**Speech title: Unity in a divided world**

**Time: 5:14**

**Core message: Encourage true model diplomacy**

Thank you mister President,

Esteemed staff members, distinguished guests and dear delegates,

Firstly, I want to wish all of you a very warm welcome at the 26th edition of Haarlem Model United Nations.

For over twenty-six years, students – full of fresh perspectives, dreams and the desire to solve the most pressing challenges – have gathered here in the historical city of Haarlem. Not afraid to show their ambition to make the future better and with a sense of purposeful optimism. This is what makes Model United Nations so powerful: it lays the foundation for students to develop themselves so much further than MUN seems to be on the surface. Students leave with a new view on international relations, enhanced negotiation skills and the ability to think as a true diplomat.

So what is a true diplomat? [*PAUSE*]

Just this last January I believed a true diplomat was the one who spoke the most, could pass the most clauses and had the nicest tie. Now, I’m not sure this is quite that simple. So, what happened in January? [*PAUSE*]

In January, I was in Spain participating in a simulation of the Arctic Council. An international body that focuses on building consensus between indigenous groups and powerful nations. This means that a resolution only passes if all members, even those with only 2000 inhabitants, reach an agreement.

So I entered the room with a MUN mindset, ready to make the strongest speeches and win that best delegate award. But, to my complete surprise delegates were not pushing their own clauses through. No, they worked hard to create a complete resolution, together, running around, not to convince the bare minimum of a majority to pass “their” clause but checking if *every* member fully agreed and supported it.

This was a refreshing view on how diplomacy actually works and made me take a second look at Model UN committees that are not consensus-based. And this is what I would like to share with you:

I am concerned about the recent trend in the world of MUN: I see a shift from modelling diplomacy to modelling a shouting contest. How can we solve pressing issues without even listening to each other? Ensuring cooperation and consensus are the very first step in solving world issues.

Surprisingly, we can see the same trend mirrored in actual international relations. Nations, parliament members and diplomats stop listening to each other and start prioritising their own beliefs and needs. There is a lot of screaming and shouting, there is very little listening.

The Netherlands is a country of consensus based ideology, also on a national level. After all, we are the founders of the so-called “**polder model**", a system that tackles this very issue, described as "cooperation despite differences". Polder is a typical Dutch word for pieces of land enclosed between dykes. This name can be traced back to when the Netherlands mainly consisted of mud and water. This church is barely above sea level. (hand beweging)

Politicians, farmers and civilians had to work together to make sure their land was kept dry. These people worked together to find a solution that was beneficial to all, without sacrificing their own ideals. They solved the issue of international diplomacy 600 years before it even existed.

Now how do we stop this trend in international relations? I would hope that current leaders could share my insight, but it might eventually be up to our generation: How do we want to define this new age of policy making? We need to step away from the belief that we can solve world problems on our own. We need to realise that consensus, not only in MUN, are the cornerstone of issue solving. Stop thinking in “winner takes it all” terms and start thinking in “we could all be winners” mode.

Now concretely, what does this all mean for you as delegates; I have three pieces of advice for you:

1. Firstly, reach out to your fellow delegates with opposing views during lobbying.

2. Secondly do not vote against something without considering how you can improve through amendments,

3. and, finally, focus on constructive rather than destructive behaviour.

After all, the best delegate isn’t the one who speaks the most or the loudest. No, it’s the person that searches for unity among everyone, even with those who have fundamentally different ideologies. That is a true diplomat, and I hope that in three days I can stand here, look around, and see many, many true diplomats.

Thank you,

I yield the floor back to the president