



## Welkom

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,  
ter gelegenheid van de ontvangst van Alar Karis, president van Estland

datum 13 april 2023

Dear Mr President,

*Tere tulemast.* Welcome.

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

Mr President,

The relationship between our countries goes back for over 100 years. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1921 the Netherlands acknowledged the Republic of Estonia. Of course, in those 100 years both our countries faced wars, occupation and annexation, so the ties have not always been as close as we would have wanted. Thankfully, the relationship has been fully restored after 1992.

Your visit today 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 have shocked us all deeply. However, the war in Ukraine once more proves the importance of European and international cooperation. In that regard it is good to see, that in Tallinn, as well as in The Hague, the commitment and support to Ukraine are continuous and unconditional.

Of course, for Estonia the war is very near. Your country shares a border and a history with Russia. Therefore we do not only support Ukraine, but we support all European countries that neighbour Russia, and feel threatened by the aggression of President Putin. The accession of Finland to NATO last week is also of great importance to Estonia, since Finland is your neighbour in the north. Estonia and the Netherlands, together with other countries, have invested in military cooperation through the Joint Expeditionary Force.

We need close friends and close cooperation to face the challenges of the future. The Republic of Estonia and the Kingdom of The Netherlands are also partners in the United Nations, partners in the European Union, partners in NATO and in many other international organizations.

I would particularly like to mention the regional cooperation between the Baltic Assembly, in which the Estonian parliament works together with those of Lithuania and Latvia, and the Benelux Parliament, in which the Dutch parliament works together with those of Belgium and Luxembourg. Just last month the Benelux Parliament, under the presidency of my colleague Senator Van Ballekom, convened here in the Dutch Senate, and representatives of the Baltic Assembly were present as well. We attach great importance to the Benelux, as the cooperation in this Union often also inspires the further deepening of the European Union. I therefore strongly believe that the exchanges between the Benelux parliament and the Baltic Assembly are of benefit to both parties.

Mr President,

As I understand, although our languages have little in common, there are some words that sound the same and have the same meaning. I found it very interesting to learn that 'kroonluchter' is a word we share. Did you know that the kroonluchter in this room was fully refurbished and fitted with LED-lights for it to be ready for decades to come. Just as the Dutch Senate is housed in this temporary location, while our own medieval buildings are under renovation.

Forgive this short intermezzo...

Mr President,

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

*Aitäh.* Thank you.