



# DIPLOMAT

## MAGAZINE

WHERE TRUTH BEGINS

ICMP DIRECTOR-GENERAL KATHRYNE BOMBERGER

CONNECTING DIPLOMACY AND BUSINESS

AMBASSADOR'S FORUM EMIEL DE SÉVRÈN JACQUET

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

ISS RUARD GANZEVOORT

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DIALOGUE AMONG  
CIVILIZATIONS AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE



COLOPHON

DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE  
By Diplomats for Diplomats  
Year 12, No 1, August 2025  
ISSN: 2468-3469

HEADS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, FOUNDERS  
OF DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE IN JUNE 2013  
H.E. Carlos Jose Arguello, Ambassador of  
Nicaragua, Dean of the Diplomatic corps  
H.E. Roberto Calzadilla Sarmiento,  
Ambassador of Bolivia, vice-Dean of the  
Diplomatic corps  
H.E. James Lambert, Ambassador of Canada  
H.E. Huynh Minh Chinh, Ambassador of  
Vietnam  
H.E. Martin Valentino, Ambassador of Malta  
H.E. Yasumasa Nagamine, Ambassador of  
Japan  
Dr. Eugenio Matos, Chargé d'affaires  
a.i. Embassy of Dominican Republic

PUBLISHER EDITOR Dr. Mayelinne De Lara  
Roy Lie Atjam

DIPLOMATIC ADVISER  
Baron Henri Estramant

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Guido Lanfranchi  
Eugene Matos

PHOTOGRAPHERS  
Kim Vermaat Roy Strik  
Chris Ronteltap

Photo on the cover:  
Kathryne Bomberger  
ICMP Director-General  
Photography by Kim Vermaat

Stichting Diplomat Magazine is a non-profit  
Dutch foundation. It is the first diplomatic  
magazine in the Netherlands' history, published  
by and for diplomats in collaboration with experts  
in international relations and diplomacy, the  
academia and dedicated volunteers from the  
Netherlands and overseas.

A broader selection of articles and contributions  
can be found in our free online version at:  
[www.diplomatmagazine.eu](http://www.diplomatmagazine.eu)

The editors do their best to ensure the accuracy  
of all information in this magazine. However,  
mistakes and omissions are, regrettably, possible.  
No rights may therefore be derived from the  
material published. All rights reserved. Nothing  
in this edition may be reproduced, stored in an  
automated database, or made public, in any form  
or by any means, whether electronic, mechanical,  
by photocopying, recording or otherwise, without  
prior written permission of the publisher.

DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE  
Zuid-Hollandlaan 7  
2596 AL The Hague, the Netherlands

[www.diplomatmagazine.eu](http://www.diplomatmagazine.eu)  
[diplomatmagazinenl@gmail.com](mailto:diplomatmagazinenl@gmail.com)

# MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

*In this latest issue of Diplomat  
Magazine, we come together to  
celebrate our collaboration and  
shared commitment as we look ahead  
to a year filled with opportunities,  
solutions, and success.*



As the world grapples with rising  
authoritarianism, we find ourselves at  
a defining moment in the struggle for  
democracy and human rights. In a world  
where the values of freedom, justice, and  
dignity are increasingly under pressure,  
the role of diplomacy has never been more  
vital. Confronted with challenges such as the  
spread of disinformation, we must remain  
united in our dedication to truth and to  
the principles that connect us as a global  
community. These principles are not abstract  
ideals—they are lived realities, shaped daily  
by our actions and choices.

In this context, our work with embassies  
accredited to The Hague is more important—  
and more sensitive—than ever.

In this edition, we feature the vision of  
some candidates for Director-General of the  
OPCW, as Ambassador Fernando Arias's  
distinguished mandate draws to a close.

Our main article is dedicated to Kathryne  
Bomberger, Director-General of the  
International Commission on Missing  
Persons (ICMP), who brings over three  
decades of experience at the forefront of post-  
conflict recovery at the only international  
organization exclusively devoted to the issue  
of missing persons through a rule-of-law-  
based approach.

We also present an interview with Emiel de  
Sévren Jacquet, who shares insights on the  
Ambassadors Forum and Amsterdam750,

masterfully bridging diplomacy and  
business in the Netherlands. In addition,  
13 ambassadors have shared their priorities  
with us, and Diplomat Magazine has  
successfully hosted several events, including  
our 2025 Gala, a remarkable conference on  
Dialogue Among Civilizations and Peaceful  
Coexistence with the Embassy of the  
People's Republic of China, and—despite the  
summer holidays—the X Diplomats Biking  
Spree. Our pages are also filled with national  
day celebrations, diplomatic events, and  
features that blend meaningful information  
with cultural enrichment.

Our team continues to work tirelessly  
to bring together diverse perspectives  
and events. We encourage diplomats to  
collaborate with us, so that Diplomat  
Magazine may always reflect the variety and  
richness of all diplomatic missions in The  
Hague. This edition serves as a reminder of  
the power of collective action.

Every step we take, no matter how small,  
brings us closer to a future where justice  
and freedom could prevail. Let us therefore  
celebrate our shared achievements—and the  
hope that lights our way forward.

*Dr. Mayelinne De Lara*  
Publisher  
[diplomatmagazinenl@gmail.com](mailto:diplomatmagazinenl@gmail.com)





Van Vliet Automotive specializes worldwide  
in new heavy vehicles, with a focus on  
Africa, The Middle East & the Caribbean  
We offer a large stock of new ready-to-go trucks, trailers,  
4x4's and towed equipment from the top brand MAN.

As an authorized MAN importer, we provide high-quality  
solutions to the construction, mining, logistics and  
humanitarian sectors through our extensive global network.



INSTANT AVAILABILITY OF  
NEW PREMIUM VEHICLES

NIEUWERKERK A/D IJSSEL THE NETHERLANDS



pktrucks.com is a global specialist in new  
heavy-duty vehicles with a focus on the African  
market, but also Latin America and the Caribbean.  
Our inventory includes more than 1.000 new  
trucks, trailers, 4x4s and towed machinery from leading  
brands such as Iveco, Mercedes-Benz and Toyota.

As an official Iveco partner we offer reliable solutions to the  
construction, mining, logistics and humanitarian industries,  
supported by an extensive international network.





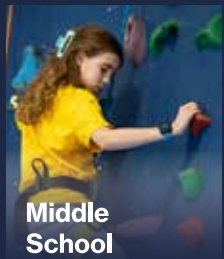
# American School of The Hague

THE  
TOP CHOICE  
FOR EXPAT FAMILIES

- Highest IB Scores  
in the Netherlands
- Leaders in  
STEM
- Advanced  
Placement (AP)
- Excellence in  
The Arts



Elementary  
School



Middle  
School



High  
School

**Excellence Across the Board**  
American School of The Hague is a leading international school that welcomes students from over 70 different nationalities. This vibrant mix of cultures creates a rich, global community that helps prepare children for living in today's interconnected world.

