



## Opening statement

On behalf President of the Senate of the Netherlands, Prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, on the occasion of the visit of the President of the Bundesrat, Mr P. Tschentscher.

*datum 14 september 2023*

*Sehr geehrter Herr Bundesratspräsident,  
Sehr geehrte Delegationsmitglieder,*

Dear President,  
Dear members of the delegation,

On behalf of the States General of the Kingdom of The Netherlands:

*Herzlich Willkommen.*

It is a great privilege for us to receive you here today in the Dutch Senate.

The visit of the President of the German *Bundesrat* to The Hague is a yearly tradition, for over twenty years now. A tradition which we have always attached great value and importance to on our side.

The relationship between our two countries, Germany and the Netherlands, is excellent for many reasons. On many topics and issues both countries share the same opinions. We work closely together on a national level, but also in our border regions.

There is also close cooperation between the city of Hamburg (your hometown) and the city of Rotterdam (not my hometown, but I did attend university in Rotterdam...). Of course, the harbours in those two cities are of the utmost importance to both our countries.

But, there are also downsides to the enormous trade hubs that these harbours represent, Antwerp in Belgium included. They attract criminal activity as well, of which the increase of drug related crimes concerns us all greatly. As I understand you are looking for close cooperation in the fight against this criminal activity. I hope your visit to the Netherlands will contribute to that end.

Your excellency,

Our continent is faced with a military conflict within its borders since February 2022.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shocked us all deeply. But, amidst the horrid situation, there have also been some positive effects. The past 18 months have been proof of the importance of European and international cooperation and solidarity. Between governments, and between people. We have witnessed great solidarity across the European continent and beyond. And this solidarity - fortunately - continuous, as long as needed.

We need close friends and close cooperation to face not only the war in Ukraine, but also to face the challenges of the future.

In the Netherlands we cherish the excellent bond between our two countries, both bilaterally and within the European Union and many other multilateral organisations, such as NATO and the United Nations.

Willy Brandt, who was *Kanzler*, chancellor, of the BRD during the cold war and who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971, spoke about freedom during a conference in 1987, just a few years before the Berlin Wall fell. A moment you will celebrate in three weeks' time, if I am correct.

Brandt said - and I quote - "If I were to say what is, next to peace, more important to me than anything else, then without qualification my answer would be: freedom. Freedom for



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many, not only for the few. Freedom of conscience and of opinion. Freedom as well from need and from fear." Unquote.

This is what we wish for all, but especially now for those people on the European continent that are affected by the war in Ukraine.

Your excellency,

I'd like to finish with a remark that comes from my curiosity. As President of the Dutch Senate – as the Eerste Kamer calls itself abroad – I am fascinated by the fact that the government of Hamburg is called *Senat*, which makes you my colleague twice: not only as President of the Bundesrat, but also as Prime Minister of the *Senat*. *Wunderbar!*

Allow me to give the floor to my colleague from the House of Representatives, Ms Anne Kuik.

*Danke schön.*