

President Zelensky, dobry ranok, good morning!

On behalf of the Senate and the House of Representatives, I would like to thank you for visiting our Parliament today. We cannot begin to imagine what you and your fellow citizens have been through in the last year.

Mr President, the relationship between your country and our Parliament is strong. Our standing committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation are monitoring the current situation in your country closely.

Let me also mention the growing amount of Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands. At the moment we have welcomed more than ninety thousand Ukrainian refugees. We are well aware that these refugees had to leave everything they had behind, including their families and friends. We: municipalities, host families, volunteers and others, do our utmost to make them feel a little bit at home.

So in times like these, the bond between us remains deep. However, it is important that we do not take it for granted. We have to work to maintain this valuable relationship. And for this reason, we are especially grateful that you were able to find time to be with us today.

My colleague Jan Anthony and I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Ruslan Stefanchuk, the chairman of your parliament, last week. He also helped to arrange a working visit for a parliamentary delegation of our Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. Their visit to Kyiv, Boetsja and Irpin earlier this year made a deep impression on them, as Mr Rudmer Heerema, who led the delegation, just mentioned.

Mr President, your visit to our Parliament at this time, with your country at war, has been memorable. We hope that your stay here will be rewarding, and that your meetings will be fruitful. They will certainly contribute to the development of even closer political ties between our two countries.

We wish the Ukrainian people courage in the months ahead. And please allow me, Mr President, to wish you every success in the vital, but extremely difficult task of leading your country to a peaceful future.