BOOK YOUR VISIT TODAY AT [WWW.ASH.NL](http://WWW.ASH.NL)  
OR CALL +31 (0) 70 512 10 60



## MAIN ARTICLE

Where Truth Begins  
Interview with ICMP Director-General  
Kathryne Bomberger \_\_\_\_\_ 6

## DIPLOMAT VIP

Connecting Diplomacy and Business:  
Emiel de Sévrèn Jacquet  
Ambassadors Forum and Amsterdam750 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Why Destroy When We Can Build?  
Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal  
CEO, Common Fund for Commodities \_\_\_\_\_ 12

A Visionary of Transatlantic Cooperation  
Interview with Mr. Theodossios Georgiou  
President of the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA) \_\_\_\_\_ 13

## DIPLOMAT AMBASSADORIAL

Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E Ms. Sahar Ghanem \_\_\_\_\_ 15

Ecuador: H.E. Mr. Teran Parral \_\_\_\_\_ 16

Costa Rica: H.E. Mr. Arnaldo Brenes Castro \_\_\_\_\_ 17

China: H.E. Mr. Jian Tan \_\_\_\_\_ 19

Ghana: H.E. Mr. Francis Kotia \_\_\_\_\_ 20

Botswana: H.E. Ms. Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba \_\_\_\_\_ 22

Russia: H.E. Mr. Vladimir Tarabrin \_\_\_\_\_ 23

Malta: H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Curmi \_\_\_\_\_ 24

Cyprus: H.E. Mr. Spyros Attas \_\_\_\_\_ 25

Chile: H.E. Mr. Jorge Carvajal \_\_\_\_\_ 26

Nigeria: Dr. Eniola Ajayi \_\_\_\_\_ 27

Algeria: H.E. Ms. Salima Abdelhak \_\_\_\_\_ 28

India: H.E. Mr. Kumar Tuhin \_\_\_\_\_ 29

## DIPLOMAT POUCH

fr. Sjaak de Boer, Church of Our Saviour \_\_\_\_\_ 31

Prof. Ruard Ganzevoort, ISS \_\_\_\_\_ 32

## Learn Dutch in small groups

We  
welcome  
embassy  
staff



- NEW location  
in The Hague,  
Frederik Hendriklaan
- Incompany  
courses tailor made  
for embassy staff
- Learn Dutch  
face-to-face or  
online
- Small groups
- Fun and interactive  
with emphasis on  
speaking skills
- Levels A0 to C1



[www.taalthuis.nl](http://www.taalthuis.nl)  
[info@taalthuis.nl](mailto:info@taalthuis.nl)  
0031(0)233050305  
Scan for our schedule

TAALtHUIS





Photo: Kim Vermaat Photography

# WHERE TRUTH BEGINS

## INTERVIEW WITH ICMP DIRECTOR-GENERAL KATHRYNE BOMBERGER HIGHLIGHTING ICMP'S HUMAN RIGHTS-CENTERED MISSION TO ACCOUNT FOR THE MISSING

*With over three decades of experience in post-conflict recovery, Director-General Kathryn Bomberger leads the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), the only international body dedicated solely to the issue of missing persons through a rule-of-law approach. Headquartered in The Hague since 2015, ICMP addresses crises from Ukraine and Syria to the Balkans, Vietnam, and Iraq.*

In this interview, Bomberger discusses how ICMP's advanced forensic tools, DNA labs, and data systems are transforming global responses to disappearances caused by conflict, migration, and climate disasters. She reflects on ICMP's post-conflict work in Syria and shares her vision for a global standing capacity rooted in justice and the rights of families.

As the world marks 30 years since the Srebrenica Genocide and faces the highest number of conflicts since 1946, ICMP's mission is more urgent than ever. At its December 2024 Conference of States Parties, held at the Peace Palace in The Hague, member states adopted key amendments reinforcing ICMP's global

mandate: no one should remain missing — and no family left without answers.

### GLOBAL MISSION AND PRIORITIES

***What are ICMP's current global priorities in addressing missing persons cases?***

ICMP's mandate is to secure the cooperation of governments and others in locating missing persons from conflict, human rights abuses, manmade and natural disasters, organized crime, irregular migration and other causes where persons go missing for involuntary reasons and to assist them in doing so.

This means we are helping governments to meet their obligations under international and domestic law to locate missing persons and investigate their disappearances, so that the rights of families of the missing, including the right to the truth, the right to justice and the right to reparations, are secured.

The priority is to help states build institutional, legal and technical frameworks to find large numbers of missing persons. This must be done in a manner that adheres to the rule of law, and in ICMP's decades of experience in different parts of the world, it will only be done successfully if families of the missing are front and center of the process.

Today, ICMP has programs in several regions where the scale and complexity of missing persons cases require immediate and coordinated responses.

In Ukraine, we are supporting the national authorities by deploying forensic experts, conducting DNA identifications at our laboratories in The Hague, and facilitating data coordination through ICMP's Integrated Data Management System (iDMS). ICMP has signed agreements with responsible ministries and state institutions and with CSOs, and has developed a five-year strategy to help the authorities develop an effective, long-term missing persons process. Since the end of 2022 it has been delivering training and providing equipment to forensic bureaus in the country and working with CSOs and family associations to help them develop an effective voice and play a central role in the process.

Since 2017, ICMP has been working to lay the groundwork for a missing persons process in Syria, collaborating with Syrian families of the missing, civil society organizations and international partners. This includes collecting data from Syrian families inside and outside Syria, and developing legislative proposals that can be implemented following the collapse of the Assad Regime. Following the fall of Damascus on 8 December 2024, ICMP is now working in Syria to help the country build its capacity to find hundreds of thousands of missing persons.

In collaboration with the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology and other institutions in Vietnam, ICMP is helping to develop advanced DNA identification techniques, as well as expanding domestic forensic capacity, establishing centralized data systems, and delivering specialized training.

In Iraq, ICMP is working closely with the authorities and families of the missing to develop effective strategies to locate all missing persons, regardless of the time period or the circumstances in which they went missing, as well as supporting legislative and institutional initiatives and delivering specialized training.

ICMP has helped the countries in the Western Balkans to account for more than 75 percent of the 40,000 people who went missing in the conflicts of the 1990s. This month's 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica

Genocide is a significant reminder of the importance of this work, which has underpinned efforts to secure justice and support reconciliation in the region.

ICMP is also monitoring emerging crises, in places such as Sudan and Gaza, where it can help account for the huge number of people who have disappeared.

### TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND EXPANDED CAPACITY

***How has the Hague lab expansion strengthened ICMP's capacity and future innovation?***

We're proud of our recently upgraded state-of-the-art DNA laboratories in The Hague, accredited under ISO 17025. Using advanced technologies such as Massively Parallel Sequencing (MPS) and Next Generation Sequencing (NGS), ICMP scientists can recover DNA from even the most compromised post-mortem samples. To date, more than 77,000 samples have been processed, delivering over 43,000 DNA matches. With a fully integrated operational structure, ICMP maintains a standing forensic capacity that can be rapidly deployed worldwide.

In Vietnam, a two-year project with the Institute of Biotechnology has introduced advanced DNA extraction and NGS capabilities to identify human remains from the Vietnam-American War, in some cases linking DNA across four generations.

