freedom of religion to be pivotal in our nation and the other nations from all around the world, which is constrained by the fact that children are imposed to religion starting from reasonably young ages. Given this fact, we have worked in our nation and on children in order to conclude religious problems in our country and endorsed the maintenance of the efforts to come up with further solutions.

In the first place, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was signed on 19 April 1990, and came into force on 15 January 1992 by the government of the United Kingdom, citizens of the United Kingdom have the right to choose the religion that will be pursued by their children and whether it will be followed at school or home. Nevertheless, a child or young person may decide on their own religion if they are capable of comprehending the vital fundamentals of having a religion unless it is seen harmful by the parents. Moreover, it is against the law to discriminate against anyone, including a child or young person, on account of religion or belief. In addition, despite the widespread requirement for schools on providing religious education in the United Kingdom, children may be withdrawn from religious education if it is perceived to be necessary. Another action that was taken in the United Kingdom in terms of the freedom of religion and belief is UK Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Forum, which works on the freedom of religious and non-religious people in our country by supporting the article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizing the freedom of religions and beliefs. Despite our priority which is maintaining sufficient freedom in our nation, we are aware of the havoc and the jeopardies of religious issues in other nations and their children either. Seeing this, we regard working with other countries to be valuable and paramount as well.

We would like to finalize our statements by proclaiming that throughout the efforts to increase freedom of religion by putting emphasis on children forced to have a certain belief by their families, we have come up with solutions planned to be undertaken in our country as pilot applications and will be spread to other countries after the other governments are persuaded by the benefits in our country, which include interactive activities held amongst children from a diverse range of backgrounds, intriguing campaigns and mandatory lessons on religion where children can learn and discuss and prepare projects on various religions and their rights. Therefore, we are willing to suggest our numerous solutions and take the required steps as a part of the coalition of the member states in the committee in order to accelerate the conclusion of this issue.