



*Setting a framework for the
production and trade of rare earths*

Committee Guide

Economic and Social Council





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Personal Introduction

Dear Delegates,

my name is Annika Kuczka, I am 16 years old and it is a pleasure for me to chair the ECOSOC with Yannick Bargfeldt this year. I come from Oldenburg and I visit the 11th grade of the Graf-Anton-Günther School here which means that my A-levels are hopefully in 2016.

In my free time, besides MUNs, I like playing golf or going to the gym to work out. But I also like to meet my friends in the city. And I like baking but I prefer eating the cake afterwards.

In 2012, I took part in Anton goes UN in our school. It is nearly the same as the OLMUN but it is a bit smaller and in German. It was a lot of fun and about half a year after the MUN I was asked to be the next secretary general. When I look back, I am really happy that I said yes because I gained many experiences and I met tons of new people. Also in 2012 I participated at my first OLMUN as a staff. The next year I decided to be a delegate because I hated it to run around in unsuitable shoes the whole day. And I wanted to debate! The last year was the best one of all. I had the chance to be a member of the Security Council and to represent Rwanda. Besides OLMUN I took part at two BERMUNs. It was impressive but I realized that OLMUN is better. :-)

Also since 2012 I have known Yannick. We also had fun working with each other so I believe that this conference is going to be awesome. And also with you delegates it is going to be the best anniversary OLMUN will ever have.

I am looking forward to see you all in June prepared to work with success and fun.

Yours faithfully,

Annika Kuczka



Dear fellow Delegates,

My name is Yannick Bargfeldt and I am happy and honoured to welcome you to the ECOSOC of OLMUN 2015 as one of your Chairs. I am 21 years old and am currently serving in the German armed forces stationed in Delmenhorst. In addition to that, I study Psychology at the University of Hagen and in the rest of my free time I enjoy various kinds of sport, listening to music and meeting friends.

My MUN history began in 2011 with my participation at OLMUN 2011 as a Delegate of Malaysia. I was really impressed that a huge event like the OLMUN was organized solely by a group of students. At that time, I was sitting in the crowd looking up at the Chairs and the Secretariat and felt inspired by their enthusiasm and passion for OLMUN.

After that, I organised a MUN conference similar to the OLMUN at my school and had the honour of functioning as the President of the General Assembly of OLMUN 2013. I have chaired at five MUNs in the past and this year's OLMUN will be my 8th conference.

I very much look forward to meeting you all in June and to having interesting debates as well as a great time overall.

Yours sincerely,

Yannick Bargfeldt

1. General Information

1.1 How to use the Committee Guide

This committee guide provides a basis for this years' topic that will be debated and discussed in the Economic and Social Council. Though, it is only the foundation for the delegates' research on this topic and is not meant to be used as an all-inclusive analysis. Accordingly, this guide serves as a thought provoking impulse to introduce every delegate to the topic. Indeed, the delegates will acquaint themselves with further information to be well prepared for the discussions and for the debates. This can be done by consulting scholarly materials, international news and more detailed proved background knowledge.

1.2 The Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council is one of the principal organs of the UN and was established in 1946. The Council is the place where such issues as economic, social and environmental challenges are discussed and debated. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ECOSOC to coordinate those issues and to find solutions for the economically related social problems. The ECOSOC holds one four-week session each year in July. Since 1998, additional meetings are held every April with the highest ranking officials of the International Monetary Fund as well as the World Bank. Adding to the member states, a number of NGOs are granted consultative status in the council.



2. Rare earths

2.1 Basic Information

Rare Earth metals are the most wanted raw materials in the world although they are not as rare as other metals. Back in 1787, they were discovered by the Swedish lieutenant Carl Axel Arrhenius. After that, scientists researched for almost one century and they found seventeen rare earths, which are silver and reactive. The separation is expensive and lengthy, which makes the process of reduction even more difficult. But without them, we would not have iPods, smartphones or computers because they are an essential component. It is treated as the oil of the future. In China they are also used for fertilization or to feed animals.

