

Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, dr. M.L. (Mei Li) Vos, ter gelegenheid van het bezoek van keizer Naruhito van Japan aan de Staten-Generaal

Datum 18 juni 2026

Your Majesty,

Dear members of the delegation,

On behalf of the States General, both Houses of the Dutch Parliament, 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 today marks a long history of bilateral relations.

At the beginning of the 17th century the Dutch and Japanese first established bilateral relations.

And in the centuries that followed the relations between Japan and the Netherlands grew stronger.

From Philipp Franz von Siebold and Vincent van Gogh to the watermen, all have been influenced by Japan or have put their mark on Japan themselves.

Von Siebold for instance was a doctor who worked in Japan on the instructions of King William the First.

He also trained local doctors.

He collected and described the *flora japonica*:

the hydrangea and blue wisteria that adorn many Dutch gardens and balconies today were brought to the Netherlands by him.

And he collaborated with Japanese artists Keiga and Hokusai to create the beautiful book *Nippon*.

You will visit the Sieboldhuis in the city of Leiden later today, I understand.

I hope you'll enjoy the collection.

Siebold was not the only one to admire Hokusai.

Vincent van Gogh was inspired by his wood prints.

He wrote to his brother Theo about 'The big wave':

'These waves are like claws, the boat is captured by them and you feel it.'

Two of Van Gogh's most famous paintings are directly influenced by Japanese engravings: 'Blooming orchard' and 'Bridge in the rain'.

At the same time as Van Gogh painted these, Dutch engineers were in Japan to help strengthening and improving river drainage and access to ports.

The 'watermen' as they were called, have left their marks on the ports of Osaka and Kobe, and the Kiso-delta.

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And they set the Japan Standard, or Tokio Peil, that is still located opposite the Imperial Palace.

Of course, our shared history was not always as flourishing.

After the turbulent first half of the twentieth century, Japan and the Netherlands, have once again established good relations.

Not only bilateral, but also within multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Trade Organisation.

Next month the Dutch parliament will host the yearly meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE.

In addition to the 57 member states, the OSCE also maintains cooperative ties with eleven Partners for Co-operation: six mediterranean countries and five asian.

Japan is one of those partners.

Cooperations like these are very important in our world today.

We value these cooperations.

Especially considering the geopolitical situation in the world today.

People are worried about the consequences of migration and climate change, and about their livelihood.

Not only in the Netherlands, but in countries across the world.

And these insecurities lead to friction in many parts of the world: inside countries and between countries.

This is cause for concern.

And this is also where visits like yours today play such an important role.

Good contacts between for instance democratic countries in Asia and in Europe become more and more valuable.

As Von Siebold and the watermen already knew, in a well-functioning relationship both sides benefit.

In present day Japan and the Netherlands, our governments and parliaments are dealing with many challenges.

Global security and economic challenges of course spring to mind.

But also our demography and democracy are subjects where we can learn from eachothers experiences and best practices.

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Your Majesty,

We are truly honored by your presence and look forward to discussing these issues with you.

Allow me to introduce Mr Koen Petersen and Mrs Tineke Huizinga-Heringa, chair and vicechair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Senate.

I would now like to give the floor to my colleague from the House of Representatives, Mr Thom van Campen.

ありがとう

Arigatō

Thank you.
