

Welcoming address of the President of the Senate of the States General,
Mrs Y.E.M.A. Timmerman-Buck, on the occasion of the visit of
His Excellency the President of the Republic of Mozambique
and Mrs Maria da Luz Guebuza
on Thursday, 28 February 2008

Your Excellency,

May I warmly welcome you today in the plenary hall of the Senate. Of course I also extend my welcome on behalf of mr Van Beek, vice-President of the House of Representatives. We are truly honoured that you have found the time in your busy programme to meet with members of both Houses of Dutch Parliament. It underlines not only the good relations between your beautiful country Mozambique and the Netherlands, but at the same time stresses our common stance on the importance of a parliamentary democracy.

A quick overview of your career – characterized by your commitment to an independent, developing Mozambique – shows that you are experienced with many forms of representation and parliament. I would like to take this opportunity to especially congratulate you on the success formula of an annual National Child Parliament in Mozambique. As President of the Senate I also support many of these initiatives in our country.

Involving our youth in politics, creating commitment with young people for the future development of our counties is of the utmost importance. It also fits into the broader context of the main challenges you are facing: sustainable development of Mozambique in combination with achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations concluded just last year, that your country is on the right track; that progress in achieving the MDG's (Millennium Development Goals) is evident. Of course, there is always room for improvement. We must however not forget that the set targets for 2015 are ambitious. That level of ambition is absolutely necessary, but the steps forward made in Mozambique are already praiseworthy. Mozambique has indeed evolved from a land of conflicts to a stable developing country.

I can only hope that your dedication towards achieving those goals remains as constructive as it is today. On that road to a solid sustainable development, I would like to underline one of the recent initiatives that have caught my attention: your Presidential Initiative for the Health of Mothers and Children. It is awful to learn that so many children die before they reach the age of just one; just as awful as it is to learn of maternal deaths. I do sincerely hope that your initiative and cooperation with the civil society and business in Mozambique will help fight the many causes of these problems. Another important initiative is your nationwide malaria control program. Let us also hope that it will be successful so that indeed malaria deaths will be cut in half by 2015. Last but certainly not least, I would like to applaud your national poverty reduction strategies.

To fight these problems and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we all know that you need economic growth. Mozambique may be one of the smallest economies in South Africa, but non the less one of the fastest growing. Your recent plans to liberalise foreign investment rules might indeed give an additional boost to the economy.

Of course, it is almost impossible to achieve results without the help of the international community. The framework of the United Nations, but also that of the European Union is hopefully providing Mozambique with the necessary help and incentives. Our Senate fully supports the many programmes set up by the EU for bilateral help with African countries, as well as the EU-

Africa umbrella-approach. The last EU-Africa Summit has been a success and it is now up to the EU and the African countries to make the fullest out of the implementation of the results.

Dear Mr President, your country is twenty-two times as big as the Netherlands and has five times as much coastline as we do. I am convinced however, that we share the same passion in combining efforts to deal with the challenges facing our world and our societies, to the benefit of all our citizens and the international community.

Mr President, as you will appreciate, we would be especially interested to hear now from you. Your expectations about the near future and what efforts you expect of us, directly and indirectly. Please rest assured, that we will follow your initiatives with close interest and will certainly support them when and wherever possible.

Thank you.