

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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MESSAGE TO AMERICAS MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE**Brasilia, 13 – 17 July 2009**

The word “model” has a number of meanings. In the context of the model United Nations, it is commonly understood as “a small copy”. But I prefer another of its meanings: “a praiseworthy example to be copied”.

People often criticize young people for their idealism, or even try to talk them out of it. But I think idealism is one of your strengths. Without it, we would have a far more difficult time imagining and building a better world.

Idealism is also a big part of what animates the United Nations. When the Organization was established in 1945, the world was reeling from a destructive period of warfare that had touched the lives of just about everyone on the planet. Those who drafted the UN Charter were determined to prevent any recurrence of such atrocities and upheaval. They wanted to see a new international consciousness emerge from the ashes – one grounded in human rights and peaceful coexistence. They too were idealists, but at the same time understood the need, bred of recent experience, to erect safeguards against human cruelty.

The past six decades have not been easy. There have been major advances in the human condition. But war and poverty still plague our world. And we can all sense the perils of the present moment, as a global economic crisis and the gathering force of climate change combine to threaten our future well-being.

As you participate in this Model United Nations, you will get a taste for the complexity of international relations. This exercise is no empty role play. Half the world’s population is under 25. You are their representatives. Many of you will move on to positions of real leadership. All of you, by your choices as consumers, by your decisions as voters, will assume real power to shape and change our world.

I encourage you to keep in mind both meanings of the word “model”. I urge you to pursue the solutions that depend on imagination and courage, consensus and compromise. Hopefully your time at this Model United Nations will help you become the models the world needs to fulfil the ideals of this indispensable organization.

BAN Ki-moon