

**Welcoming address of the President of the Senate of the States
General,
Mrs Y.E.M.A. Timmerman-Buck, on the occasion of the visit of
His Majesty King Abdullah II and Her Majesty Queen Rania of
Jordan
on Monday, 30 October 2006**

Your Majesties,

It is with very great pleasure, Your Majesties, that I welcome you here today in the plenary assembly room of the Senate. Of course I also extend my welcome on behalf of my colleague, Mr Weisglas, the President of the House of Representatives. It is a signal honour for all present that you have been willing to make time during your short visit to the Netherlands for a meeting with the two Houses of the States General. We see it as proof of the excellent relations between your country and the Netherlands that you, your Majesty, wish to enter into a discourse with Members of the two Houses. As requested by you, among the Members of the States General present here today, you see members of the parliamentary standing committees for General Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Defence, Economic Affairs and Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality.

Your wish to have this discourse underlines the importance you attach to the role that national parliaments can play both generally and in your own country too. We have taken respectful note of the National Agenda which was adopted in 2005 and serves as a framework to guide the reform process. This process is irreversible, but cannot take place overnight. In an interview in the Al Rai newspaper you are quoted as saying that this must be 'a collective effort derived from countries around the world and from the conviction that reform is necessary'.

Your Majesty, we regard this meeting as an opportunity to hear from you about the important initiatives which you have taken and which extend beyond, indeed far beyond, the borders of your country. We are thinking in this connection of the Western-Islamic dialogue promoted by you, of the relationship between Islam and democracy, and of your efforts to illuminate the positive and peaceful aspect of religions and to stress the need for dialogue between the various religions, for example within the framework of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies. These are matters from which we in the Netherlands can also learn. After all, lasting peace between peoples and cohesion within one's own society, in the Netherlands too, can never be achieved without an understanding and appreciation of each other's deepest convictions and views on life. The Dutch parliament is following with close attention your unremitting efforts to promote peace in your region: your efforts, the efforts of your House and the efforts before you of your father, King Hussein. We are also very aware of how setbacks alternate with hope. We realise full well that a just peace is of crucial importance, and not only to the peoples directly involved. We are thinking in this connection of the consequences for prosperity and employment – for Jordan too. But peace is also of crucial importance to the region. Ultimately peace in the Middle East will help to shape the fate of the world as a whole in the decades ahead. It is for this reason and for reasons of humanity that our country has every interest in these efforts and that we too, as a parliament, feel a responsibility in this regard. Naturally, if the 'road map to peace' is to be followed successfully, the commitment of the United States, Russia and Europe as a whole, together

with those most closely involved, will be decisive, but we too nonetheless feel a shared, bilateral responsibility.

Your Majesty, the mutual relations between Jordan and the Netherlands are especially good. Both countries have a constitutional monarchy with a Senate and a House of Representatives. Historically too, there have been friendly and warm relations between our countries for many decades. Treaties between our two countries and supporting programmes are being implemented. Mutual trade is increasing, and more and more Dutch people are visiting your country to see its impressive cultural heritage, the many sites of historical interest and your unique areas of natural beauty. Your visit here will, I hope, also lead to an intensification of parliamentary contacts between our two countries.

Please rest assured, Your Majesty, that we are watching your initiatives with close interest and will certainly support them when and wherever possible. As you will appreciate, we would be especially interested to hear your expectations about the near future and what efforts you expect of us, directly and indirectly.

Thank you.