

# THE OPENING SPEECH

*Taken from the Instructional Guide, 15th Edition The Hague International Model United Nations written by Irwin Stein and David L. Williams*

Many conferences have delegates give an opening speech either in the general assembly or within their committee. The opening speech should be treated as a serious occasion and, although the delegation's opening speech can be of either a general or a specific nature, it must be representative of the nation's or organisation's primary concerns about the state of the world. Under no circumstances, may they abuse the privilege by insulting other members of the United Nations or by presenting their own delegation in an unworthy fashion.

If the opening speech is within the committee, speakers should attempt to state their delegation's position on the agenda issues. A delegation might come to a conclusion about what it considers to be the single most important theme in the current atmosphere of relations within the world community. This might be in the field of war and peace, human rights, ecology, development or disarmament. Another delegation might be able to emphasise the interrelatedness of the areas of concern, such as the effects of "development" on the "environment". Yet another delegation might prefer to concentrate on a single item of contention affecting many of the UN members, such as the Palestinian Question.

## Sample Speeches

### Delegation: India

*Four-fifths of our world's population depends on one-third of the global income. This group clings to survival with a meager annual income of one hundred dollars or less, and in the past decade has experienced an economic growth of only 10%, while the richer one-fifth of the world's population has enjoyed five to ten times that growth. Poor people are getting poorer and the rich are becoming richer. The growing gap between the developed nations and the developing nations is a disgrace to the international community.*

*The developed nations are responsible for helping developing nations. Debt servicing alone is sending the developing countries further and further away from economic stability and independence. It is a bottomless pit, with no way out unless the developed nations are willing to make some concessions in relieving the burden of debt. India calls upon wealthier countries to consider the problems of poorer nations, lest they undermine their own prosperity.*

### Delegation: The Netherlands

*The Netherlands recognises the need for multilateral efforts to achieve a greater balance in terms of development between the nations of the world. However, The Netherlands also believes that any hope of achieving an acceptable economic balance in terms of global standards of living must take into consideration the environmental impact of such development efforts. The post World War II era has emphasised development on a grand scale without respect for the environment.*

*The improvement in man's condition was believed to flow from the channeling of enormous funds into the newly independent nations of the Third World. We have since learned that aid and investment do not automatically lead to development. We know now, in the post Cold War era, that money alone does not determine the chances of success in development. We also know that the environmental impact of*

*development projects must be taken into consideration or the resource base of the very society one is seeking to create and foster may be destroyed.*

*The Netherlands applauds the recent changes in tone apparent in the North-South dialogue and calls for greater attention to be paid to the interrelatedness of development planning and environmental security. Development projects have a direct effect on the state of the world's environment. The lessons which the industrialised world are learning about environment and growth, must be communicated to developing nations. Environmental threats from industrialisation must be eliminated from development planning. This is why The Netherlands stands firmly behind the idea that development aid and investment should occur at the local level, where traditional knowledge about the environment can play an important role in the modernisation process.*

## **Delivering the Speech**

Every speech should, of course, be preceded by a formal greeting, e.g. "Madam President, Honoured Delegates..." and should finish with a phrase such as "Thank you Madam President!"

Delegates should avoid making such introductions and conclusions too long, however, since they only have one minute to speak and other delegates will soon become bored with long, flowery introductions. It should be obvious from the speeches mentioned before that the design of the speech should be content-based as well as dramatic in tone. The participants at the conference will respond to a speech that is both informative and emphatic. A primary purpose of the opening speech is to allow a delegation to communicate what it perceives to be an important message for the world community