

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO THE BELGRADE INTERNATIONAL
MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
Belgrade, 18-21 March 2010**

On behalf of the entire United Nations system, thank you for taking part in this hands-on exercise in international diplomacy. This Model UN Conference will teach you something about the sheer grind of international diplomacy; the patience needed to reach consensus; the teamwork that reaps rewards.

But there is also something I hope you will bring to your participation here today.

The earthquake in Haiti was one of the biggest humanitarian crises we have faced. Tens of thousands were killed, and many more injured and made homeless. The UN peacekeeping operation was hit hard; dozens of our colleagues lost their lives. But those who survived realized that their work was now more vital than ever. Soon after the quake, the mission was up and running to serve the people of Haiti.

That is the UN spirit: resilient, dedicated, striving to do more. We try to bring that spirit to all our work. If you feel some of that same commitment and dedication, I hope you will bring it to your efforts at this Model UN, and to everything that you do.

We also need to harness your spirit, and the spirit of youth around the world, to address the tough challenges we are facing. The agreed deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 2015, is nearly upon us, yet many countries are not on track. Climate change is a potentially catastrophic threat, especially for the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Discrimination against women and girls remains widespread even though we know that women's empowerment is the key to prosperity. And we continue to live under the shadow of nuclear weapons.

So let us unite the UN spirit and the great determination of the world's young people. Half the world's population is under 25. You live in extraordinary times, which create extraordinary opportunities for change. Help us meet the trials of our age and shape the world for good.

BAN Ki-moon