



Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,
ter gelegenheid van de parlementaire top van de NAVO, 19 en 20 juni in Brussel, en
de 70^e verjaardag van de NAVO Parlementaire Assemblée (1955-2025)

datum 20 juni 2025

Dear colleagues,

How wonderful it is to meet you here in Belgium.
And thank you to our wonderful hosts from the Belgian Parliament.
Dank u. Merci.

One of the most illustrious Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands was Max van der Stoel.

Early in his political career Mr Van der Stoel was a Member of the Dutch Senate.
In 1961 he took the floor during a debate on the Defense Budget.

Van der Stoel warned against the expansive nature of the Soviet Union and its allies.
He also expressed his worries about the growing anti-NATO-sentiment in the Netherlands.
Finally, he called upon the Dutch government to defend the credibility of the alliance.

And here we are, 64 years later.
The topics mentioned by Mr Van der Stoel have never been as urgent as they are today.
The war in Ukraine has shocked us all.
Europe is now at the heart of brutal aggression.

The day after Russia invaded Ukraine, NATO activated its NATO Response Force for the first time.
Thousands of troops are now on the ground in NATO Member States in the East of Europe.

Finland and Sweden, after so many years of neutrality, have joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The need for mutual defense and cooperation, is once again at the heart of all NATO Member States and our parliaments.

As Max van der Stoel was convinced, NATO is once again, in the eyes of many people, an indispensable tool in the defense of freedom.

In this respect the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is pivotal, because parliamentary scrutiny in matters of war and peace is of the utmost importance.

Former Parliamentarians from the Netherlands such as Bert Koenders who was President in 2006 and 2007, and Angelien Eijssink, Frank van Kappen, and Henk Jan Ormel have served as Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, helping shape what it has become today: a parliamentary forum grounded in freedom, security, and solidarity.

Proof that the NATO PA is as important today as it was 70 years ago.

Colleagues,

Next week, the Netherlands will host the NATO Summit in The Hague, home to the Dutch Senate and House of Representatives.

The Dutch have long understood that defense is not only a matter of bunkers and battalions, but of laws, values, and legitimacy.

Just this week both the Senate and the House of Representatives have debated on NATO.
The Senate voted in favour of enshrining in law the 2% of GDP as the absolute lower limit.
And the House of Representatives gave the green light to the Dutch government to agree to the 5% standard during the NATO summit.



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In a world marked by uncertainty, it is our shared commitment to freedom, solidarity, and parliamentary dialogue that anchors us.

As we mark 70 years of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, let us look ahead with confidence and resolve.

For freedom must be defended not only with force, but with words, with principles — and with parliaments.

Thank you.