



**Opening remarks of the President of the Senate of the Netherlands, Ms. Ankie Broekers-Knol, on the occasion of the visit of the President of Costa Rica, H.E. Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís, to the States General of the Netherlands, 11 May 2017**

Your Excellency,

It is a great honour to receive you here today. On behalf of the Senate and my colleague from the House of Representatives, Ms Khadija Arib, I bid you a warm welcome.

Your visit here underlines the sound bilateral relations that Costa Rica and the Netherlands maintain. One of the foundations of this relationship is our shared belief in promoting human rights and international peace and security. Costa Rica and the Netherlands are both strong promoters of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of speech and the protection of an independent press.

Many decades ago, our countries were pioneers in referring jurisdiction to the International Court of Justice. Currently, we are both active contributors to the International Criminal Court. As you know, both these institutions are situated right here in The Hague, together with numerous other international organisations.

The Hague is sometimes referred to as the 'international city of peace and justice', but I believe the same can be said for San José. Institutions like the University of Peace contribute greatly to education and research for peace. I am glad that The Hague was chosen as the location for the university's European subsidiary. This adds to the links that tie our countries together.

To name another link that ties us together: both the Netherlands and Costa Rica are small countries that have a long coastline (about 2000 kilometres). This means that water management, in combination with the issue of global warming, is of crucial importance to us.

Over the last ten years, Costa Rica has been a world leader in raising awareness for environmental issues. We admire the role Costa Rica has played in building a sustainable economy without creating a large ecological footprint. This is truly impressive. I am sure it was no coincidence that it was a Costa Rican who led the negotiations for the historic Paris Climate Agreement.

The Netherlands in turn has a history of creating sustainable solutions to flooding and freshwater shortages that dates back centuries. I understand you got acquainted with Dutch maritime expertise yesterday, when you visited our two main ports. I hope that in the future, our countries can join forces to find innovative solutions for climate change.

Your Excellency,

There is another thing that our countries have in common. It is something that we can be very proud of, because it is central to life itself. Both our Costa Rica and The Netherlands are amongst the happiest nations in the world. There are many factors that support happiness: freedom, health, income etc. But the one that caught my eye is 'good governance'. I hope that when it comes to good governance and safeguarding the rule of law, our countries can exchange ideas and best practices in order to support the happiness of our nations.

Your Excellency,

Once again, thank you very much for visiting the States General. We look forward to having an open and frank discussion with you. At this point, I would like to give the floor to you. Thank you.