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Inspiring Future Leaders: The Inaugural Undergraduate National Public Speaking and Debate Competition

Yesterday marked a significant milestone as I had the privilege of delivering the opening speech at the inaugural Undergraduate National Public Speaking and Debate Competition organized by Abu Dhabi University (21-22 January). This event brought together ten universities from the UAE and Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, showcasing the talents and aspirations of young speakers from across the region. The event was masterfully organized by my esteemed colleague, [Kathryn Swift](#)

In my speech, I emphasized the pressing need to address vital issues such as climate change and the development of artificial intelligence. These topics are not just challenges; they are opportunities for the next generation to engage in meaningful discussions that can shape the future. However, I also highlighted the importance of considering other significant subjects, including education, mental health awareness, and sustainable living.

By participating in competitions like this, students can develop essential skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Public speaking fosters confidence, enabling young people to express their ideas clearly and persuasively. The ability to articulate thoughts not only enhances their communication skills but also prepares them for future academic and professional endeavors. Engaging in debate encourages critical thinking, as students learn to analyze various perspectives and construct well-reasoned arguments. This skill is invaluable in an increasingly complex world where collaboration and understanding are crucial.

I also stressed the importance of respecting the value system in the UAE. Understanding and honoring cultural values enriches discussions and promotes a sense of unity among diverse groups. This respect is vital in creating an environment where everyone feels valued and heard, allowing for a more productive exchange of ideas.

As we celebrate the achievements of these talented students, it is clear that events like the Undergraduate National Public Speaking and Debate Competition provide a platform for growth and learning. I wish all the participants the best of luck and encourage them to embrace the journey ahead.

Together, we can inspire a generation of leaders who will tackle the challenges of today and build a brighter future for all.

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