Ladies and gentlemen......

I welcome the opportunity to address you this morning.

It is an absolute honor to be here and to say a few words on behalf of the United Nations System in Suriname. As the family of nations, the UN seeks to engage all nations and all citizens in taking on the role as true members of this universal family. No better way to express this than to provide meaningful opportunity for young people to confront first hand, the topical issues that occupy the agenda of the United Nations. Your participation therefore in this, the first model UN to be organized by the Rotary club of Paramaribo is paramount and a clear indication that as members of the next generation of leaders, you are already capable of articulating and advocating for a world in which every citizen is able to reach their full potential.

As I stand here, I cannot help but reflect on the many Saturdays I observed you zealously participating in the training sessions for today's grand event. You have given up a lot of your time in preparation for today. I therefore wish you every success as you debate your respective positions. But whilst you do this as a model exercise, I urge you to ponder that in fact, around the world, there are over 258 million migrants and nearly 30 million refugees, and these numbers keep growing daily. You, by getting to discuss these issues, are preparing yourselves to be immersed into one of the world’s most current topics. I encourage you to engage in today’s debate as if you were indeed standing within the hallowed walls of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, for one day, it may be you leading the charge as a diplomat for your country, an official of the UN, or a citizen requiring the services of the UN to address the real impacts that migrants and refugees are having on your society.

This Model UN is a unique opportunity which contributes to your growth and development as a conscientious, concerned citizen. Grab the opportunity and make it count. Jij bent Suriname. Jij bent de Verenigde de Naties. Jij bent de lieders van morgen.

I thank you.