



Seul le discours prononcé fait foi

**Visite d'État au Luxembourg
de LL.MM. le roi et la reine des Pays-Bas
du 23 au 25 mai 2018**

**Speech of HRH the Grand Duke
(23.05.2018)**

Your Majesties,

The Grand Duchess and I are delighted to welcome you on this State Visit that continues a longstanding tradition of encounters between our two families. Five years ago, you chose Luxembourg as the first country to visit after your accession to the throne – a gesture that touched us deeply. What a great sign of affection between our two countries and our two Houses!

Through the personal union of the King of the Netherlands with the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, history has laid out the conditions for a special relationship between our two countries. But, beyond that, our two families have developed a strong bond that exists to this day. Consider, for instance, the close relationship that Queen Wilhelmine or Queen Juliana shared with Grand Duchess Charlotte, or the one that Queen Béatrix had with Grand Duke Jean. This tradition of proximity has helped foster a sense of intimacy and mutual support in times of happiness as well as hardship.

That is why we greatly value your presence here tonight and why it holds such a deep meaning for us. Your Majesty, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation for ‘maintaining’ this bond. I also want to use this opportunity to pay tribute to your dear Mother, Princess Béatrix, for Her dedication to Her country for over thirty years.

Your Majesties,

When thinking of the Netherlands and its people, images of great artists, philosophers and innovators come to mind. It is a country that can boast a plethora of brilliant creations whose lights still shine on throughout the world to this day. One could list, for instance, the paintings of Johannes Vermeer and the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza. At the same time, the Netherlands, through its numerous ports and long history of maritime trade, embodies an openness towards the world.

The people who have shaped your country, under difficult geographical conditions, are emblematic of the values underlying your society. These values, such as a sense of solidarity

and a commitment to liberty, freedom and tolerance, have, for centuries, made the Netherlands a refuge for those persecuted on political or religious grounds. These ideals constitute the essence of Dutch identity and have inspired admiration and respect throughout the world.

In your Speech from the Throne last year, you used the following words to describe your understanding of 'living together': *'The strength of our way of life in the Netherlands lies in the fact that everyone, regardless of their origin or beliefs, can be themselves within the shared values of the rule of law. [...] Above all, building a united society is a shared responsibility and an ongoing task for families, schools, associations – in short, for all of us. We each have our own important role to play.'*

These values of liberty and tolerance have made the Netherlands a model of modernity. In this context, modernity refers to the ability to find new ways to overcome current challenges.

One of the issues that we all face is the preservation of our planet. The Netherlands has established itself as a pioneer in sustainable development. While the rise of the water levels is a true challenge for your country, principles of sustainable development that incorporate economic, social and environmental aspects have been adopted since the 1980s. Successive governments have made the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions an upmost priority. I would also like to highlight the debates and concrete actions that are taking place in your country regarding alternative production and consumption models, energy transition and mobility issues.

My country shares the same goals. It has committed to redirect parts of its economy towards the requirements of a more sustainable development. This is not always an easy task, as significant constraints remain - but it is necessary. Our planet has been handed down to us as a legacy that we must pass, as undamaged as possible, onto future generations. Here, I would like to pay tribute to our Secretary of State for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Mr Camille Gira, who, very suddenly, passed away last week and who worked all his life for the environmental cause. During your stay, we will visit a number of places that demonstrate our efforts, be it in the area of the mobility of people and goods, be it in the construction sector, or, more generally, the social economy. We can thus compare our experiences, and, from thereon, further promote a more sustainable development that is respectful of our quality of life and our environment.

Your Majesty,

Belonging to a larger network of multilateral organisations and institutions, which we helped found, has enhanced the cooperation between our countries. This cooperation also rests on a strongly shared belief in the prevalence of the rule of law. This is only natural for two countries whose capitals house institutions devoted to the principle of law - The Hague as the seat of international law and Luxembourg as the seat of European law.

We have many reasons to celebrate the achievements of the Benelux Union - whose sixtieth birthday is next week. Similarly, we should not forget the invaluable contribution of the European Union in bringing prosperity to our continent and in cultivating our 'vivre-ensemble'. They have provided us with the necessary instruments to tackle the challenges of our times.

However, the rising global instability and the prevailing skepticism should encourage us to increase our shared efforts.

So let's add momentum to this partnership between old friends - in the Benelux, in the European Union or even in the United Nations, where the Netherlands has been a member of the Security Council since the beginning of this year. I hope that this State Visit will provide an opportunity to reaffirm our determination for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, because Europe, and also the rest of the world, needs it.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Both the Netherlands and Luxembourg are aware of how deep our 'common destiny' runs within Europe and the benefit it provides to our people. It is a destiny that needs to be built together, relentlessly, through determination, creativity and solidarity.

Strong with this conviction, the Grand Duchess and I invite you to raise your glasses and to drink to the health of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen, and to the happiness of our two nations.