Honourable Madam President, Lord Mayor of Haarlem, the principal Mr . Van der Werff, dearest Secretary-General, fellow staff members, distinguished MUN-directors, BoD-member and guest, and dear, dear delegates,

It is my great honour to welcome all of you to the 24th session of the Haarlem Model United Nations. All of you, who are a part of HMUN , whom without, we would not be here at the start of HMUN 2021.

Throughout the process of organising HMUN 2021, I have felt a feeling of pride and happiness. Proud to see plans, that seem too ambitious on paper, come to life. Proud to see the staff member grow into their positions, and, more and more, become a close team. And most of all proud to see HMUN come to life, even during this year during which we suffered lockdowns, got forced to online meetings and needed to switch our expectation multiple times.

Therefore, I am beyond happy to see every single delegate, StOff member and MUN director that is joining us this weekend.

For this year's theme, we chose: Planetary Polarisation: uniting a divided world. Polarisation is an issue that has been going on for years, however, we see that this process has accelerated the last couple of years. In times of crisis, it seems contradictory to divide instead of unite, however, this is exactly what is going on, nowadays, but also in the past, and possibly in the future, too.

Only three years ago, Lucas Meyer, one of our former Secretaries-General, proudly stated during his opening speech that HMUN added the UNASUR committee to its list of committees. Characterizing the committee as one of the four continental unions to pursue international dialogue.

However, in April 2018, 6 out of the original 12 countries suspended their membership and by now, the union only consists of 4 active member states.

This fact astonished me. Why do organisations, such as the UN and the EU, slowly lose their power to unite? Moreover, why do countries not recognise the importance of international cooperation?

This problem is not only going on on a worldwide scale, but also on a national scale. Covid made this even more clear. On the one hand, there was this group that stayed, and is, staying at home, while on the other hand, people are partying, taking care of their own needs, instead of looking at the bigger picture. This shows the individuality of mankind.

But we have to acknowledge that change is also coming our way. A generation, our generation, is rising. A generation that wants change, and shall not rest until changes are made. And this shows the absolute opposite of polarisation. Internationally, people united to protest.

We have seen this with the worldwide marches against climate change, of which I am sure, many of who have joined us here today have participated in. And not to mention the Black Lives Matter movement. About a year ago, thousands of people came together on the Dam square, demonstrating. Ever since the murder of George Floyd, more and more people pay attention. This has globally changed the perspective of so many people and will, without a doubt, continue to do.

What I want to exemplify is what an international movement can accomplish. What we can achieve when we chose to unite, instead of divide.

Furthermore, it gives us hope for a future in which we will fight against polarisation and take the lead in a world in which cooperation will be the standard, even in times of crisis.

Especially, this year I have seen what an incredible collaboration can do. This conference started with a bunch of motivated individuals. With collaboration, we turned this into HMUN. With collaboration, resolutions will be formed this weekend. With collaboration, we determine the future.

The way to a world, in which polarisation will be a term of the past, will not be an easy way. It will be a process during which we will fail. However, we must find the strength to stand up again, to learn from previous made mistakes and keep going on.
We, the next generation, need to take the matters into one’s own hands. Keep the world showing that cooperation is the solution instead of polarisation.

For that reason, my advice is to take on your own future. Fight, and even when you fail, stand up and try again. Show the world what you believe in, show the world who you are and most importantly show the world its way to a better and brighter future.

Thank you!

I yield the floor back to the presidency.