



Welkom

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,
ter gelegenheid van de ontvangst van Emmanuel Macron, president van Frankrijk

datum 11 april 2023

Cher Monsieur le Président,

*Soyez le bienvenu au parlement néerlandais; les États généraux.
Si vous me permettez, je vais continuer en anglais.*

I am very honored to welcome you in the Dutch Senate. It is a great privilege for us to receive you here today.

Mr President,

The relationship between our countries goes back for centuries. Your visit is one in a long tradition of meetings between your country and ours. A unique tradition which we find of great importance and value highly.

Since the bilateral ties between our countries are strong, we in the Netherlands follow the political developments in your country closely: last year the Presidential elections and the elections for the Assemblée Nationale, and this year, I will – as President of the Dutch Senate – of course follow the elections of the French Senate with great interest, coming September. Like in our country, the Members of the senate are not elected directly: next month the new Dutch Senate will be elected by the representatives in the twelve provinces and by electoral colleges in the Dutch Caribbean, and one representing the Dutch living abroad. Exciting times for both our countries!

France and The Netherlands are united from the beginning with the European Coals and Steel Community, and the European Union as it is today. We work closely together in many areas. In recent years the European member states have faced important challenges, such as climate and energy.

Mr President,

Your visit to the Netherlands comes at a time when our continent is faced with a military conflict within its borders. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the violence carried out by the Russian army has shocked us all deeply. However, the war in Ukraine once more proves the importance of European and international cooperation. In that regard it is good to see, that in Paris, as well as in The Hague, and in almost all other European capitals, the commitment and support to Ukraine are continuous and unconditional.

Common problems need common solutions. And common opportunities require common action. We need close friends and close cooperation to face the challenges of the future. The French Republic and the Kingdom of The Netherlands are partners in the United Nations, partners in the European Union, partners in NATO and in many other international organizations.

Last year, on the 9th of May, Europe Day - towards the end of the French Presidency of the European Union-, you launched the idea of the European Political Community. In October a first meeting took place, in Prague. It is an interesting idea to work together with 44 democratic countries in Europe, crossing the borders of the European Union. I would like to hear more from you on this, and also about the role parliaments in the participating countries can play.

Since both our countries are founding fathers of the European Union, with Frenchman Jean Monnet and Dutchman Max Kohnstamm working very closely together in the early years of the European Coal and Steel Community.



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In the period after World War II, both men were – together with Robert Schumann – looking for a new form of community. Kohnstamm believed it should not be a 'defense of interests, but a common search for the good solution of every problem.' Monnet didn't view European unity as a blueprint nor a theory, but as a process to bring together peoples and states, and to find the right adjustments for ever changing circumstances together.

Mr President,
80 years later, our continent is under pressure of war once again. But I do believe that the ideas of Monnet and Kohnstamm are the only possible solution to this challenge and the other challenges our countries and Europe face. Let us continue to stand shoulder to shoulder, let us continue to work closely together and let us continue to further build on our excellent partnership. I am certain that your visit to the Netherlands will undoubtedly contribute to this end.

Je vous remercie d'être venus aujourd'hui. C'est un grand plaisir de vous recevoir. Je vous souhaite une bonne continuation de votre visite au Pays Bas.

Allow me to give the floor to my colleague from the House of Representatives, Ms Vera Bergkamp.

Merci. Thank you.