

REMARKS

Delivered by
Ambassador
Mark Gitenstein,

On the Occasion of
The Opening Ceremony of the Iasi Model UN Conference

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At the Gheorghe Asachi University Festivities Hall

REMARKS:

Good morning to you. It is great to have the opportunity to be here with you and I'd like to start by thanking Peace Corps Volunteer David Pi and the staff of Emil Racovita National College for extending me the invitation to join you this morning.

I'd also like to thank the national and Iasi county representatives of the Ministry of Education, for joining us this morning for the opening ceremony of the Iasi Model United Nations Conference.

Let me start by introducing myself. As Ken mentioned, I am the United States Ambassador in Romania. But what does that mean?

I serve, at the request of the President of the United States of America, Mr. Barack Obama, as his representative here in your country. It is both a significant honor and an extraordinary opportunity. My work involves representing the United States of America and the administration of President Obama with officials in the Romanian government as well as Romanian citizens such as yourselves. As Romania is a great partner of the United States, much of my work is about promoting cooperation and opportunities for us to work more closely and effectively together.

This may sound familiar because in fact much of my work is similar to what each of you will be doing over the coming 3 days as you participate in Iasi's Model United Nations Conference. I collaborate with colleagues to address issues of national and global impact, look for solutions and represent the point of view of my nation and president. Starting this morning, you'll be doing the same.

On a more personal note, I am the father of 3 children, all of whom also participated in Model UN Conferences in the United States when they were your age. I think it is a great opportunity and wish you well in your work together. You may be aware that my great grandparents emigrated from Romania to the U.S. in the late 19th century, making me the first U.S. Ambassador to Romania with Romanian heritage. My family's roots are from this region of Romania, so it is a special honor for me to be here with you.

Let me speak about Foreign Service and why you should be concerned with global issues. As President Obama said on the eve of NATO Summit last spring, and I quote him, "This generation cannot stand still."

As young Romanians in today's world, you cannot stand still because the world faces a season of change and a season of challenge -- an economic crisis that has hurt too many people and eroded their confidence, a war in Afghanistan now in its eighth year, and new forces shaping this young century. Those new forces, among other things, include the spread of weapons of mass destruction and dangerous diseases; the expanding chasm between the rich and poor; ethnic animosities and failed states; a rapidly warming planet and an uncertain supply of energy, food and water.

As Vice President Biden mentioned during his recent visit to Romania, the United States and Europe will meet these challenges together, for that's the only way they can be met. No amount of idle talk, no distortion of the facts, can chip away at this unassailable truth: The United States of America remains committed to our alliance with Europe, which we Americans believe, and continue to believe, is the cornerstone of American foreign policy, as it has been, for the last 60 years. We are all the more committed, because our European partners have grown broader and stronger. We, the United States, cannot succeed without you.

You and your generation will play a key role in helping the world community to address these issues. And...based on my experience to date interacting with young Romanians, I would say the world community is in good hands.

As you prepare for your Model UN Conference here in Iasi, let me provide you two tips from President Obama, taken from his address to the UN General Assembly in September 2009.

- First, "We must embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and our work must begin now." As you represent your countries over the coming days, also remain committed to thinking and being sensitive to the interests and needs of others.

- Secondly, pursue "a future of peace and prosperity that we can only be reach if we recognize that all nations have rights, but all nations have responsibilities as well. That is the bargain that makes this work. That must be the guiding principle of international cooperation." Pursue your rights, but assume your responsibilities.
- And let me add my own tip, a third point for you...upon completion of your conference here in Iasi, return to your communities and become involved in service work. Do something for someone less fortunate than you in your community. Consider volunteering at an orphanage or helping at a school for the disabled. While this conference will focus on global issues, leadership starts at the local level. President Obama started as a community organizer; David Pi is here is a United States Peace Corps Volunteer, one of 109 we currently have volunteering in your country.

What can you do to help out?

What will you do to help out?

Let me close by offering you a few words from former U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, a man who was a strong supporter of the idea of the United Nations. President Roosevelt said, "The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation.... It cannot be a peace of large nations -- or of small nations. It must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world."

Enjoy your conference.

Work together.

Here now and in the coming years as you become our world's leaders and decision makers.

Thank you again for inviting me to join you.