



## Toespraak

## Toespraak van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer Ankie Broekers-Knol ter gelegenheid van de ontvangst van de President van Oekraïne dhr. Poroshenko 26 november 2015

datum 26 november 2015

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the States General, and on behalf of my colleague, the Speaker of the House of Representatives Ms Anouchka van Miltenburg, a warm welcome to the Senate of the Netherlands. We can imagine how busy you must be with everything going on in your country, which is why we are very grateful for your visit.

As you know, the Netherlands is a strong advocate of international law. For us, principles such as self-determination, sovereignty and free choice are of the utmost importance. At this moment Russia is impeding your country from exercising its own choice. As you said in the General Assembly of the United Nations in September, your country has become the object of external aggression. The result is destabilization in Eastern Ukraine and in other parts of your country. Under the Minsk accords a cease fire is in place, but it remains fragile.

Every day, you are confronted with violations of the sovereignty of your country. Every day, you fight for the existence of the state. We cannot imagine the struggle you are going through. And our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine.

Continued vigilance and development are required so that the war in the fields of Eastern Ukraine does not reach the streets of Kiev. The inevitable consequence of war is that there is less focus on the development of the rule of law, good governance and human rights.

It is exactly this connective tissue of society that rebels and terrorists try to destruct and undermine. The tragic Paris attacks two weeks ago demonstrate this very vividly.

Therefore it remains vital for your country, but also for the Netherlands, to make our societies, and the connective tissue that binds us together, as strong as possible. Strong and sound institutions, laws and principles enable us to become more resilient and to be a strong democracy.

A fellow senator and dear friend of mine once said: *"the rule of law is not a quiet possession, not a house where we can go to sleep carefree."* His name was Willem Witteveen and he died in the downing of flight MH17. They are wise words which we should take to heart.



*datum* 23 november 2015

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Your Excellency,

When it comes to the EU, your country's aspirations are clear. The Association Treaty between the EU and Ukraine is a very important step for you, and I can imagine your disappointment about the advisory referendum that is planned in the Netherlands on the 6th of April next year.

Many things can be said, but the fact remains that it is a new instrument of democracy and that we - as politicians - have no choice but to embrace it, and to take in the results as they come. Nevertheless, it remains an advisory referendum; the outcome is non-binding.

Despite your country's struggles, there are positive developments. This last quarter, the Ukrainian economy grew for the first time in 18 months. As of the 1st of January you will enter into a free trade area with the EU. And, not entirely unimportant... for the first time in history Ukraine has qualified itself independently for the European football Championship next year! And the Netherlands is out...

That being said, I can only express the hope that one day soon, Ukraine will be able to exercise its choice freely again, that it will be a safe country, and that it will be flooded with foreign tourists visiting the biggest dancing water show in Europe, in Vinnytsia!

And in order to achieve this, it is vital that the international community stays committed to, and stands united with, Ukraine.

Your Excellency,

Once again a warm welcome. And may I give the floor to you.

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