



# Eerste Kamer *der Staten-Generaal*

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Dear Presidents, Dear Colleagues,

Two approaches might be pointed at for the explaining and understanding of international relations. Firstly, the international system is simply the sum of the behaviour of nation states. This is called the theory of individualism. Secondly, the starting point is not the nation state, but the international system. In this approach the interests of nation states are understood and explained in terms of the international system. This is called the theory of holism.

I would like to state today that for the future of Europe we need a better appreciation of the holistic approach. Of course, I am not stating that we should give up the concept of sovereign states. After all, the concept of subsidiarity remains of the utmost importance. But if the subsidiarity check leads to the opinion that European measures are desired, it would be advisable to apply the holistic approach. That is to say, that a proposal or policy should be judged on its European instead of just its national merits. Then Europe has indeed become more than the sum of our nation states.

At the moment, however, we are facing developments that actually cause worries. Due to the economic and financial crisis, the siren songs in favour of nationalism and protectionism become louder all over the continent. The G20 and the European leaders in Berlin issued a declaration stating that protectionism is not the way forward. In spite of that, we observe agendas to restrict the reaps of financial and economic interventions just to the own population. Perhaps understandable, but not desirable.

In addition to this crisis, contemporary challenges of climate change, energy security, terrorism and social exclusion demand more instead of less cooperation. It is exactly the overarching phenomenon of globalisation that urges us to find a suitable European answer. This of course is a political choice. The question is whether we, the European Senates, are willing and able to make that choice.

The process of globalization is vulnerable. The process of European cooperation is just as vulnerable. Cooperation within the European Union, within the Council of Europe and amongst each others. In my opinion, a better appreciation of the holistic approach, is necessary to build a strong Europe. A Europe that is able to face her challenges.

In the Senate of the Netherlands, every now and then, the starting question is Europe, the relevance of Europe. The overarching perspective is not just the protection of our national interest. It is the acknowledgment that national interests most often equal the European ones.

Over the last two years, the Senate pro-actively organised public hearings on the future of Europe and on data retention. Not too long ago, the Senate organised such a hearing on the future of the relationship between the EU and Russia. In



the Dutch Senate, this relationship is regarded to be of great importance. We also persistently lobbied for the EU accession to the European Convention for Human Rights. As you would have probably noted in our draft joint statement, we did it again today.

Dear Colleagues, our future equals the future of Europe. There are two misconceptions. One, the stronger Europe, the weaker the nation states. Two, the stronger the nation states, the weaker Europe. In my view, a strong Europe requires strong nations. Therefore, strong parliaments, strong Senates, simply for the wellbeing of all men, women and children we represent.

Thank you.