



Welkom

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,
ter gelegenheid van de ontvangst van de president van Portugal, Marcelo Nuno Duarte
Rebello de Sousa

datum 11 december 2024

Excelência,

*Bem-vindo ao senado holandês.
É um grande privilégio recebê-los aqui hoje.
Por favor, permita-me continuar em inglês.*

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

Your visit is one in a long tradition of meetings between your country and ours. A tradition which we find of great importance and value highly. The relationship between our countries goes back for centuries, to 1664. So this year even marks an anniversary: 360 years of bilateral relations.

Both our countries are shaped by the relation with the sea. We have a long history as seafaring nations. We both know that the sea, and water in general, have brought us opportunities and prosperity, but also of the threats that they can pose. In the first line of your national anthem is even a reference to your relation with the sea: '*Heróis do mar, nobre povo*', Heroes of the sea, noble people'. No wonder then that during your visit to the Netherlands a seminar on the blue economy is included in the programme.

Portugal and the Netherlands work closely together in many areas: economically, culturally and politically. Our countries are also united in the European Union and many other multilateral organisations. In recent years the EU member states faced important challenges, such as migration, climate and energy, and economic competitiveness. Challenges that cannot be solved behind border lines, rather in cooperation with all member states.

Mr President,

This year not only marks the anniversary of the relations between our two countries. It is also the anniversary of the Carnation Revolution which in 1974 formed the start for the transition of your country from a period of authoritarian regime to the parliamentary democracy it is today. The Carnation Revolution happened during a time of more transitions of power from authoritarian rule to democratic rule on the European continent; in Greece and Spain. Not long after the three countries became members of the European Community.

The Second World War led to the foundation of what is now the European Union with peace and cooperation at its core. Eighty years later our continent and our common peace are under pressure of war once again. Still, I do believe that the ideas of the founding fathers of the European Union are the only possible solution to this challenge and the other challenges our countries and Europe face.

As I understand you will also visit the Peace Palace, here in The Hague. As a professor of law this must be of particular interest to you. What are your expectations of this visit? Maybe we can discuss this later on.

Your Excellency,

In his famous novel *Blindness*, Portuguese Nobelprize winner José Saramago writes about what happens to society when unexplained epidemic of blindness affects nearly everyone in an unnamed city, and the social breakdown that follows.



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I am a doctor and a politician, so for me the combination of these universal themes and questions related to it, are close to my heart and mind. They are also a reminder that a given status quo can never be taken for granted. The slightest change can have enormous consequences.

Saramago also wrote – and I quote: “One cannot be too careful with words, they change their minds just as people do.” And also this is a theme that is of the greatest importance for us politicians. Realizing this means that as politicians we have a great responsibility. Especially in a time where there is a risk of desinformation, it is our obligation to find the right words, based on facts rather than assumptions. Words matter. The power of words can never be underestimated.

Mr President,

After more than three and a half century the bilateral relations between Portugal and the Netherlands still flourish and with meetings like ours today we continue to learn from each other. Let us continue to work closely together and to further build on our excellent partnership. I am certain that your visit to the Netherlands will undoubtedly contribute to this end.

Obrigado por ter vindo hoje. É um enorme prazer recebê-lo. Espero que aproveite a sua visita à Holanda.

Allow me to give the floor to my colleague from the House of Representatives, Ms Roelien Kamminga.

Obrigado. Thank you.