



***Speech by the President of the Senate, Mrs Broekers-Knol,  
on the occasion of the official visit of HM King Felipe VI and HM Queen Letizia  
15 October 2014***

Your Majesties,

It is a great honour to receive you here in the democratic heart of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I bid you a warm welcome, also on behalf of my colleague the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mrs Anouchka van Miltenburg.

The shared history of Spain and the Netherlands goes back hundreds of years. This room, the Count's Room, holds portraits of all of the Counts of Holland. The last Count of Holland was King Philip II. His portrait hangs just behind you. Under King Philip II the Spanish empire included territories on every continent then known to Europeans. It was "the empire on which the sun never sets".

However, differences in politics and religion lead to the Eighty Year War between the Spanish empire and the seven Provinces of the Netherlands. The resistance that was led by Willem of Orange laid the foundation for a strong and united Netherlands and irreversibly shaped the Dutch identity. In fact, the resistance resulted in the creation of important institutions such as the University of Leiden.

Since then much has changed, our countries are now allies. The relationship between our countries has become strong in recent decades. Personal contacts between the Spaniards and the Dutch have accumulated and economic ties have grown stronger and stronger. Although, not long ago we were opponents once more. And this time, the battle did not last 80 years but 90 minutes... I am of course referring to the World Cup final in 2010. A match that we will not soon forget! What makes it even more remarkable is that in the national anthem that we sing at the beginning of every football match - also that specific match - we sing the words "I have always honoured the King of Spain". Well, we got our revenge with the World Cup match last June (5-1)!!!

Your Majesty,

Together with our King Willem-Alexander, you form a new generation of Kings. A generation that takes on the changes that the current situation demands and that helps steer their countries through uncertain times.

In your speech before the United Nations you spoke out for a united front in defence of common values and the dignity of all human beings. You can be assured of our support and sympathy in the battle against fanaticism, intolerance and barbarism. There is no place for this in our societies, nor in the peaceful and democratic Europe that both our countries strive to maintain. Recent shocking attacks, such as the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight 17 in Ukraine, have unequivocally shown us the necessity of joining forces. As did the train bombings in Madrid in March 2004, that are still fresh in our memories. They remind us of the need of continued cooperation, of the fact that domestic security can no longer be seen apart from foreign security. The connectedness between our countries today is important for the generation of tomorrow.

For the last six years Europe has endured the deepest economic crisis the world economy has seen since the great depression. Your country has also suffered, but has proven to be resilient and is showing encouraging signs of economic recovery. The crisis has had large effects on the European economies and major political impact on the ruling governments. From this crisis, Europe is slowly emerging with common financial institutions and a greater commitment to shared responsibility and solidarity. In this process it is of course very important to protect the diversity of all Europe's citizens and regions. But at the same time, for this to succeed, it is vital that we pull together and not disintegrate, in order to face the difficulties that lie ahead.

Your Majesty,

Your visit here underlines the close and special bond between our two countries. We are very glad that you, together with Queen Letizia, are here in our midst. Spain and the Netherlands can be proud of their joint contribution to European cooperation and integration, of their rich shared culture, and of their friendship.

Thank you.