ICMP's forensic archaeology and anthropology teams conduct site investigations, recovery and analysis of human remains, mortuary assessments, and complex case reviews combining DNA and anthropological expertise. Its Data Systems program develops global tools to manage large-scale missing persons data, while the Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning supports knowledge-sharing with families, forensic experts, and government officials.

### RULE OF LAW AND JUSTICE

***How are ICMP's efforts tied to justice and accountability?***

Missing persons is fundamentally a human rights issue, and states have a legal duty to investigate disappearances effectively.

Failure to do so breaches the rights of both the missing and their families. ICMP's mandate is anchored in advancing justice and strengthening the rule of law.

Working with governments, ICMP helps build legal frameworks that uphold families' rights. In Ukraine, its iDMS system supports data sharing on more than 70,000 missing individuals, aiding identifications and investigations. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, ICMP assists in developing mechanisms similar to the Western Balkans' regional cooperation model.

ICMP's DNA laboratories provide evidence used in international and domestic war crimes trials. Since 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Criminal Court has reinforced cooperation on missing persons cases.

Alongside this, ICMP empowers civil society and family associations through training and grants, ensuring that the search for the missing is not only humanitarian but also central to justice and accountability.

### PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

***How do partnerships support ICMP's work in different regions?***

Addressing the issue of missing persons requires collaboration. ICMP works with governments, civil society, and judicial bodies to implement its rights-based mandate. In 2016, it launched the Interagency Committee on Missing Persons (IAC) at the UN Security Council, bringing together organizations such as the EU, ICC, INTERPOL, IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF to develop joint solutions.

In the Western Balkans, ICMP supports regional cooperation through the Missing Persons Group, uniting institutions and families. In Iraq, partnerships with national authorities have led to the creation of a National Committee on Missing Persons and a central record, while civil society involvement has been strengthened.

ICMP also works in Latin America—including Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil—providing DNA expertise, data management support, and empowering families to play a central role.





## CAMEROON AT THE EMBASSY FESTIVAL 2025 CELEBRATING HERITAGE AND BUILDING BRIDGES

The Embassy of Cameroon in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the leadership of Her Excellency Mrs Liguemoh Ondoua Madeleine, is delighted to announce its participation in the Embassy Festival 2025 in The Hague. This marks the third consecutive edition of Cameroon's presence at this prestigious cultural event, which brings together nations from across the globe to showcase their diversity and heritage.

Our participation reflects a clear ambition: to use art and culture as a vibrant showcase of Cameroon's identity, while also highlighting economic opportunities that can strengthen bilateral relations with the Netherlands and beyond.

For this year's edition, Cameroon is proud to present a rich and colorful program:

- Gastronomy – A culinary journey led by renowned Chef Suzanne Ekwala, offering visitors a taste of Cameroon's unique and delicious flavors.



- Fashion – An elegant fusion of tradition and modernity with creations from acclaimed Cameroonian designers MboArts and Donatela Creations, presented by talented models from the diaspora.
- Performing Arts – A spectacular performance by the Ballet of the Cameroonian Diaspora (Paris), alongside the rhythms of the celebrated Djembe band Zamana, bringing the heartbeat of Cameroon to The Hague.

This year, Cameroon is also honored to welcome special guests: the Autonomous Port of Douala and the Urban City of Douala, two key institutions that embody the dynamism and strategic importance of Cameroon's economic and cultural capital.

Through this participation, Cameroon reaffirms its commitment to promoting its heritage, fostering cultural dialogue, and building stronger bridges of friendship and cooperation between nations.

## THE DOUALA AUTONOMOUS PORT (DAP): A RELIABLE AND AMBITIOUS ECONOMIC PLAYER



As a leading parastatal institution in Cameroon, the DAP is responsible for coordinating the management of services available in Douala-Bonaberi. It ensures the management, promotion, and marketing of the port. Located in the estuary of the Wouri River and opening onto the Atlantic Ocean, the Douala Port is organized into eleven geographical operating zones, including:

- A general cargo port
- A modernized container terminal
- A timber terminal
- A terminal

With a management approach focused on the triad of Performance, Attractiveness, and Competitiveness, the DAP is not only a catalyst for the competitiveness of the Cameroonian economy but also a powerful

engine for sub-regional development and an indispensable player. It is the logistics platform for the Gulf of Guinea, serving landlocked countries such as Chad and the Central African Republic.

To succeed in this mission and confirm its ambition, the port is developing, expanding, modernizing, and opening up to external partners. In this regard, the DAP is honored to participate in the Embassy Festival scheduled for September 6, 2025, in The Hague. The members of its delegation intend to take advantage of their stay to explore cooperation opportunities with Dutch partners and establish win-win partnerships in the following areas:

- Construction and maintenance of port infrastructure
- Dredging
- Port development
- International trade
- Drainage and sanitation, etc.

The Cameroonian Embassy in The Hague is available to provide any useful information to potential interested partners.

## THE DOUALA CITY COUNCIL: MAIN ECONOMIC HUB OF CAMEROON

As a decentralized public entity, the largest in Cameroon, the Douala City Council (DCC) manages, under the supervision of the State, local affairs with the aim of ensuring the economic, social, and cultural development of the city of Douala. Covering an area of 923 km<sup>2</sup>, the DCC has a population of 5,500,000 inhabitants, with a density of 5,959 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. It comprises divisional councils.

The DCC's responsibilities include:

- Urban planning and development
- Equipment and infrastructure of community interest
- Maintenance of main roads, signaling, public lighting, and drinking water supply
- Traffic and transportation

- Hygiene and sanitation
- Monitoring and control of industrial waste management
- Collection, removal, and treatment of household waste
- Cemeteries, etc.

A delegation from the DCC will participate with great interest in the Embassy Festival in The Hague. In addition to the various contacts that can be established on this occasion, they wish to build win-win partnerships in the areas of:

- Drain construction
- Sewerage and sanitation
- Industrial and household waste management and treatment
- Training programs and related financing



The Embassy welcomes this opportunity for cooperation not only with the City of The Hague but also with all competent individuals and structures in these areas. Douala is coming to you; open yourself to Douala for a mutually beneficial partnership.





# CONNECTING DIPLOMACY AND BUSINESS: EMIEL DE SEVRÉN JACQUET ON THE AMBASSADORS FORUM AND AMSTERDAM750

In a year marked by celebrations, the city of Amsterdam is preparing to commemorate its 750th anniversary with a series of landmark events. At the heart of these festivities is an exclusive diplomatic gathering hosted by the Ambassadors Forum Foundation, bringing together ambassadors from around the world and CEOs of leading Dutch enterprises.

To learn more about the mission behind this initiative, Diplomat Magazine sat down with Emiel de Sévrén Jacquet, Honorary Consul of Ukraine and Chairman of the Ambassadors Forum Foundation. An experienced connector between the diplomatic corps and the business community, Emiel shares his vision for promoting meaningful dialogue, international cooperation, and ensuring that Amsterdam takes its place not only as a historic capital but also as a dynamic platform for global engagement.

