



## Speech

by the President of the Senate of the Netherlands, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, during the Ninth G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20) in New Delhi, India

*Theme 4: Transformation in Peoples' Lives through Public Digital Platforms*

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Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

It is a great honor to be here today and to speak to you about this important topic: Transformation in Peoples' Lives through Public Digital Platforms.

But first, it is a great privilege for the Dutch Parliament and for me personally to participate in this meeting. We are grateful to the Indian Presidency of the G20 for the invitation to our country. More specifically, I would like to thank my colleagues from the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha, and the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr Duarte Pacheco, to allow us to join you here today. I believe that our parliaments can and should deliver valuable input to the G20 deliberations.

Dear colleagues,

Because of the 175th anniversary of the constitutional reforms, the Dutch Senate has organized an exposition over the past weeks of the handwritten Constitution of 1848. To see a document that has played such a pivotal role in our history, with the signatures of King William II and all the ministers of 1848, is a truly impressive experience.

Imagine, handwritten documents that still form the basis of many democracies present here today. Technology has come a long way since, and during this session we focus on the impact of public digital platforms on peoples' lives.

Since 2010 India has built an impressive collection of public-facing digital platforms that have transformed its citizens' lives. And as I understand, it is the aim of India's government to expand and export this so called DPI, Digital Public Infrastructure. During the G20 in June, the New Delhi Declaration was adopted. It draws attention to building safety, security, resilience, and trust in the digital economy.

In 2023, digital public infrastructure has also been selected as one of this year's high-impact initiatives to accelerate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

With the introduction of the digital public infrastructure we have seen the remarkable difference that digital services can make to peoples' lives, through access to payments, finance, healthcare, education, and more.

There are many advantages as these services are easy accessible once you have the right means; both financially, technically, plus you have to be tech-savvy.

The danger with these advantages is that - at the same time - they also work as a disadvantage: when you have no access to these public digital platforms you are left out and face the risk to fall behind.

In the Netherlands this is for instance the case for the elderly, low-literate people, and people under or just on the minimum wage. Therefore it is important that these groups also have easy and open access, and that both private and public digital services provide assistance when needed.

And this is not only important within my country, the Netherlands, it also needs to be between countries and between continents, with different levels of development,

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, that we question these issues, and that digital affairs are at the center of our focus, both nationally and internationally.



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We need to question our ministers of digital affairs, but also the other ministers, that new initiatives and new laws benefit all citizens. Not just those fortunate enough, but also those who do not have the same starting position.

In the Dutch House of Representatives the committee on Digital Affairs was established in 2021. The committee focuses specifically on new technologies such as artificial intelligence, algorithms and Big Data, and their influence on, for example, employment, our safety, democracy and our privacy. But also on relationships between citizens and with the government.

The committee ensures connection in the handling of digital files in the various policy areas. Six themes have been determined to on and on which she also plans committee debates. The committee Digital Affairs acts as a 'monitoring committee' on various topics, so that the expertise of its members is used in the treatment of legislative proposals.

The Dutch Senate has for the past two years discussed the growing influence of AI on decision making processes and the role of the Senate. This has resulted in a debate with the minister of Digital Affairs. One of the conclusions of the debate was that the senate would like to have more specialized expertise on AI within the support staff.

Also, the Council of Europe is drafting a treaty on Artificial Intelligence with input from national parliaments, after the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on the Committee of Ministers to elaborate a legally binding instrument governing artificial intelligence based on a comprehensive approach.

Coming back to our original topic, Digital Public Platforms: with all these issues, it is important to have enough democratic control, especially where artificial intelligence and coding are concerned. I would like to know what your parliaments are doing to secure this democratic control.

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Thank you for your attention, it is a great privilege to be here today and I look forward to the rest of our discussions.