



Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, ter gelegenheid van de bijeenkomst van de Standing Committee van de Parlementaire Assemblée van de Raad van Europa, 2 en 3 maart 2023

Datum 2-3-2023

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome in The Hague, the political and administrative capital of the Netherlands, also known as the city of Peace and Justice.

75 years ago, on the 9th of May 1948, the Congress of The Hague took place, the reason you are meeting here today.

The Congress of The Hague is considered as the birthplace of the Council of Europe:

the future and structure of the Council of Europe were discussed, and one year later the Council of Europe was founded to protect the European values of human rights, democracy and rule of law.

At present MPs from 46 countries actively participate in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, under the presidency of my dear colleague Tiny Kox, who was recently re-elected.

I am very proud to call him Mr President or *Monsieur le Président*.

It is also good to see that the Dutch delegation in the PACE is very active.

I would especially like to mention Petra Stienen as head of delegation, Margreet de Boer and Ria Oomen-Ruijten.

All three of them will not return to the Senate, and therefore also not to the PACE, after the elections for the Senate in May of this year.

Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all the work they have done:

Thank you so much!

Luckily, you will continue your work in the PACE until then!

Ladies and gentlemen,

At present the Hall of Knights in the city center where the Congress of The Hague was held in 1948, and the adjacent Parliament buildings are closed for renovations.

These renovations were long due and have a symbolic resonance as well: democracy cannot be taken for granted, democracy is a work in progress.



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The same goes for the Council of Europe.

There have been challenging times in the past.

But I dare say that this past year has been unprecedented, with the war in Ukraine that led to the exclusion of Russia from the Council of Europe.

Unknown grounds have been explored, and decisions were taken that we never deemed necessary before 24 February 2022.

As said, democracy is a work in progress, that benefits from continuous discussions within the institutions and takes into account challenges from the outside.

Therefore, I very much welcome that the future of the Council of the Europe is at the heart of your meeting here in The Hague, and also later this year in Reykjavik, during the Fourth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe.

I wish you a good meeting.

Thank you.