In this exclusive interview, Emiel discusses the Foundation's role, the highlights of the upcoming event at the Maritime Museum in the beginning of July, and

how ambassadors can benefit from direct engagement with the Netherlands' most influential business leaders.

## INTERVIEW: ABOUT THE AMBASSADORS FORUM FOUNDATION & THE 750TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION IN AMSTERDAM

*Could you share the vision and mission of the Ambassadors Forum Foundation and how it serves the diplomatic community in the Netherlands?*

Our mission is to strengthen the connection between ambassadors and the C-suite

of leading Dutch organizations. We aim to enhance international cooperation in trade, economic development, science, and culture.

*What inspired you to establish the foundation?*

As you know, the Netherlands has always been a nation of traders, with long-standing trade relations across the globe. In today's turbulent times, marked by shifting trade dynamics and geopolitical tensions, the ties between countries and companies have become increasingly vital.

Both diplomats and CEOs rotate regularly, which often leads to the loss of established connections and makes it challenging to maintain consistent relationships between diplomatic missions and corporate leaders. We noticed that many ambassadors and CEOs had a mutual desire to connect with one another. We want to facilitate and stimulate those crucial interactions.

*Which companies are part of your advisory committees or act as sponsors?*

We have a diverse and influential advisory committee, including the CEOs of Heineken, ING, KLM, and Philips—icons of Dutch business. Other members include the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, former Prime Minister, the King's Commissioner, the Commander of the Armed Forces, and the Director of the Van Gogh Museum, among others. Our founding partners are ING Bank, McKinsey & Company, De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek, and FGS Global.

*The Ambassadors Forum Foundation is organizing a prestigious gathering at the Maritime Museum in Amsterdam in early July. What makes this event special, and what are the key highlights?*

This will be a truly unique event in a very special year—Amsterdam's 750th anniversary. We are bringing together around 80 ambassadors and 100 prominent CEOs for an exceptional afternoon on the terrace of the Maritime Museum, next to a life-size replica of a historic VOC ship.

The event emphasizes active introductions—connecting CEOs and ambassadors directly to promote international cooperation. There will be fantastic speeches by Dilan Yeşilgöz, Leader of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Fabricio Bloisi, CEO of Prosus, the largest tech investor

in the world and Christiaan Rebergen, Secretary General Ministry of Foreign Affairs however the main goal is to foster meaningful and productive interactions.

*How has the response been so far, and how does the Foundation strengthen ties between diplomats and Dutch stakeholders?*

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of ambassadors and a large number of industry leaders already confirmed. In these uncertain times, people increasingly recognize the importance of international connections. With geopolitical shifts and growing trade challenges, many companies are looking to diversify their markets, and countries are seeking new alliances. Diplomats play a pivotal role in facilitating these efforts.

*Why is the event taking place in Amsterdam?*

The Netherlands has a somewhat unique situation in that the capital is not the seat of government. Much of the diplomatic activity happens within what we call "The Hague bubble." We want to ensure ambassadors feel equally welcomed in Amsterdam and can experience the best the city has to offer.

That's why our program has two parts. After the gathering at the Maritime Museum, ambassadors will enjoy a 45-minute tour on vintage salon boats through Amsterdam's iconic canals. The evening will conclude at the prominent terrace of 5\* Hotel De L'Europe, where more prominent guests will join us for drinks and food prepared by the hotel's Michelin-starred chef.

*Is the Ambassadors Forum the only event the Foundation organizes?*

No, this is just the beginning. We plan to organize several more events throughout the year. For example, early next year, following the New Year's reception at the Royal Palace, we will host a lunch at a nearby location just across from the palace.

*How does the Ambassadors Forum Foundation assist diplomats?*

We actively support diplomats by facilitating introductions to companies, NGOs, organizations, and key individuals. We also advocate on behalf of the diplomatic community by addressing relevant topics with (government) stakeholders and



offering advice across various domains. Thanks to our extensive network, we can often help diplomats navigate the Dutch business and legal landscape more effectively.

## ENGAGING THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY

*How do you envision this event benefiting the ambassadors who attend?*

Ambassadors will have a productive and efficient day with a great opportunity to directly engage with top industrial leaders in the Netherlands and build valuable new relationships.

*What message would you like to convey to diplomatic missions about this event?*

We encourage diplomatic missions to research which (corporate) representatives they'd like to meet. This event offers a unique chance to exchange details and schedule follow-up meetings for more in-depth discussions.

*How does the Foundation plan to maintain long-term engagement with ambassadors?*

The Ambassadors Forum Foundation will continue playing an active role in connecting the Dutch business community with diplomatic missions by organizing events and seminars year-round. We are always available to provide advice and introductions. In partnership with Diplomat Magazine, we can also inform a wide readership and highlight issues relevant to the diplomatic community.

## THE NETHERLANDS AS A HUB FOR DIPLOMACY & BUSINESS

*From your perspective, what makes the Netherlands an attractive hub for diplomatic relations and international business?*

The Netherlands is highly attractive due to its strategic location, stable political and economic environment, business-friendly climate, multilingual and well-educated workforce, and the presence of numerous international institutions.

*What are some key challenges and opportunities in strengthening ties between diplomats and the Dutch business community?*

While the opportunities outweigh the challenges, there are still some barriers. A typical challenge lies in the difference in objectives and organizational cultures: diplomats focus on political, economic, and cultural relations, whereas businesses prioritize profit, market access, and stakeholder returns. This can make alignment difficult, especially when diplomatic caution contrasts with business urgency.

On the other hand, economic diplomacy offers a tremendous opportunity. Diplomats can facilitate market entry, provide access to key contacts, and help navigate complex regulatory landscapes. Furthermore, in volatile regions, diplomatic networks can support businesses by offering risk mitigation and crisis navigation.

For more information about the Ambassadors Forum (AMFOR) please visit [www.amfor.nl](http://www.amfor.nl)





# WHY DESTROY WHEN WE CAN BUILD?

By Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal, CEO, Common Fund for Commodities

THE MATH IS SIMPLE:  
WAR = POVERTY \ INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE = PROSPERITY

I write this from The Hague—a city whose very cobblestones echo with the footsteps of diplomats, jurists, and dreamers who believed that peace is not an ideal, but a duty. The same city where, over a century ago, nations gathered not to plan wars, but to prevent them.

Today, as we weigh missiles against medicine, we might recall the haunting words posed to a soldier in an ancient tale: “If all are killed, who do you serve?”

Defence budgets are reaching historic highs, yet so too are poverty, hunger, and social inequality. The question is not whether nations have the right to defend themselves—it is whether the world can afford the cost of doing so in a way that erodes the very foundations of human dignity.

As bombs are prioritized over bread, tanks over teachers, and drones over doctors, we must ask: are we protecting our societies, or impoverishing them?

## STAGGERING DISPARITIES

In 2024, NATO’s overall military spending rose by 11%, with European members increasing their budgets by 19%. Meanwhile, critical infrastructure crumbles. Germany is committing 2% of its GDP to defence even as 40% of its schools lack heating and digital tools. France allocates €50 billion to its military while 20,000 people sleep rough on the streets of Paris.

