



Toespraak

van de voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof. dr. J.A. Bruijn,
ter gelegenheid van de opening van het symposium Religion, Security and Peace

datum 8 november 2019

Your All Holiness,
Your Eminencies,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the house of the Dutch Senate for this special meeting on religion, peace, and security. We are fond to call the Senate a *chambre de réflexion*, a room for thorough consideration of the proposed laws and government policies.

Our democratic system was built on the fundamental freedoms, starting with the freedom of religion that was explicitly acknowledged as early as 1579 with the Union of Utrecht. This has been part of our peace treaties, together with the care for minorities and the responsibility to protect our society against the negative ways in which world views and also religions can be used.

The Netherlands is a pluralist society with a secular government. This has helped us over time to develop equal rights for each and every one. The Dutch way of respecting pluralism and secularity allows for the expression of religious diversity, rather than trying to eliminate this from the public sphere. But obviously this has been contested from the beginning and remains so until today. That is one reason why our government has appointed a Special Envoy for Religion and Belief, Mr. Jos Douma.

Today's meeting is an extraordinary occasion to reflect on the role of religion in our common search for peace and security. The meeting brings together diplomats, religious leaders, members of parliament, academic researchers, and leading representatives of NGO's. Under the auspices of the Special Envoy and in collaboration with the Ecumenical Patriarch, this meeting was organised by members of the Senate and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

I wish you a fruitful and inspiring meeting that will contribute to the common good of humanity.