

## Connect Global US-MENA: Week One Report

### **Main Activities and Group Dynamics:**

This week, participants attended their first sessions of the Connect Program. Before the sessions begin, students shared their perception of dialogue through the introductory activities. Participants opened their first sessions with ice-breakers and activities during which they introduced themselves and their respective countries. Then, facilitators shared more information about the Program and the role of participants in the dialogue process.

After the introductions, participants started discussions about their required readings. Based on the readings, some groups discussed the current global risks while others shared thoughts about how the current social challenges are perceived and dealt with. During the discussions, participants shared their opinions on the most critical global problems and linked them to the current challenges their communities are facing. Among the issues presented in the required readings, some groups agreed on a topic and explored it on a deeper level. Some picked environment, while others discussed poverty and inequality.

Most facilitators rated their group dynamics as “good” or “excellent” while others had a slightly slower start. During the first sessions, it is normal for some participants to be shy. Throughout the Program, students will develop a better understanding of their role in the discussions and will become more familiar with each other. Despite the slow start, many facilitators reported that participants are curious about how some issues are dealt with in their peers’ countries. In the upcoming sessions, conversations will run more smoothly and facilitators are expecting to take a step back.

### **Attendance:**

Given the technical challenges some groups faced this week- particularly on Monday, we will make sure your students’ attendance records are not affected by the issues. All students’ absences in week 1 will be excused, and will not be counted against them. We expect the upcoming sessions to run as normal, and we would be grateful for your help in reminding students to attend their sessions and login a few minutes early, if possible, especially as they might need a little bit of motivation after some of the setbacks this week.

### **Next week:**

During the second session, groups will continue engaging in discussions about global and social issues and will continue to build comfort and reinforce their confidence through active listening and follow up questions. Then, participants will start working on their final projects by picking a program-related topic with their groupmates and discussing it further with the community members they will identify by the end of the week.