



Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,
tijdens de ontmoeting van het parlement met de President van Oekraïne, Volodymyr
Zelensky

datum 4 mei 2023

Mr President,

On behalf of the Parliament of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, I am very honored to welcome you and your delegation in the Plenary Hall of the Dutch Senate for this special meeting of Members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives in which we welcome you as our most distinguished guest.

For the past fourteen months Ukraine has been fighting Russian aggression in a fierce and unrelenting manner.

The way the Ukrainian people and your government have defended and continue to defend the territorial integrity, sovereignty and autonomy of Ukraine impresses us greatly. The eyes of the international community are focused on your government and on the people of Ukraine.

My colleague from the House of Representatives Ms Vera Bergkamp and I have met our colleague, Ruslan Stefanchuk, speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, several times in the past year. As recent as one week ago in Prague, where he held an impressive speech about the European values that Ukraine is defending.

Undoubtedly, your country's resilience is expressed in a telling way in the first words of your national anthem, which was written in 1862, but banned during the Soviet Union and once again reestablished by the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, in 1992.

The first sentence reads:

Sjtsje ne vmerla Oekrajiny i slava, i volja
"Ukrainian glory has not yet perished, nor its freedom"

Mr President,

Tomorrow, the Netherlands will celebrate the importance of freedom, since this country was liberated on May 5th, 1945. After almost 80 years, the scars of the Second World War are still present in Dutch society, both visible and under the surface.

But before we celebrate freedom – freedom we so much wish for your country as well - we will first remember those we lost during World War II, and also all those Dutch military men and women who gave their lives for the freedom of others in conflicts all over the world. We will do so by keeping a two minute-silence in Parliament later this morning and throughout the country at 8 o'clock tonight.

Dutch poet Lieke Marsman wrote the poem 'Europe, 2022' the day after your country was invaded, and it translates to the war this country suffered 80 years ago as well. I'd like to share the final two sentences:

"The first resistance becomes the loudest protest.
A new world is possible."

Mr President,

I wish unto you and unto all of Ukraine the hope of a new world.

Once again, thank you for visiting us today.