



## Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn ter gelegenheid van het bezoek van de President van Montenegro, de heer Jakov Milatović

*Datum 14 maart 2024*

Dear President Milatović,

On behalf of the States General, I am very honored to welcome you in the Dutch Senate. It is a great privilege for us to receive you here today.

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.

Now, more than two years after the invasion, it seems that an end to the war is not in sight. However, the aggression of the Putin government in Ukraine once more proves the importance of European and international cooperation. These past 24 month we have shown our solidarity with the Ukrainian governments and with the Ukrainian people.

As I understand Montenegro provides a safe haven for thousands of refugees from Ukraine. Although they would of course rather not be in your country or here in the Netherlands, it is important that they can lead as much a normal life as possible. It is good that in Podgorica, as well as in The Hague, and in almost all other European capitals, the commitment and support to Ukraine are continuous and unconditional.

Mr President,

Since the independence of your country in 2006 – which made you one of the newest internationally recognised countries in the world, Montenegro has become a member of many international organisations, such as the United Nations, NATO, and the Council of Europe. You even adopted the euro – albeit unilaterally.

And of course, Montenegro is a candidate for membership of the European Union. During the recent EU-Western Balkan Summit in December of 2023 you spoke with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte about the ambitions of Montenegro and the importance of progress on the terrain of the rule of law.

The Copenhagen Criteria for enlargement are also of pivotal importance for both Chambers of the States General. It is therefore good that today you are not only meeting with my colleague from the House of Representatives and myself, but you will also be meeting other members of parliament later this morning.

In this light, I would also like to stress the importance of international diplomacy. It is of great value that politicians from different countries meet each other, have a dialogue with each other and inform each other about the situation in their countries. As representatives of the people, we should exchange information, learn from each other and work together where possible.

Mr President,

The land behind the coastlines of Montenegro and the Netherlands couldn't be as far apart: ours below sea level and flat, except for the dunes. Yours with gorges and rocky mountains.

But the two landscapes share one very important aspect: both countries are located by the sea. Your national anthem even sings of the connection between the river, the two seas and the ocean.

Finding common ground, in this case literally common ground, is of the utmost importance in international meetings like ours today. That is why I am very glad to welcome you here.



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Because only you can inform us firsthand about the actual situation in Montenegro and the latest developments from your perspective.

Mr President,

Allow me to give the floor to my colleague from the House of representatives, Mr Martin Bosma.

Hvala.

Thank you.