



Toespraak

Opening remarks H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco

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Votre Altesse Sérénissime,

Permettez-moi d'abord de vous féliciter des circonstances heureuses de votre épouse.

Your Serene Highness, Monseigneur,

It is a great honour to receive you here today. It is the first time that a reigning monarch of the Principality of Monaco has visited the States General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Just over one year ago, you visited the Netherlands for the abdication of Queen Beatrix and the investiture of King Willem-Alexander. We were very honoured to have you in our presence then, as we are today. Therefore, on behalf of the Senate and my colleague from the House of Representatives, Ms Anouchka van Miltenburg, I would like to bid you a very warm welcome.

Today, you find yourself in the Count's Room. If you look behind you, you will see 36 portraits of the Counts of Holland. The first is of Dirk I, who lived around 920 AD. The last is of Philip II, better known as the King of Spain, who reigned until 1581. Close to the middle, you will see a Count wearing an armoured mask. That is Count Floris IV, who was the founder of the Binnenhof. He is portrayed in this way because he died in armour during a tournament. Count Floris IV lived in the thirteenth century, at around the same time as the House of Grimaldi began its reign over Monaco. At first sight, these paintings may seem relics of a distant past. But to me, they are a constant reminder of an important time in European history, the effects of which are still playing out today.

Monseigneur,

In April 2006, you followed in the footsteps of your great-grandfather, Prince Albert I of Monaco, to become the first reigning head of state to reach the North Pole. Your goal was to bring attention to climate change,



datum 26 mei 2014

ons kenmerk EB/TS/009

blad 2

and to seek solutions to this problem. In January 2009 you undertook a three-week scientific journey in the Antarctic. Here in the Netherlands, we admire the role that Monégasque royals have played throughout history in raising awareness for environmental issues, and we applaud your efforts.

Both the Netherlands and Monaco are small countries, and among the most densely populated in the world. As a result, both our countries are engaged in land reclamation projects. I understand that the Principality of Monaco has expanded its land-mass by 20 per cent. Here in the Netherlands, we have created an entire new province that lies 5 meters below sea level: the Province of Flevoland. Water management, in combination with the issue of global warming, has always been of crucial importance to the Netherlands, and this remains the case today.

When it comes to issues of water management and marine technology, I think that the Netherlands and Monaco have much to offer one another. There is a great deal of potential for pooling our knowledge and creating closer economic ties between our two countries. Your visit here will undoubtedly contribute to this.

Monseigneur,

To round off my opening remarks, I wish to underline that I look forward to our states continuing to work together constructively in various international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and in the Schengen area. Border control is an essential prerequisite for keeping Europe stable and secure, and we admire Monaco's efforts in this respect.

Now, there are two specific topics that I would like to discuss with you. The first is the organisation of the parliamentary system in the Principality of Monaco. Could you elaborate on the Monégasque unicameral system and on the relationship between the executive and legislative powers?



datum 26 mei 2014

ons kenmerk EB/TS/009

blad 3

Second, the Principality of Monaco has strong ties to France, and relations between Monaco and the EU are primarily conducted through France. Through this relationship, Monaco directly participates in certain EU policies. Could you elaborate on this and how your country participates in European Parliamentary affairs?

Monseigneur,

Once again, we would like to bid you a very warm welcome. We look forward to having an open and frank discussion with you. At this point, I would like to give the floor to you.