



**Word of welcome by Mrs. Ankie Broekers-Knol, President of the Senate of the Netherlands, at the occasion of the visit of the President of Israel, H.E. Mr. Shimon Peres 1st of October 2013 in the Plenary Hall of the Senate**

Welcome, Your Excellency.

It is a great honour to address you here in the States-General of the Netherlands - the democratic heart of our country.

As President of the Senate of the Netherlands, I warmly welcome you. Welcome also on behalf of my colleague, Mrs Van Miltenburg, the President of the House of Representatives. And of course on behalf of all our other colleagues present here today, both from the Senate and the House of Representatives.

We are extremely pleased to have you in our midst. I will be brief, as we are all eager to listen to what you would like to convey to us. After your own words we will have a discussion led by the chair of the committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, Mrs Eijssink; followed by closing remarks by my colleague Mrs Van Miltenburg.

But first, your Excellency, I would like to take this opportunity to point out some features of our Plenary Hall. In my eyes, the decorations of this room reveal a lot about the Dutch world view. And naturally, this also reflects in the way we look at the world beyond our borders.

Let's start with the walls. I invite you to look to the right and to the left. Behind the public galleries, you should be able to get a glimpse of two beautiful paintings. To the left, a painting depicting the Roman God Mars, representing "War". On your right a more brightly coloured painting representing "Peace".

War and Peace. We all know that a thin line runs between the two.

The instability in the Middle East remains a stark reminder of this. Achieving and keeping peace is only possible with continuous and strenuous efforts. It means building mutual trust and requires compromises from both sides.



Your Excellency, I also invite you to move your eyes towards the ceiling. As you can see, from all corners, foreigners peek into this room. This colourful bunch represents our international trading partners. I think we all agree that strong economic relations are extremely helpful in cementing constructive political relationships. As such they form a cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Then, in the very centre of our ceiling, we see children, the future generations. These children remind us parliamentarians of our responsibilities. Both at home and in the wider world. After all, diplomacy does not just involve dialogue from one government to the other. Also parliamentarians can be key in building mutual understanding and in bringing parties together. I can say, and I believe that would be on behalf of all colleagues present here today, that we are most willing to do so. For the betterment of all.

Your Excellency, once more, 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.