

## Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Jan Anthonie Bruijn, bij de ontvangst van de parlementsvoorzitter van Servië, Ana Brnabić

*datum* 14 mei 2025

Madam Speaker,

It is an honour and a pleasure to meet you here today.

On behalf of the Senate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I also bid you welcome to our country.

I hope that your visit and our meeting here today will further contribute to the relationship between our two countries and between our two parliaments.

It is my impression that the relationship between Serbia and the Netherlands has developed over the years.

From a difficult start, influenced by conflicting opinions about the Serbian path towards EU-membership, towards a bilateral relation which resulted in growing trade relations since 2020, both sides importing and exporting. Machines and fruit from Serbia to the Netherlands and vehicles and pharmaceutical products the other way around.

Since its independence, Serbia has become a member of many international organisations, such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

And of course, Serbia is a candidate for membership of the European Union.

The path to EU Membership for Serbia is turbulent.

At the moment, no new chapters have been opened since 2021.

A condition for the next step is progress when it comes to the reform of the rule of law.

I look forward to hearing your opinion on this topic.

The Copenhagen Criteria for enlargement are also of pivotal importance to the Dutch parliament.

It is therefore good that today you are not only meeting with my colleague from the House of Representatives and myself, but you will also be meeting other members of parliament later today.

In this light, I would also like to stress the importance of international diplomacy.

It is of great value that politicians from different countries meet, have a dialogue and inform each other about the situation in their countries.

As representatives of the people, we should exchange information, learn from each other and work together where possible.

Your Excellency,

Ivo Andrić, Serbian novelist and winner of the Nobel prize for literature, often wrote about bridges and why he finds them significant:

“Of everything that man erects and builds in his urge for living nothing is in my eyes better and more valuable than bridges.

They are more important than houses, more sacred than shrines.

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Belonging to everyone and being equal to everyone, useful, always built with a sense, on the spot where most human needs are crossing, they are more durable than other buildings and they do not serve for anything secret or bad.”

Dear Madam Speaker,

Building bridges and finding common ground, is of the utmost importance in international meetings like ours today.

It is a pleasure and an honour to meet with you today. I would like to give the floor to you.

Хвала вам.

Thank you.