



Toespraak

datum 14 juni 2019

Bijdrage van de oud-Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer, Ankie Broekers-Knol, tijdens de AES-bijeenkomst 2019 Parijs van 13 t/m 15 juni 2019 (sessie I: 'Dialogue between European and African Senates').

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure and a privilege for me to be here today. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to *mon cher ami*, Mr. Gérard Larcher, the President of the French Senate, for his hospitality and for the excellent work of the Senate of the French Republic to organize this meeting. *Merci beaucoup*.

Our meeting here in Paris truly marks a special edition of our Association: it is the 20th meeting of the Association of European Senates since its establishment in the year 2000. That we celebrate this milestone here in the Luxembourg Palace, the very same place as where our predecessors decided to set up this Association, contributes to the extraordinary character of our meeting today.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to extend a special word of welcome to our colleagues from several African countries who are present here today. Your participation is a very important one and evidently adds to the value of our meeting and enriches the discussions we have today, especially with regard to the topic that is on the table at this moment: 'the dialogue between African and European Senates'.

As Mr. Gérard Larcher so rightly said last night: we must not stand with our backs to each other, but we must meet, we must join and we must cooperate. We must reunite.

The Senate of The Kingdom of The Netherlands has a long tradition of inter-parliamentary cooperation. We clearly see the value of dialogue between parliaments. Inter-parliamentary cooperation can offer new opportunities. It can lead to improved mutual understanding. And it can truly contribute to the good relationship between countries.



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That is why I am delighted that through this meeting we also build on the further enhancement of the relationship between African countries and European countries.

Our two continents may share a sometimes rough and complicated common history. But our relationship has changed over the past decades and in recent years we see that many of the challenges of the 21st century are common challenges. Challenges that we can only face together. Migration. Climate change. Terrorism and other security issues. These are common challenges that need common answers.

It is the task of parliaments and especially Upper Houses, as Chambers of reflection and review, to make sure that we do not lose the connection with our citizens when dealing with these challenges. Big problems ask for big solutions, but there is a risk of getting too far ahead of our citizens, for example on the field of climate policy. Major policy shifts can only be successful in the long run if they go hand in hand with an extensive, careful and gradual process in which the interests of all our citizens and the estimated impact of measures are considered.

Inter-parliamentary bodies such as the AES offer an excellent opportunity to discuss the role of Senates in these matters, especially with regard to the common and inter-related challenges of African and European countries.

Dear colleagues,

Allow me to raise another issue that will undoubtedly influence the relationship between Africa and Europe in the coming years. As you know, Africa-EU relations generally take place in the context of the Cotonou Agreement. The Cotonou Agreement was adopted in the year 2000 to replace the 1975 Lomé Convention and forms the overarching framework for EU-relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

The Cotonou agreement will expire in February 2020 and work has begun to lay the groundwork for the future partnership, which will probably cover important areas such migration, security and climate, which I mentioned before, alongside other major issues like economic cooperation, democracy, and the rule of law. It will provide new opportunities and it will also show whether we can succeed to find common solutions to our common challenges of the 21st century.



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It is important as parliamentary houses to be involved in the process towards this new partnership and I am interested to hear about the vision of our African colleagues on this matter.

Dear colleagues,

I started my contribution with a reference to the extraordinary character of this 20th meeting of the AES here in Paris. However, on a personal note this meeting is also extraordinary for another reason. As many of you might know, elections for the Dutch Senate took place on the 27th of May and since I did not stand for election, our Senate will soon have a new President at the end of this month.

Myself, I ended the Presidency of the Senate on the 11th of June and on the same day I was sworn in by His Majesty the King as minister for Migration at the ministry of Justice and Security.

I trust that my successor as President of the Senate will continue the active role of the Dutch Senate in international fora such as the AES and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all wholeheartedly for the friendship, the valuable discussions and the fruitful meetings we had over the past years. It was a great pleasure and an honour to be part of this distinguished association.

I look forward to the rest of our meetings today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much. *Merci beaucoup.*