“Your beliefs become your thoughts,

Your thoughts become your words,

Your words become your actions,

Your actions become your habits,

Your habits become your values,

Your values become your destiny.”

Honourable Madame President of the General Assembly, Lord Mayor and Principal, Dearest Secretary-General, My fellow Secretariat and Staff, Content, Hospitality and Press Teams, honourable Chairs and Presidents, dear Delegates, Esteemed Guests, MUN-Directors and BoD-members,

The words I just quoted perfectly encompasses both how polarisation arises and how it is to be fought against. Planetary polarisation is the topic of this 24th edition of Haarlem Model United Nations, our aim: uniting a divided world.¨

This quote from Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British rule, who in turn inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. (Non-violence, so through talk and discussion and I want you to remember that for a second)

In my eyes, he was also fighting against polarisation, not in the least in his hope to reconcile Hindus and Muslims in India.

I will lead you through the issue of polarisation, using his quote to inspire you as to how unification of a divided world can be achieved.

Polarisation is defined as follows: ¨division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs.¨ Polarisation, sadly enough, occurs in all parts of our global community, be it economic, social, informational or political or any other aspect of our world where a difference of opinion could lead to detrimental things.

If we look at every major conflict in our societies throughout history, somehow polarisation lies at the heart of the problem.

“Your beliefs become your thoughts,

Your thoughts become your words.

These, the first two sentences of the quote, link (beautifully) to what we are about to do this weekend: trying to solve conflicts in committees by debating different views and opinions, -thus- using words. Bridging different beliefs, different thoughts on the same matter and voicing them to unify opposites.

We can see that conferences such as ours and the example we follow, the United Nations, work are past (peace)conferences. As early as 363 after Christ, there was a Perso-Roman Peace Treaty, precisely instituted because the war between them was getting them nowhere. A war initiated by contrasting beliefs; polarized views.

Nearer to our time, I could give you the example of the Treaty of Paris in Versailles in 1919, where through talk and discussion the First World War was put to a stop and years of peace lay ahead. A war fought, due to polarised views on what the map of Europe should have looked like.

Your words become your actions,

Your actions become your habits,

As I said before, this quote has a flipside. It could just as easily describe how polarisation gains ground and flourishes. One headstrong person, set in their beliefs, could wander along, straight ahead, without anyone contradicting their views or offering another one. By the time someone does, their words will have turned into actions, a life lived with habits that no one spoke about. And I get it, breaking habits is hard. It takes time, it takes patience, it always does. But breaking habits is worth it.

And recently, countries have had the habit of nationalism; choosing themselves and their people above others, who might need support more. Last year, the UN celebrated its 75th birthday, which should have been a milestone in the fight for unification, while the opposite was true. The only unification that could be seen lies in the pressing issue of these years, the COVID-19 pandemic. And even then the only unifying factor is the fact that it is a global issue and everyone has to deal with it.

But, even as we speak, countries are hoarding vaccines and medical equipment for their own people, their own sick, their own use.

And that should not be the case.

A noteworthy exception is the Covax initiative, led by the World Health Organization.

Your habits become your values,

Your values become your destiny.”

This quote can also be interpreted as the road every person walks, the path of life into their future. As you roam along your life, you stumble upon a fork (in the road). You can either take your thoughts turned into values toward a destiny filled with talk, healthy discussion and compromise or walk straight ahead, with only your own words and habits, willing to defend them with arms and anger. Two destinies, both sprung from your own beliefs. A furthering of hardened differences or a will to look past those differences and simply combine forces to do good. A choice.

On another note:

“A wise man once said the true history of the world is the history of great conversations in elegant rooms.”

I will repeat this quote

“A wise man once said the true history of the world is the history of great conversations in elegant rooms.”

This was said by Tyrion Lannister, a character from the hit-series Game of Thrones, and even though he is a made up persona, this statement couldn't be more true. Talk, conferences, peace negotiations are what highlight our history and how we should see the future.

And I urge you to have those conversations, envision yourself in Versailles´ grand halls at the Peace Conference in 1919, or sitting on the famous bench at the Yalta Conference in 1945 (scooched) next to Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt.

Think of these elegant rooms, these significant moments in time and that perhaps in your future lies the next (such moment)

Because opinions will always differ. But it is our duty, as people, as human beings capable of speech and emotion,

to talk about things, bridge those gaps, find solutions.. so that all may benefit and we leave our world behind just a little better than how we find it today.

I would like to express my pleasure (and gratitude) in seeing you all here today, despite COVID-19, despite its restrictions. All of us, all of you, the generation of tomorrow are necessary for change.

And to conclude: “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” ..

Have fun, you guys.