Globally, military expenditures have soared to an eye-watering \$2.7 trillion per year—enough to fund the entire UN system for 75 years. The United States alone accounts for 37% of this, while Russia and Ukraine dedicate 7.1% and 34% of their GDPs respectively to military budgets. These figures are not just unsustainable—they are unjust.

In the Global South, the consequences are even more dire. Many developing countries now spend twice as much on defence as on

healthcare. Ethiopia, for example, allocates 17% of its government budget to military spending and just 1% to health. These are not statistics—they are choices that sacrifice futures.

## WEAPONS OVER WELLBEING

The opportunity costs are devastating. One modern heavy bomber costs as much as:  
· Building 30 schools  
· Powering two towns  
· Equipping two fully operational hospitals  
The war in Afghanistan has already cost the U.S. over \$2 trillion, much of it in long-term liabilities like veterans’ care and debt interest. And still, the cycle of violence continues.

For every €1 invested in peacebuilding, the world spends €16 on war. We are allocating 200 times more to armies than to conflict prevention.

## AN INVESTMENT IN JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

At the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), we see daily how small investments can transform lives. Over the past three years, we have received 873 viable project proposals requesting \$770 million—initiatives that could lift communities out of poverty through sustainable agriculture, inclusive finance, and climate-resilient development.

We were able to fund just 6% of them.

The shortfall represents just 0.06% of NATO’s annual budget—a rounding error for global security alliances, yet a lifeline for millions.

With similar modest reallocations:  
· \$13 billion could provide clean water and sanitation to 100 million people  
· \$5 billion could fund universal primary education in 20 developing nations  
· \$500 million could create 2.6 million green jobs

And it’s not just the Global South that would benefit. Germany’s schools require \$50 billion in upgrades—just two years’ worth of its new defence spending. France could resolve its housing crisis with a fifth of its military budget. The dividends of peace are local as well as global.

## TOWARD A NEW PEACE COMPACT

The current trajectory is not inevitable—it is a choice. A better path exists:

1. Launch a NATO Peace Dividend Initiative, earmarking at least 1% of defence budgets for development.
2. Create a Hague-based accountability mechanism to track defence spending versus human development outcomes.
3. Establish binding national commitments that no country spends more on military than on education and healthcare individually, not combined.

## SECURITY ROOTED IN DIGNITY

True security is not measured in missiles or military drills—it is measured in children who are fed, schools that are built, jobs that sustain dignity, and communities that thrive.

Let us not confuse deterrence with development. Let us not conflate security with superiority. The world does not need more weapons. It needs more wisdom.

As stewards of peace, we must ask: Why destroy when we can build? Why rob dignity, when we can restore it?

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Common Fund for Commodities or any affiliated institution



# A VISIONARY OF TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

INTERVIEW WITH MR. THEODOSSIOS GEORGIOU, PRESIDENT OF THE ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION (ATA)

On June 24–25, The Hague hosted the NATO Summit. Heads of state and government from all NATO member countries, along with their partners, gathered in the homeland of NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte to discuss and decide on the Alliance’s future course. In parallel, the NATO Summit Public Forum took place—a high-level event with around 200 participants, including politicians, diplomats, military officials, academics, and young scholars, all of whom engaged directly with the leaders attending the Summit. The NATO Public Forum provided an open platform for discussion and debate around the key themes of NATO’s Summit.

Among the key invitees were representatives of the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA). A large delegation—comprised of former

ministers, ambassadors, senior military leaders, academics, and students—was led by the Greek President of the Association, Mr. Theodossios Georgiou. We asked Mr. Georgiou, elected twice as President of ATA, to speak to us about the role of the ATA, the Alliance’s current priorities, and the importance of transatlantic cooperation.

## Q: What have been your key priorities as ATA President?

Georgiou: My work has centered around three pillars:  
First, increasing public awareness of NATO and the ATA—especially among youth. With war once again on European soil, it’s critical that younger generations grasp the importance of defending democratic values.



Second, amplifying the voices of our national associations. They offer insights from civil society that are often overlooked but essential for sound policymaking. Third, expanding partnerships beyond the traditional sphere. Ensuring peace and stability is not the job of governments alone—it requires academic, civic, and institutional cooperation. NATO is everyone’s business.

**Q: Why is public support so important for NATO?**

Georgiou: In democratic systems, public legitimacy is the foundation of every institution. NATO must not only deliver security—it must also explain and justify its mission to the public. Citizens need to understand how the Alliance protects their daily lives, ensures peace, and promotes international collaboration.

**Q: What message would you give to young people today?**

Georgiou: Young people are the future of the Alliance. Many of them have grown up in a world where democracy and freedom are taken for granted. But these values require constant vigilance. My message to youth is simple: Get involved. Participate. Your ideas and vision are essential. Without your energy and innovation, no institution—NATO included—can remain relevant or strong.

**Q: You’ve had an extensive international presence. What experiences stand out?**

Georgiou: I’ve been fortunate to represent the ATA in over 30 countries—from Sweden and Hungary to Portugal and Albania. Each visit reinforced the importance of people-to-people engagement. I’ve spoken at conferences, met heads of state, and worked with faith leaders, including His Holiness the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch. I’ve also visited key NATO facilities—SHAPE in Mons, SACLANT in Norfolk, the NATO Defense College in Rome—and mission zones such as SFOR in Sarajevo and KFOR in Pristina. These experiences brought me closer to the Alliance’s operational and strategic core.

**Q: How did your journey with the ATA begin?**

Georgiou: It began in 1978 with the Atlantic Association of Young Political Leaders. My

first major event was a 1979 conference in Washington, attended by President Jimmy Carter. From that moment, I was fully committed. In Greece, I helped reinvigorate national involvement by founding the Greek Association for Atlantic and European Cooperation. We hosted two General Assemblies in Athens (1993 and 2006) and NATO’s 50th anniversary event in 1999. That celebration brought together ministers from 14 countries and senior international officials. I was proud to be elected twice President of ATA in 1997-2000 and in 2023-2026. One memorable moment was our 1999 General Assembly in Strasbourg, for the 50th NATO Anniversary. French President Jacques Chirac chose our forum to present France’s strategic position on European security. More recently, in December 2024, 75th Anniversary, at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the new Deputy Secretary General, Radmila Šekerinska, gave her first speech during an ATA event. Being President of these milestones fills me with pride.

**Q: Where is the ATA heading next?**

Georgiou: The ATA is adapting to new realities. We revised our Constitution a year and a half ago, and it’s now officially published in the Belgian Government Gazette. We’re operating under a new roadmap and strategic vision. Just recently, we finalized a major internal reform process. It included creating thematic working committees to boost participation and foster joint initiatives. This was the result of long, sometimes exhausting consultations—but it was worth it. We now have a stronger, more agile platform for action. I firmly believe in dialogue—the Greek word ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΣ -DIALOGUE. It is the only true power that can prevent conflict and build peace.