2.2 Separation of rare earths

The minerals have been pushed to the mantle of earth centuries before. They are partly penetrated down to two hundred meters to the earth's surface. But the reduction of rare earths is complicated. All seventeen metals are chemically close to each other so that they need to be separated with acids and leaches. Often rare earths occur in form of tracks in mixtures. End products can be radioactive or polluting.

2.3 Environmental damage

During the separation of rare earths, a lot of environmental damage is caused. Poisoned mud emerges because of acid which is disposed of in ponds in China. Also, toxic environmental waste could be produced. It is difficult to dispose of and a danger for the ground water. In addition, there is a risk of radioactive elements.

2.4 Situation of the world market

More than 30 percent of rare earth metals can be found in China which leads to a dependence of the world from that nation. In the 1990s, the United States of America were the largest exporter of rare earths but due to higher environmental requirements and lower production costs in China, the mining was stopped. In the past few years, China curbed the export of rare earths in order to conserve the dwindling resources and limit environmental damage. This led to worldwide concerns and especially increased the research effort of recycling technologies for raw materials. In January 2015, the WTO court of arbitration announced new trade guidelines after a complaint by the USA, the EU and Japan. As a consequence, China scrapped its plans of limiting their exports.

Other countries like Australia, India, Brazil or Malaysia are thinking of recovering rare earths from mines. Experts discovered rare earths on the moon and there might be an opportunity of asteroid mining. On the one hand, there would be no dependence on China anymore, on the other hand it is expensive and not every country has the funds to invest in it. Furthermore, the equilibrium of the world market will be highly influenced.

3. So now what?

Now you have a very brief overview what our committee's topic is about. To answer your next question – no, that's not enough knowledge for our sessions.

If you happen to look at other committee Guides, you might notice that some contain round about 5 to 6 more pages of explicit know-how. We decided to keep our Committee Guide shorter, on the one hand to enable you to search for more detailed and interesting information by yourself and on the other hand we are sure you wouldn't have been in the mood to read a sixteen pages long barren text.

Our committee's topic is: "Setting a framework for the production and trade of rare earths". That's exactly what we are going to do. So look in to how the country you will be presenting is involved in our topic. Ask yourself following questions:

Is your country more interested in the economic or in the environmental aspect of the production of rare earths?

Which trade guidelines will you support?

Does my country have a reliable trade resource for rare earths?

Does my country need rare earths?

Does my country need smartphones or even cars?

If the only question you asked yourself up until now was "What are they talking about – I thought Rare Earth is an American rock band?", then you should get to work right now!!!

4. Organizational matters

Get started with your research straight away!

Every Delegate is expected to write a Policy Statement **and** a draft Resolution. Every Delegate is to send us their **draft Resolution** by the **8th of June!**

Keep in mind that we will of course entertain punishments in certain cases (for all first timers – it is not as bad as it sounds).

As every year we will have a **dresscode** at OLMUN 2015. If you have never heard of the word "dresscode" before, you should have a look at the OLMUN Handbook on the website www.olmun.org. **First timers** should look through the handbook in any case.

You should receive an email from us a month prior to the OLMUN the latest. Furthermore we will establish a facebook group soon for quick and easy communication.

If you have any kind of **questions** concerning the topic, OLMUN or what color tie you should wear – don't hesitate to contact us! As you know there are no dumb questions.

You can **contact** us via email ecosoc@olmun.org



Of course you can contact us personally on **facebook** too.

5. Useful links

<http://web.mit.edu/12.000/www/m2016/finalwebsite/problems/ree.html>

-> Massachusetts Institute of Technology

<http://www.rareearthtechalliance.com/>

-> Rare Earth Technology Alliance

<http://geology.com/articles/rare-earth-elements/>

-> Geoscience News Page

<http://www.rareelementresources.com/rare-earth-elements>

-> Rare Element Resources Ltd.

http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/rare_earths/

-> Geoscience Statistics Page

<http://www.namibiarareearths.com/rare-earths-industry.asp>

-> Namibia Rare Earths Inc.

<https://www.ameslab.gov/dmse/rem/what-are-rare-earths>

-> U.S. Department of Energy

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

-> CIA factbook