



Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn

ter gelegenheid van het bezoek van twee commissies van de Parlementaire
Assemblee van de NAVO (NAVO PA) aan Den Haag

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Dear Members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, dear colleagues,

How wonderful it is to meet you here in the Netherlands, in The Hague, in the building that temporarily houses the House of Representatives of the Netherlands.

As you may have heard already, this building used to be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And the room where you have had most of your meetings the past few days, was named after one of the most illustrious Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Mr Max van der Stoel.

How suitable that your meetings have been held here, in this room.

Early in his political career Mr Van der Stoel was a Member of the Dutch Senate. In 1961 - around the same time the Berlin Wall was built at the height of the Cold War - he took the floor during a debate on the Defense Budget.

Van der Stoel warned against the expansive nature of the Soviet Union and its allies. He valued greatly the American nuclear guarantee that offered protection to Europe in the so-called bipolar security system. He also expressed his worries about the growing anti-NATO-sentiment in the Netherlands. Finally, he called upon the Dutch government to defend the credibility of the alliance.

And here we are, 61 years later. The topics mentioned by Mr Van der Stoel have never been as urgent as they are today. The war in Ukraine has shocked us all. From a continent that has mostly known peace since World War II, Europe is now at the heart of brutal aggression.

25 February, the day after Russia invaded Ukraine, NATO activated its NATO Response Force for the first time. Thousands of troops are now on the ground in NATO Member States in the East of Europe.

Countries like Finland and Sweden, after so many years of neutrality, are considering joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; something we could not have imagined until a few weeks ago.

The need for mutual defense and cooperation, is once again at the heart of all NATO Member States and our parliaments. As Max van der Stoel was convinced, NATO is once again, in the eyes of many people, an indispensable tool in the defense of freedom.

Dear colleagues,

I hope your visit to the Netherlands and the meetings with the Dutch delegates, government representatives and security strategists have been fruitful.

I understand that you will have some excursions to organizations that embody the meaning of the name The Hague is known for worldwide: the city of peace and justice.

Enjoy your final days here!

Thank you.