**Q: Finally, what is your personal message for the Alliance’s future?**

Georgiou: NATO has endured and evolved for 75 years. It remains the backbone of our collective security. The ATA will continue to be its civil society partner—connecting people to policy, translating strategy into values, and building bridges across borders and generations. The future of the Alliance lies not only in institutions—but in the hands of the people it protects. Especially the next generation.

PERU MARKS 204 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE AND 200 YEARS OF TIES WITH THE NETHERLANDS

By Pietro Proglio

H.E. Ambassador Franca Lorella Deza Ferreccio hosted a vibrant reception in the gardens of the Peruvian Residence in The Hague to mark Peru’s 204th Independence Day and the bicentennial of diplomatic relations with the Netherlands.



The event gathered ambassadors, Dutch officials, representatives of international organizations, academia, and the Peruvian community. Distinguished guests included The Hague’s Mayor Jan van Zanen, Mrs. Marjan Kamstra of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias, PCA Secretary-General Marcin Czepelak, Judge Luz del Carmen Ibáñez Carranza, as well as former Dutch ambassadors to Peru.

In her remarks, Ambassador Deza Ferreccio reflected on two centuries of friendship: “Two hundred years ago, in 1825, our nations began a path of cooperation and respect that has endured through time.”

She praised the Peruvian diaspora as “Peru’s daily ambassadors,” contributing to both Dutch society and Peru itself through art, science, business, and culture. Looking ahead, she expressed hope that the bicentennial would mark “a new chapter of even deeper, more innovative, and more human cooperation.”

Mrs. Kamstra emphasized shared values, noting: “Our countries are close allies when it comes to the promotion of democracy and the rules-based international order,” while also highlighting cooperation on global challenges such as organized crime and drug trafficking. Mayor Van Zanen, addressing guests in Spanish, recalled his personal ties to Peru, with visits spanning back nearly 25 years, and praised ongoing cultural exchanges such as the Touched by Nature exhibition in The Hague.

Guests enjoyed Peru’s rich gastronomy—from ceviche and lomo saltado to the famed pisco sour—alongside an exhibition and a commemorative stamp celebrating 200 years of bilateral relations. The reception was a warm display of Peruvian culture and hospitality, underscoring two centuries of enduring partnership with the Netherlands.



Their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands welcomed ambassadors and heads of international organizations to the Annual Diplomatic Gala Dinner, traditionally held in the stately Citizens’ Hall of the Royal Palace of Amsterdam.

This long-standing tradition is a hallmark of the Dutch monarchy’s engagement with the diplomatic community, offering a moment of reflection, celebration, and renewed commitment to the values of peace, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation. In 2022, Dutch government representatives joined the ambassadors as special guests.

In 2023, the evening spotlighted scientists and researchers. Last year, it was dedicated to innovative entrepreneurs. This year, ambassadors were paired with leading figures from the world of art and culture—artists, musicians, writers, performers, architects, designers, heritage experts, and museum directors.

In his address, King Willem-Alexander warmly welcomed the international community and reflected on the richness of cultural exchange, affirming the Netherlands’ support for international engagement and cooperation.

“Relations with other countries and peoples near and far made a large contribution to the growth and prosperity of Amsterdam and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The international orientation of our open society and economy is one of the Netherlands’ biggest strengths. You represent the many countries we share ties with today. And we greatly value your presence. The world we all live in is changing fast. Long-standing rules and agreements are under pressure. Increasingly, healthy competition

ROYAL ANNUAL RECEPTION HONORS THE POWER OF CULTURE AND CONNECTION  
 ROYAL PALACE OF AMSTERDAM | MAY 2025

is turning into bitter rivalry. And sadly, tensions and conflicts are disrupting the lives of millions of people.

Our hearts go out to the victims of violence in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan, and other troubled regions.

The future is unpredictable. In these turbulent times, the Netherlands is working to promote stability and security, prosperity and good governance. Everyone — all around the world — wants the same basic things: a decent life for themselves and their loved ones. Food on the table. A strong economy. Security and healthcare. Effective governance. That’s the only way people can build successful lives in their own countries. Everyone needs socioeconomic security and prospects for the future.” It is with that conviction that the Netherlands seeks cooperation with partners,” the King remarked

His Majesty spoke of Dutch reputation in the field of food production, water management, healthcare and sustainable energy. and addressed the international representatives “The unifying role you play as diplomats is crucial. And the significance of your work has only increased as global tensions have risen.” This year’s Diplomatic Gala Dinner highlighted our shared humanity and the timeless ties forged through beauty, art, diplomacy, and cultural dialogue. In a world often divided by difference, the evening offered a compelling reminder of what unites us.

**“Eendracht maakt macht — unity makes strength.”**

Speaking on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E. Ms. Sahar Ghanem, Ambassador of Yemen and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, delivered a stirring address: “Your hospitality reflects the importance you place on diplomacy and the vital role diplomats play in fostering international understanding and cooperation,” Ambassador Ghanem said, expressing collective gratitude to Their Majesties. Reflecting on the symbolic grandeur of the Royal Palace, the ambassador shared with warmth and humor : “ I must admit that on more than one occasion, I secretly wished

that royal receptions would be held in The Hague instead. But definitely not tonight!

She then turned to the deeper theme of the evening: the enduring power of art and culture as universal languages “Viewed through the lens of culture, our world resembles a vast mosaic. No two pieces are the same, yet each one complements the other, contributing to a stunning and harmonious whole,” praising the Netherlands as a living example of cultural blending and innovation. Drawing from history, she referenced the VOC-era import of Chinese porcelain, which evolved into the iconic Dutch Blue Delft, and the transformation of Turkish tulips into a national symbol.

Ambassador Ghanem shared a deeply touching personal story about her mother: “Would Johannes Vermeer have ever expected that a woman from a faraway country called Yemen would one day dream of visiting the Netherlands because of his masterpiece Girl with a Pearl Earring? Today, that woman’s daughter is standing before you as the ambassador of that far country to the very Netherlands her mother always longed to visit! ”

Addressing the impact of modern technology, Ambassador Ghanem acknowledged the opportunities digital platforms offer for global cultural exchange but also issued a gentle warning, quoting a viral social media post: “I want AI to do my laundry and dishes so that I can do art and writing—not for AI to do my art and writing so that I can do my laundry and dishes!”

The comment underscored the need to strike a balance between technological progress and the preservation of human creativity and imagination—a shared responsibility for diplomats, artists, policymakers, and innovators alike.

In closing her speech, Ambassador Ghanem addressed Queen Máxima directly with warm and gracious birthday wishes, “May your day be filled with cherished moments with those you hold dear, and may your distinguished grace and charm continue to shine year after year” and invited the assembled guests to raise their glasses: “To peace, love, and prosperity—cheers.”





## AMBASSADOR TERAN PARRAL: A STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE OPCW

Ambassador Teran Parral of Ecuador brings over 42 years of diplomatic experience to his role at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including his time as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. His vision for the OPCW focuses on strengthening cooperation, modernizing operations, and preventing the use of chemical weapons in any form.

