

Address of the President of the Senate of the
States General,
Mrs. Yvonne E.M.A. Timmerman-Buck,
on the occasion of the extraordinary meeting of the Association of European Senates, St. Petersburg,
14 November 2008

Dear Colleagues, Honourable Presidents,

Our discussions within the Association have once again proven to be interesting and fruitful. After the Russian Federation it is the privilege of the Netherlands to host a meeting of our Association.

Mr. Mironov, it will be difficult to match your organisation and chairmanship during this conference. Our task is laid out in front of us. Dear Colleagues, I would like to cordially invite you for our annual meeting 2009 to The Hague, from the 16th until the 18th of April.

On that occasion, we are looking forward to continue our discussions. As you have heard me say earlier today, the Senate of the Netherlands has the solid conviction that Europe goes far beyond the borders of the European Union. It is deriving from this consideration that we have chosen our topic for the eleventh conference of the Association of European Senates. The subject will be: the role of the Senates on the European continent.

Let me briefly sketch the outlines of this topic. Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, this year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the European Parliament. Next year we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe and the 50th anniversary of the European Court on Human Rights. All this is proof of a strong European entity that promotes stability, peace, democracy and prosperity on the European continent.

This solid European foundation needs to be safeguarded, promoted and strengthened. Against the hectic background of everyday national and European politics, the Senates of Europe are in a unique position to play an im-

portant role. Questions that could be addressed in The Hague are, for example:

- in what way can Senates contribute to promoting and safeguarding progress and stability on the European continent?
- in what way can Senates contribute to an increased awareness in our societies of the importance of the European continent?

We would also like to hear your views on how your chamber optimize it's participation in the different international organisations and conferences and how these international experiences are being incorporated into national activities. To what extent can Senates exert influence on the policy and the activities of important European organisations, such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE or NATO? The city of The Hague, international city of peace and justice, will be a very appropriate venue for the exchange of ideas on this matter. We will provide you with an explanatory note on our conference topic.

On a more logistic note, bearing in mind the discussions we had during our previous annual meeting in Vienna on the annual and extraordinary meetings of the Association, we would like to make an inventory on possible candidacies for the upcoming years. We will especially try to find the right combination of special celebrations in member states and the annual gathering of the Association. Therefore I invite you to inform us if you have any plans for hosting the annual meeting of the Association, perhaps in line with a special celebratory occasion in your country. We will soon be sending out the official invitations including the necessary registration forms.

Dear colleagues, I sincerely hope to welcome all of you next Spring in the international city of The Hague.

Thank you.