

Toespraak Voorzitter Eerste Kamer bij bezoek President Chili aan de Staten-Generaal op 25 mei 2009

Your Excellency,
Honourable President,

May I warmly welcome you in the Senate of the Netherlands, also on behalf of my colleague, the President of the House of Representatives, Mrs Verbeet. It is a great honour for the Dutch Parliament that you have found the momentum to exchange views with elected representatives of the Dutch citizens during your state visit.

Your personal story and your career are very impressive. You personally experienced the awfulness of a military junta, but never lost faith in the people of Chili nor in democracy, human rights and the rule of law. As a victim of a dictatorship yourself, you have very admirably helped your country deal with that part of its history. The efforts to overcome tyranny of many ordinary citizens in Chili in those dark days have inspired many people, certainly in our country, who wanted a better, more humane world.

President Bachelet, the Netherlands is one of the few countries in the world where the presidents of both Houses of Parliament are female. You were elected first female President of your beautiful country. Upon taking office you appointed as many female as male ministers in your cabinet. President Bachelet, you have build a strong international reputation on inspiring and supporting women. And even though it will be constitutionally not possible to participate in the next presidential elections in Chili, I hope that many of your qualities will not be lost to your country, nor to the world.

The Republic of Chili is economically speaking doing very well. The extra revenues from exporting different kinds of metals and of exporting food articles are dealt with in such a manner, that the value of the Chilean peso remains stable. At the same time, notwithstanding this careful financial policy, you succeeded in improving the social cohesion in your country.

The 50 percent reduction in extreme poverty in your country is internationally seen as a milestone in realising the Millennium Development Goals. The newly introduced Chilean Solidarity System has played an important role in this context. And even though there is still work to do in Chili to indeed meet the targets set by the MDG's, your country is on track.

Dear President, your career is all about breaking through existing and old barriers. A presidential mentality that would actually serve many countries. I sincerely hope that the Republic of Chili and its citizens will make the most out of your presidency.

Thank you.