"I am fully committed to the complete eradication of chemical weapons and to preventing their re-emergence," said Ambassador Parral. "This includes close cooperation with key States, particularly the Syrian Arab Republic, and ensuring strong, independent investigations into recent allegations."

Among his key goals is leading investigations into the alleged use of riot control agents and other banned substances in Russia and Ukraine. "These cases must be addressed thoroughly and in full alignment with the Chemical Weapons Convention," he stated. Ambassador Parral also supports ongoing legacy operations, including the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons in China and old stockpiles in Germany. In addition, he highlights the need to help countries respond effectively to chemical emergencies. "Capacity-building is essential," he said. "We must improve training, protection measures, and technical assistance, especially for developing nations."

Another central part of his vision is the use of new technologies to improve the OPCW's work. "Modernizing the verification regime is vital. I will promote a more regular system of inspections and the use of emerging tools, including Artificial Intelligence, to improve efficiency and effectiveness at the Technical Secretariat."

He also believes the OPCW should be more open and engaged with the public. "I want to make the OPCW more visible and transparent through public diplomacy. We must communicate clearly about our technical and impartial work." This outreach is not only about visibility—it is also meant to increase voluntary contributions and encourage more participation from a wider range of countries. "We need to improve how we recruit, ensuring gender balance and regional diversity," he added.

Ambassador Parral's leadership is based on openness, innovation, and inclusion. "My goal is to help strengthen cooperation with States Parties and build mutual trust. This is how we will protect future generations from the threat of chemical weapons."

Ecuador, a founding member of the OPCW, has a long record of supporting disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Ecuador chaired the 1540 Committee, addressing the risks related to the spread of weapons of mass destruction. "I carry with me Ecuador's strong commitment to multilateralism and peace. We see the OPCW as a key part of global security and disarmament, and I am proud to contribute to that mission," concluded Ambassador Parral.

*Here you have some questions to help expanding the article, choose one, two or more.*

1. As a member of the OPCW Executive Council and GRULAC representative, how do you see regional cooperation evolving under your leadership?
2. What inspired your candidacy for Director-General at this critical time for global chemical disarmament?
3. One of your key priorities is strengthening cooperation with States like Syria. How do you plan to navigate such diplomatically sensitive partnerships while upholding the OPCW's mandate?
4. You have proposed comprehensive investigations into chemical agents used in conflict zones, including Ukraine and Russia. What mechanisms will ensure these inquiries remain impartial and credible?
5. What new programs or partnerships do you envision to enhance response capabilities globally, improve training, protection, and technical assistance worldwide?
6. Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies are part of your modernization plan. How do you foresee these tools changing the OPCW's verification and inspection processes?
7. Public diplomacy is a key aspect of your vision. What steps will you take to make the OPCW more visible and accessible to the global public?
8. Having chaired the 1540 Committee at the UN Security Council, how has that experience shaped your perspective on global disarmament and the OPCW's role?

## AMBASSADOR ARNOLDO BRENES CASTRO: COSTA RICA'S VISIONARY CANDIDATE FOR THE OPCW DIRECTOR-GENERAL



Amid rising geopolitical tensions and ongoing threats from chemical weapons, strong and principled leadership at the OPCW is more vital than ever. The Government of Costa Rica has nominated Ambassador Arnaldo Brenes Castro, a candidate who reflects the nation's enduring commitment to peace, the rule of law, and disarmament.

"I am honored to be presented by Costa Rica for the role of Director-General of the OPCW. With a 30-year career in diplomacy, disarmament, and legal affairs, and a deep belief in the Rule of Law and global cooperation, I am prepared to lead the OPCW with vision and integrity." - H.E. Arnaldo Brenes Castro

A Nation of Peace, a Candidate of Principles Costa Rica, Latin America's oldest democracy, abolished its military in 1948 and declared permanent neutrality in 1983—the only country in the region to do so.

"Costa Rica proves that peace and disarmament are possible when dialogue, diplomacy, and multilateralism are prioritized," notes Ambassador Arnaldo Brenes Castro.

Host to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the UN University for Peace, Costa Rica is a global advocate for conflict resolution. Ambassador Brenes, serving in the Netherlands since 2020, embodies this tradition. His candidacy for OPCW Director-General reflects a lifelong dedication to disarmament and international law.

### *A Career Forged in Diplomacy and Law*

Ambassador Brenes Castro's path mirrors Costa Rica's ideals, forging his unique leadership skills. Educated in law at the University of Costa Rica, he pursued further

academic specialization in Human Rights Theory and Practice at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom.

In 1995, he joined the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, serving as Coordinator of the Security and Demilitarization Program, through which non-military security policies were promoted across Central America and Africa. His work on demilitarization, captured in publications such as *The Leadership Challenges of Demilitarization in Africa* and *Soldiers as Businessmen: The Economic Activities of Central America's Militaries*, remains influential.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, he held roles of critical importance since the year 2000. In the wake of 9/11, he spearheaded the creation of Costa Rica's Inter-Institutional Commission against Terrorism, aligning national legislation with UN Security Council resolutions and international conventions. He also trained at the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies of the U.S. National Defense University, further honing his skills in defense planning and inter-agency coordination for fighting terrorism.

During a time span of two decades, Ambassador Brenes was Advisor to nine Ministers of Foreign Affairs, served as Coordinator of International Litigations and Counsel and Advocate in six major cases before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and negotiated a landmark maritime delimitation treaty with Ecuador,

among other achievements. His leadership in extending Costa Rica's continental shelf through a joint submission with Ecuador to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, highlights his diplomatic acumen and legal expertise.

To date Ambassador Brenes has worked for the last seven Costa Rican governments, originating from four different political parties. "I was privileged to be honoured with the trust of several Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Presidents, and I believe this was possible because I am perceived as a just person, deeply committed to the same principles and values that I have brought forth to my current post of Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to several international organizations, including the OPCW.

### *International Credentials and Affiliations*

Since starting his post in 2020, Ambassador Brenes Castro has long engaged with the multilateral system in The Hague, including work with the International Criminal Court and the OPCW. He has also been actively participating in the Inter-State Working Group to Advance Proposals for International Criminal Accountability for Chemical Weapons Use, reflecting his deep commitment to justice and the Rule of Law. His distinguished affiliations include:

- Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (appointed in 2019, renewed in 2025)
- Knight of Magistral Grace of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta
- Associate at the Instituto Hispano-Luso-Americano de Derecho Internacional

### *A Vision for the OPCW*

"Costa Rica's commitment to the Rule of Law and peacebuilding influenced my academic and professional path. I am convinced that my roots and my background can bring a positive imprint to my leadership role as Director-General of the OPCW." Should he be elected, Ambassador Brenes Castro pledges to lead the OPCW with impartiality, unity, purpose, and unwavering dedication. Besides following up on the strengthening of the Chem-Tec Centre, as well as continuing the on-going work in Syria and Ukraine, he plans to:

- Emphasize inclusive diplomacy, ensuring that the OPCW remains a trusted multilateral body responsive to all its Member States.



