

## **Profile of goals and activities, re. International Eco-School Application/Authentication**

For 15 years now, the Otto-Hahn-Gymnasium Gifhorn has been sending delegates to Model United Nations Conferences, mostly in the Netherlands and Germany. These conferences simulate United Nations General Assembly sessions as well as diverse UN committee sessions and are attended internationally, by delegates from schools both European and overseas. Weekly mock debates at our school afford MUN club members a chance to prepare for these conferences.

With English as the working language for debate and usually also for informal meetings outside the actual conference, MUN conferences offer a unique possibility for students to train and improve their English-language skills and argumentative strategies in a competitive and quasi-realistic setting. The prerequisite to represent a country different from one's own allows delegates to reconsider established lines of thought and put themselves in a different pair of shoes. The formal debate advances possibilities to compare and reflect on diverse interpretations of current problems, with these interpretations based on varied social structures, judicial traditions or cultural convictions. Finally, MUN conferences and supplementary spare-time activities bring together delegates from European countries and further abroad, allowing students to form friendships and connections across borders.

At MUN conferences, various topics currently on the international agenda are debated. In this context, environmental issues play an important role. For example, at Leiden Model United Nations 2016, our delegates to the UN Environment Commission debated issues such as "Safe drinking water in developing countries", "Fracking", and "Exploring the possibilities of geo-engineering for counteracting climate change". Just as relevant, the Special Conference on World Food Security included environmental topics such as "Reducing the use of antibiotics in agriculture", "Food loss and waste in MEDCs", and "Reducing post-harvest food loss in rural areas". Accordingly, environmental topics are also debated at the OLMUN conference which we regularly visit. This year, our delegates to the simulation of the United Nations Environment Program will be "Assessing Genetic Engineering Regarding its Consequences for Agriculture and Nutrition", and the Third Committee of the General Assembly will be "Developing Guidelines for Sustainable Urban Development".

Participation in Model United Nations offers many chances to further develop both social and language skills and grow personally. We believe it thereby also allows for valuable insights into Agenda 21 topics and the goals of an "International Eco-School".

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