



Intervention

by the President of the Senate of the Netherlands, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, during the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments in Palma de Mallorca

Session I: The strategic autonomy of the EU faced with new challenges for liberal democracies in times of social media and artificial intelligence as regards foreign and defence policy: the illegal invasion of Russia against Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East

datum 22 april 2024

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

It is a great privilege for the Dutch Parliament and for me personally to participate in this meeting. More specifically, I would like to thank our colleagues from the Senado and the Congreso de los Diputados, for hosting this conference.

Dear colleagues,

On the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the reforms of the Dutch Constitution last November, the Dutch Senate organized an exposition of the handwritten Constitution of 1848. To see a document that has played such a pivotal role in our history, was a truly impressive experience.

Imagine, handwritten documents that still form the basis of many democracies present here today. Technology has certainly come a long way since, and plays a crucial and indispensable role in our democracies.

Technology also plays a crucial role in warfare, both on the ground where the military weapons depend on very advanced technology, as well as digital warfare. This is, I believe, at the core of the topic at hand today.

The war in Ukraine is our war as well. Not only since most of our countries support Ukraine with intelligence and defense material, but also since the war is not limited to the ground in Ukraine. It also crosses online borders to influence our citizens, our politicians and our elections. Military attacks on the ground are very concrete and aim to disrupt immediately. But influencing is being done in a very subtle way and over a long period of time. Making it difficult to recognize the signs.

In some cases attempts at influence, for instance through disinformation and social media, have materialized in attacks on our democracies and our politicians. This is unacceptable and this is exactly where parliaments can play a role.

I believe that as members of parliament, it is our duty, as representatives of the people, to make digital affairs at the center of our focus, both nationally and internationally.

We need to urge our governments, in particular ministers of digital affairs and also ministers responsible for our national intelligence, foreign affairs and defense - to initiate campaigns of awareness and work together to protect our citizens.

To balance the need to protect them and our democracy on the one hand, and to safeguard the freedoms that our constitution and our rule of law hold dearly on the other hand. In essence, to make our citizens, make us, more resilient.

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

The EU was founded on the ruins of the Second World War, with peace and multilateral cooperation at its core. These values are still the only possible answer to attacks on our liberal democracies.

Thank you for your attention.