



Welkomstwoord

Namens de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, de heer prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, ter gelegenheid van het bezoek van de Voorzitter van de Senaat van Kenia, de heer Amason Jeffah Kingi.

datum 23 januari 2025

Dear Mr Speaker,
Dear members of the delegation,

On behalf of the States General, I would like to welcome you to the Dutch Senate.

It is an honour to receive you here today, together with my colleague from the House of Representatives, Mr Martin Bosma.

Kenya and the Netherlands maintain strong bilateral relations in multiple domains, especially economically. This is underlined by the visit the Dutch King and Queen will pay to Kenya in March. They will be accompanied by an economic delegation, with a focus on sustainable agriculture and water.

Mr Speaker,

As I understand you are currently on a tour through the three countries that together form the so-called Benelux-cooperation. Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, although you are traveling the other way round, if I am correct.

Your country is part of the East African Community that celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024, just as the three Benelux countries celebrated 80 years of successful cooperation the same year. The East African Community, or EAC, has achieved remarkable milestones that have strengthened regional integration and fostered socio-economic growth across the partner states.

You yourself have also been strongly involved in the EAC as minister of East African Community in a former Kenyan government. So, it would be good to hear your take on these kinds or regional cooperations and the lessons you have learned.

The Kenyan Senate has a strong regional connection, just like ours. The Dutch Senate is elected by representatives from the twelve provinces. As I understand, more than two thirds of the Senators in Kenya are direct representatives of the 47 regions in your country. What are for you the advantages of these strong regional ties on the national level?

Our two countries have more in common: we share the value of democracy and the value of human rights. Both Kenya and the Netherlands are partners in the United Nations and other international organisations to uphold the rule of law.

However, reports about police violence in Kenya in response to anti-government demonstrations that led to lethal victims amongst the protesters, and about human rights activists gone missing, have raised concerns in our country and do not match the values of democracy and human rights that we historically share. I hope you can elaborate on this topic in our conversation.

Mr Speaker,

The Kenyan coat of arms carries the Swahili motto 'Harambee' (*fonetisch: harrambèh*), which means 'pulling together'. I hope your country will be able to pull together and find a way out of the situation it is in at the moment, towards a situation that everyone feels respected, represented and heard.

I hope that today we can speak about democracy, the rule of law and the parliamentary process in both our countries.

Allow me to give the floor to Mr Martin Bosma, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Thank you.