

*Improving the Working Conditions and  
Situation of Miners*

# **Committee Guide**

*Human Rights Council*



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# 1. Personal Introduction

## **Bart van Donselaar**

Dear delegates,

I'm Bart van Donselaar, I'm 17 years old and I will be one of your chairs of the HRC here at OLMUN 2018. This conference will mark my 16th MUN session and my 8th time chairing. I currently study at the Vechtdal College Hardenberg, where I follow a curriculum of natural sciences.

When I'm not occupied with my work for school, I'll be reading, watching videos online, listening to music, doing a little gaming and making my friends laugh at my stupidity and clumsiness. I also love to sing, even though I know my singing isn't good in any way.

I started being part of MUN's when I was 14 years old. After my first MUN conference, I have participated as a delegate, chair or secretariat member in other MUNs. Even though I adore the debating and public speaking you do at an MUN, I can't help but love the social aspect of MUNs, getting to know many different people and making friends. I hope you will learn a lot from your experiences in our committee!

## **Flo Seifert**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Flo Seifert and I am going to be one of your chairs. I am 18 years old and live in Oldenburg, where I will be writing my Abitur this year. In my leisure time I do sports, hang out with friends, travel with my family and watch netflix.

I have participated in the OLMUN in 2015 and 2017 as a delegate so far, having spent one year abroad in between. Although I really enjoyed being a delegate, I especially enjoyed debating about it, I decided to take the next step this year. Therefore it will be my first time chairing, which makes me very much looking forward to this new experience and meeting all of you guys.

## 2. Committee introduction

The Human Rights Council is a body within the United Nations Organization, which was founded on March 15<sup>th</sup> in 2006, when a resolution in the General Assembly declaring its establishment passed. It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them. It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. The HRC consists of 47 member states, which are reelected every three years. What you need to know is, that the HRC only has the right to make recommendations on how to combat violations of human rights, which are defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What it can do as well is sending its own observers to countries to report the local conditions to them. These have to be appointed either as "thematic mandates" or as a "country mandate". Which means they are either specialized on a certain topic or a certain country.

## 3. Introduction to the issue

### 3.1 Topic

This year's topic is about improving the working conditions of miners.

Miners in many developing but even some developed countries all over the world experience terrible working conditions, endangering the workers to a life-threatening degree.

Many countries have taken significant steps during the last decades to address working conditions in the mining industry, but there is still a lot of room for improvement. The stricter safety laws and steadily improving machinery have also played their part in decreasing the risks.

Working conditions in mines and quarries can still be unusual and sometimes dangerous.

Due to the fact, that underground miners spend most of their time in the mines, which are damp and dark, there are still major risks for health and safety of miners, like falling rocks, exposure to dust, intensive noise, explosions, cave-ins, electric shocks, or exposure to harmful gases and high temperatures. Although underground mines have electric lights, only the lights on miners' caps illuminate many areas. Workers in mines with very low roofs may have to work on their hands and knees, backs, or stomachs, in confined spaces. Especially the exposure to coal and rock dust poses a major threat to many miners' health, causing different forms of pneumoconiosis, depending on the type of dust. Workers in surface mines and quarries are subject to rugged outdoor work in all kinds of weather and climates. Some surface mines shut down in the winter, because snow and ice covering the mine site makes work too difficult. Physical strength and stamina are necessary, because the work involves lifting, stooping, and climbing. Surface mining, however, usually is less hazardous than underground mining. Another problem faced by the miners are very low wages, that are in no proportion to the hardships many have to go through in their working places. Furthermore, many miners have to work great distances away from their homes, which separates them from their families.

## **4. Major parties involved**

### **4.1 South Africa**

South Africa's mining industry is massive, with diamonds, gold, platinum and coal being mined on a great scale. The country has a history with discrimination based on race, and this history led to a great disparity in racial diversity in miners. Furthermore, these miners work under terrible conditions, with miners suffering from treatable illnesses like tuberculosis and being undercompensated for their hard work. More information on the poor working conditions of miners in South Africa can be found on Mining Africa's website, which is listed in the 'Sources and further reading' section of this research report.

### **4.2 Guinea**

Guinea has an extensive bauxite mining industry. Due to a lack of qualified workers domestically, most miners come from abroad. The country has suffered from major outbreaks of diseases like yellow fever and Ebola, because of poor health care. Because the country lacks basic health care in many aspects, working conditions in all fields, including the mining industry, are miserable.

### **4.3 Russia**

Russia, while having a massive mining industry, has a history of treating its miners relatively well, and thus is an example of balancing great profits from the mining industry with good working conditions for miners. The Russian government heavily invests in the mining industry, which has led to positive improvement in working conditions of miners.

### **4.4 International Labour Organisation**

The ILO has spoken out against maltreatment of miners in South Africa on multiple occasions, and has passed Convention C176 (listed in the 'Sources and further reading' section) on safety and health in mines. To this day, the organisation is a major advocate for improving the working conditions of miners.

## 5. Previous and possible attempts

### 5.1 A previous attempt to resolve the issue

Working conditions of miners need improvement in multiple dimensions. Measures have already been taken to curb the mortality rate in the mining industry and improve miners' working conditions in general. Below, you can find a brief summary of a piece of legislation that is central to this issue, convention C176. Please read the convention, as it makes great strides to improve miners' working conditions.

The outcome of the Convention is that miner's health and safety is upheld and monitored through various actions involving the mining workplace. The responsible parties would be the employer and the government of the countries that ratified the Convention. The laws outlined in the Convention ensure the health and safety of miners. The ILO adopted the Convention on June 22, 1995.

### 5.2 Possible solutions to the issue

Although there has been a lot of improvement in miners' working conditions on a global scale, their situation still is far from ideal. Below are a few ideas for operative clauses that you can elaborate on yourselves.

Many miners are uninformed on the dangers of working the mines. Further educating miners on the dangers of working in the mines and on how to protect themselves improves their chances of survival during calamities in the mines.

Hazards in mines are often well-known with employers, and thus some calamities are easily preventable. However, to save money, most employers don't correct issues in the mines until the danger is almost imminent. Employers thus should move faster to correct problems in the mines.

Infrastructure in mines is often deteriorated, and should be renewed periodically. This is quite an easy fix to curb the mortality rate of miners and improve their working conditions, but due to the high costs of renewing infrastructure, the infrastructure of mines is often ignored by employers.

Many countries also haven't yet ratified C176, and doing that would greatly improve miners' working conditions as well.

## 6. Sources and further reading

<https://www.miningafrika.net/mining-news/mining-conditions-south-africa/>

<https://www.export.gov/article?id=Russia-Mining-Equipment>

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/78653/guinea-winners-and-losers-guinea%E2%80%99s-bauxite-industry>

<https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2014/07/guinea-mining-guide.pdf>

[http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_187783/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_187783/lang--en/index.htm)

[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C176](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C176)

The Washington Post Article:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/07/organ-traffickers-lock-up-people-to-harvest-their-kidneys-here-are-the-politics-behind-the-organ-trade/?utm\\_term=.d71a1ed87f0d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/07/organ-traffickers-lock-up-people-to-harvest-their-kidneys-here-are-the-politics-behind-the-organ-trade/?utm_term=.d71a1ed87f0d)

World Health Assembly Human organ and tissue transplantation WHA63.22

[http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA63/A63\\_R22-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA63/A63_R22-en.pdf)

Human Trafficking for the Removal of Organs and Body Parts, United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking

<https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2008/BP011HumanTraffickingfortheRemovalofOrgans.pdf>