



## Welkom

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,  
ter gelegenheid van de ontvangst van Zijne Koninklijke Hoogheid Koning Felipe VI van  
Spanje door de Staten-Generaal

datum 18 april 2024

Majestad,

*Es para mí un gran honor recibirle en el Senado holandés.  
Es un gran privilegio para nosotros recibirle hoy aquí.  
Por favor, permítame continuar en inglés.*

I am very honored to welcome you in the Dutch Senate. It is a great privilege for us to receive you here today. Allow me to also introduce Mr Bastiaan van Apeldoorn, chair of the committee on European Affairs of the Senate.

Your visit is one in a long tradition of meetings between your country and ours. A tradition which we find of great importance and value highly. The relationship between our countries goes back for centuries. There is even a reference to the King of Spain in our national anthem, as you undoubtedly are aware of. I tried finding a reference to the Netherlands in your national anthem but apparently the Spanish anthem is one of four national anthems in the world without lyrics.

Spain and the Netherlands work closely together in many areas: economically, culturally and politically. Our countries are also united in the European Union. In recent years the EU member states faced important challenges, such as migration, climate and energy. Challenges that cannot be solved behind border lines, rather in cooperation with all member states.

This of course does not mean that we lose sight of the identity of all the different people and groups within the EU. It is of the utmost importance to protect the diversity of all Europe's citizens. But at the same time it is vital that all countries pull together and that as EU we do not disintegrate, in order to face the challenges that lie ahead.

In less than two months 350 million Europeans will be able to vote in the elections for the European Parliament. I hope that a grand majority will turn up to vote and give the newly elected European Parliament a strong mandate. The challenges faced in the past have proven that common problems benefit the most from common solutions.

The second World War led to the foundation of what is now the European Union with peace and cooperation at its core. Eighty years later our continent and our common peace are under pressure of war once again. Still, I do believe that the ideas of the founding fathers of the European Union are the only possible solution to this challenge and the other challenges our countries and Europe face.

Your majesty,

In 1981 you awarded poet José Hierro with the Prince of Asturias Award for Literature. His poem *La lección de anatomía de Rembrandt-Tulp*, about the painting by Rembrandt that is on display at the Mauritshuis, here in The Hague, suggests he must have seen it. Maybe he visited the museum when he stayed in the Netherlands.

The first three words of the poem are: *Los tiempos cambian; times are changing*. Those timeless words have been used by many before and after Hierro, and still they are very much of our time as well.

Although times change, it is up to us to continue to stand shoulder to shoulder. Let us continue to work closely together and let us continue to further build on our excellent partnership. I am certain that your visit to the Netherlands will undoubtedly contribute to this end.



datum 18 april 2024

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Coming weekend my colleague Martin Bosma from the House of Representatives and I will be visiting the EU Speakers Conference in Mallorca. I am very much looking forward to the conference and hopefully we will meet you there once more.

*Gracias por venir hoy. Es un gran placer darle la bienvenida. Espero que disfrute de su visita a los Países Bajos.*

Allow me to give the floor to my colleague from the House of Representatives, Mr Martin Bosma.

*Gracias. Thank you.*