

SPEECH BY DAN PLATO

SOUTH AFRICAN MODEL UN

16 OCTOBER 2009

This century, more than ever before, global problems are local problems. Climate change, population migration, food shortages, computer viruses and oil price increases are just some of the many problems that start somewhere else, and are experienced at a local level.

There are no easy solutions to the problems our country and our planet faces, and the model UN approach of debating issues is very important to teach people that democracy and negotiation are extremely important values, and that no one can be right on their own. What I hope you will come to see is that great leaders are not the people who force others to see things their way, but the ones who can bring everyone's views together and construct a shared vision.

I can assure you that the skills you learn about discussion and working together with other people will stand you in good stead for the rest of your lives. They are things that you will not be tested for in school or university, but will be usable in the real world.

I hope to see many of you coming up to debate issues in our local government chambers, our national parliament, our regional and continental organisations, and in the big international organisations like the UN which have to look after the whole world.

You learners here today are high flyers and achievers, and I want to encourage you to begin using your gifts and opportunities to everyone's benefit. Share what you have learnt with your friends and classmates.

My favourite thing about the SAMUN programme is the principle of partnering schools together. This is not just about helping under-resourced schools access facilities, it should also be an opportunity for you to learn from each other.

In South Africa we have such an incredibly diverse range of people and life experiences, and this is a rich and valuable source which you must not take for granted. We have one of the very largest gaps between rich and poor in the world, and this programme will give you great experience if you are hoping to work as global players.

I hope to see some of you one day representing our country in the very forum that you are modelling today, the UN, and I hope that you can look back on your experiences here today as having contributed to a very solid foundation in this work.

Thank you.