



MOTION REGARDING THE CLARIFICATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL POSITION 2020-12-03

Submitted for: 2020-12-03

Submitted to:	SSMU Legislative Council	Document no.:	LEG-PUB-MOT-2020-12-03-002 (to be assigned by Steering)
Moved by:	Brooklyn Frizzle <i>Vice-President (University Affairs)</i>	Current Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Noah Merali <i>Services Representative</i>		

Issue

In response to recent calls for the SSMU to speak out on international conflicts, this motion seeks to establish the beliefs of the SSMU with regards to international solidarity.

Background and Rationale

As a political body and further to the Leadership pillar of the Constitution, the SSMU carries the responsibility of demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection. In the execution of this mandate, the SSMU has been called on, from time to time, to speak out on international and geopolitical matters.

The lack of an established position on international affairs has inevitably led to varying levels of conflict and ambiguity, with the legitimacy of the SSMU's international advocacy being called into question.

Most notably, a 2016 [Judicial Board ruling](#) on the legality of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Motion concluded that "all motions which compel SSMU to actively campaign against specific countries are unconstitutional." However, in the same ruling, it was also decided that "SSMU is not precluded from issuing statements related to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict."



With that in mind, there remains an uncertain middle ground whereby the SSMU can, constitutionally, adopt positions on international issues so long as those positions don't compel the SSMU to campaign against a given nation.

This motion, therefore, seeks to establish a catch-all Position to clarify the Society's political belief with regards to international matters. This Position would serve as a basis for the deliberation and establishment of future Positions and act as a foundation for the political activities of the Executive Committee where specific matters cannot be resolved at Council.

Alignment with Mission

This motion seeks to reinforce the SSMU's constitutional mandate to demonstrate leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection.

Consultations Completed

This motion was drafted with the Vice-President (External Affairs), in communication with the Executive Committee. The proposed position seeks to address concerns raised by members-at-large in response to SSMU's recent political activity, following consultations with the outspoken students leading the opposition to SSMU's recent statements.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Should this motion fail, SSMU's political stance on international issues will remain ambiguous, leaving the political bodies of the Society in limbo. The lack of an established position, currently, requires that any international-facing political activity or response needs to be resolved on a case-by-case basis, creating unnecessary procedural and emotional strains for those involved.

Sustainability Considerations

This motion serves to increase the social sustainability of SSMU's practices and promote a strong, safe and empowering community by endeavouring to minimize systemic power imbalances within society and foster a culture of anti-oppression, as outlined in section 3.2 of the Sustainability Policy.



Impact of Decision and Next Steps

All political actions of the SSMU, including subsequent positions taken, will be made in full compliance with the Constitution, Internal Regulations, and Policies, with special consideration given to the Equity Policy.

In compliance with the Judicial Board *Reference re: Legality of the BDS Motion and Similar Motions* the proposed Position, should it be adopted, will not be used to compel the SSMU to campaign against a nation as a whole, distinct from the actions or beliefs of its government.

Furthermore, the Executive Committee will be responsible for consulting the Legislative Council, as the political and representative body of the SSMU, on political actions whenever possible, alongside any relevant student groups.

This Position, should it be adopted, will be consulted when such a discussion is not possible for reasons including, but not limited to, the urgency, confidentiality, or complexity of the matter at hand.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved, that the Legislative Council adopt the Position outlined in **Appendix A : Proposed Position** as an official Position of the SSMU, to be added to the SSMU Positions Book;

Results of the Vote

In favour	(18)
Opposed	(2)
Abstain	(3)



Appendix A : Proposed Position

15. International Solidarity

In fulfilling its mandate to lead in advocacy and representation surrounding matters of human rights and social justice, the SSMU believes:

- 15.1** That the criticism of the actions or beliefs of a given government does not equate to the criticism of the nation or its people;
- 15.2** That the legitimacy and authority of a government is derived from its democracy and the consent of the governed;
- 15.3** That protests, community mobilizations, and other non-violent demonstrations are valid expressions of political dissent;
- 15.4** That all people have the right to self-determination
- 15.5** That international disputes should be resolved, first and foremost, through diplomacy and multilateral cooperation;
- 15.6** That the human rights of migrants and displaced persons, regardless of their status or documentation, must be upheld;
- 15.8** That Indigenous stewardship and reconciliation are essential to environmental protection and the opposition of colonialism, imperialism, and expansionism;
- 15.9** That socialization and social services should prevail against deregulation, austerity, and financial destabilization;
- 15.10** That socioeconomic mobility must be favoured over class systems;
- 15.11** That secularism, the separation of church and state, should be promoted but should not infringe on freedom of religion;
- 15.12** That cultural diversity and relativity should be celebrated rather than discouraged or assimilated;



Office of the Speaker | Bureau du président du conseil

Tel: (514) 398-6800 | Fax: (514) 398-7490 | speaker@ssmu.ca

3600 McTavish St., Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3

Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories

15.13 That, above all else, human rights and freedoms, as outlined in the Quebec Charte des droits et libertés de la personne, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must be protected and promoted.

APPROVED