

Honourable guests, dear participants,

Welcome to FerMUN 2020, the 10th edition of this conference.

A huge amount of energy and enthusiasm has gone into bringing us all together today. So what's the objective?

On the surface, Model UN looks just like role-play. It's undeniably a great learning experience; but as an imitation of a real institution, it can feel lacking in tangible impact.

A few months ago, in a United Nations meeting room just like this one, a teenage girl turned to an audience of international representatives in business suits and ties, and asked a provocative question: How dare you?

Greta Thunberg threw this question out as a challenge to an audience of politicians and career diplomats, to denounce their empty words, their inaction. She was on the outside, challenging those on the inside.

That is not what is happening here. We've turned the whole situation inside out.

Over the next few days, in committees or in our two new Youth Assemblies, it will be up to us, young people, to propose solutions, reach consensus, and make decisions about our common future. We are no longer on the outside, looking in; instead, we are at the core.

The theme of this year's debates is far from simple: "Technology for Development". The power of technology is as scary as it is promising. It could help us solve massive issues. Or it could create new problems on unprecedented scales that we are far from ready to face. How can we use it efficiently, without letting it escape our control?

Usually, these debates are reserved for professionals. But for the next three days, it will be up to us. And the professionals will listen.

That is what makes this conference special. This is the first ever ITU Futurecasters Global Young Visionaries Summit. Through this summit, ITU is engaging with youth on the digital future we want.

What's more, this year, to mark their 75th anniversary, the United Nations are inviting the world to participate in the largest ever conversation on global cooperation, under the slogan: Join the Conversation. Be the Change.

For all of us at FerMUN 2020, the conversation starts today. To launch UN75 in Geneva, we are invited to enter a dialogue with Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director General of UNOG; Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, BDT Director at ITU; and Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, UN Under-Secretary-General.

One thing is clear: this conversation is wide open to young voices. A week ago, on New Year's Day, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres held up today's youth as the greatest source of hope and inspiration in this time of planetary danger. "The United Nations stands with you – and belongs to you," he said to us.

This means we are entering a transitional stage. In this room, at this conference, we are in the act of assuming responsibility. Until now, we were not a part of the global conversation; but today, we are being consulted. We are speaking out and being heard.

Delegates, we have the floor.

So we've turned it all inside out. And I want to turn the question inside out as well. I will not ask, How dare you? Instead, I will ask: do you dare to?

Do you dare to ask difficult questions?

Do you dare to speak out for what matters to you?

Do you dare to get involved in creating solutions?

Do you dare to make a change in the world around you?

The issues we're facing are massive in scale. Their importance is planetary. It can seem daunting, like a huge mountain. You're not sure you'll make it to the top; maybe you can't even see that far. But take one step, just one, and you'll already be that much higher; the view will be that much clearer.

That is our vision for the next three days. We may not solve every issue we tackle here and now, but if each one of us makes that step, those 700 steps in unison will give us the momentum we need to go further.

Let's dare to step up.

Thank you.