- Warrant that the organisation's Technical Secretariat incorporates AI and other emerging technologies in its various fields of work, with a special emphasis on the verification regime; to achieve this, the organization should develop its own in-house capacity, thereby ensuring both the ability to stay up to date with the unprecedented speed in technological progress, while ensuring that protected information is safely handled.
- Bolster the organization's verification frameworks to meet evolving challenges.
- Through cooperation initiatives, work with all Member States to warrant that internal legislation and procedures, are fully adopted for the proper domestic implementation of the obligations derived from Chemical Weapons Convention by all Member States, as well as delivering training and other capacity building initiatives.
- Promote transparency and public engagement, increasing international awareness on the dangers of chemical weapons, as well as on the relevance of the OPCW and its work, and the unique role it plays in contributing to make the world safer.
- Foster collaboration with other international institutions to reinforce the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime, as well as to explore additional sources of funding.
- Continue the efforts to achieve gender balance and a broad and equitable geographical basis within the Technical Secretariat, while seeking the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.
- Strive to achieve full universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

As the OPCW prepares for a new chapter, Costa Rica offers a proven leader shaped by history, forged in international law, and guided by a profound belief in peace, dialogue and multilateral cooperation.

"We must all be extremely proud of the OPCW and its achievements up to date. The world is definitely a better place because of its existence and the work it does. There is in fact no other organization like it. But there are important challenges ahead, many of which require dialogue and diplomacy, grounded in deeply rooted principles. I am ready to lead the OPCW forward—guided by the values of impartiality, efficiency, and dedication to bring forth a safer world."

# X DIPLOMATS BIKING SPREE

BY DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE

Pedaling into diplomacy, discovering The Hague's surroundings, and enjoying a classic Dutch Saturday — this was the spirit of the X annual Biking Spree for Diplomats, organized by Diplomat Magazine. Despite the summer holidays, the event gathered enthusiastic ambassadors and diplomats from Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Ireland, Palestine, the Philippines, Spain, Uruguay, the United States, and Venezuela.

The Biking Spree is a unique tradition that combines eco-friendly transportation, healthy living, and informal networking on two wheels. On Saturday, 16 August 2025, participants gathered at the Leonardo Royal Hotel The Hague, where they enjoyed coffee and friendly conversations before setting off. Led by Emma Stubbe of the Dutch Cycling Embassy, the group cycled through scenic dunes and along the route to Kijkduin, exploring The Hague's charming landscapes.

This year's edition was made possible through the collaboration of Diplomat Magazine, the Dutch Cycling Embassy, and Leonardo Royal Hotel The Hague. Dr. Mayelinne De Lara, Publisher of Diplomat Magazine, emphasized the importance of the event:

"Biking is a fundamental part of the Dutch experience. This activity not only promotes healthy living but also combines informal diplomacy with sustainability and cultural immersion."

Along the way, Emma Stubbe introduced the mission of the Dutch Cycling Embassy, which works worldwide to help cities design safe, functional, and enjoyable cycling infrastructure inspired by Dutch expertise. She also explained the fascinating history of cycling in the Netherlands and how bicycles became deeply integrated into daily life. At every stop, participants learned about the infrastructure developed to encourage cycling — including the new facilities in Kijkduin.

By around 2:00 p.m., the group returned to the Leonardo Royal Hotel. Diplomats gradually left the ride at the points closest to their homes, marking the end of a memorable day of cycling, learning, and connection.

The X Diplomats Biking Spree once again proved to be a joyful highlight in The Hague's diplomatic calendar. We look forward to an even larger group joining us next year 11th Diplomats Biking Spree.



Photo: Kim Vermaat Photography

# JOINTLY OPENING A NEW CHAPTER IN CHINA-EU RELATIONS

## MORE RESILIENT, AUTONOMOUS, MATURE, AND FORWARD-LOOKING FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS

By H.E. Jian Tan, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union. Over the past half-century, the China-EU relationship has weathered storms and overcome challenges, growing increasingly mature and stable. It has become one of the most influential bilateral relationships in the world. Our fruitful exchanges and cooperation have delivered tangible benefits to nearly 2 billion people, set an example of mutually beneficial collaboration in an era of economic globalization, and made significant contributions to global peace and development. China and the EU have not only achieved mutual success but also benefited the whole world.

At present, China-EU relations are at a crucial juncture—building on past achievements and paving the way for the future. A key lesson from our experience is the importance of mutual respect, seeking common ground while reserving differences, openness and cooperation, and win-win outcomes.

On July 24, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with President of the European Council Antonio Costa and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in Beijing for the 25th China-EU Summit. The more complex and severe the international situation becomes, the more China and the EU must enhance communication, build mutual trust, and deepen cooperation. Both sides are constructive forces advocating multilateralism and open cooperation. As two major forces for multipolarity, two major markets supporting globalization, and two great civilizations upholding diversity, the timing of this summit is of great significance.

China remains the only major country to have established a comprehensive cooperation framework with the EU, led by summit-level engagement and supported by high-level dialogues in strategic, economic and trade, environment and climate, digital, and people-to-people areas. China has

always viewed and developed its relations with the EU from a strategic and long-term perspective, seeing Europe as a key pole in a multipolar world, and consistently supporting European integration and the EU's strategic autonomy. The challenges facing Europe today do not stem from China. There are no fundamental conflicts of interest or geopolitical rivalry between China and the EU. Cooperation outweighs competition, and consensus outweighs differences—this fundamental tone has not changed.

China and the EU are the world's second- and third-largest economies, accounting for over one-third of global GDP and more than one-quarter of global trade. Our economic and trade relations are inherently complementary and mutually beneficial. History and reality prove that interdependence is not a risk, and intertwined interests are not a threat. Competitiveness should not be built by erecting walls or barriers. Decoupling and supply chains disruption will only lead to self-isolation, and "de-risking" must not mean reducing cooperation. China's high-quality development and high-level opening-up will bring new opportunities and space for China-EU cooperation. Facing major choices between war and peace, competition and cooperation, isolation and openness, the right answer

lies in multilateralism and solidarity. China's policy in international affairs is based on facts and principles. We advocate for peaceful resolution of disputes through political means and dialogue. China and the EU should jointly support political solutions to international crises and promote both short- and long-term approaches to maintain the international order and rules established after World War II. Together, we should work toward a more just and equitable global governance system and address global challenges such as climate change, keeping the torch of multilateralism lit for the progress of humanity.

China is a peace-loving nation that values harmony, inclusiveness, cooperation, and win-win outcomes. Judging China from western perspectives could mislead. While China and the EU differ in history, culture, systems, and stages of development, these differences have not hindered the establishment and growth of our relations, nor should they become obstacles in the future. We hope the EU will respect the development path and system chosen by the Chinese people, respect China's core interests and major concerns. China-EU relations are not targeted at, dependent on, or controlled by any third party. The two sides should deepen strategic communication, enhance understanding and trust, and foster accurate mutual perceptions.

As a founding member and key pillar of the European Union, the Netherlands has long been a strong advocate for an "open Europe" and a vital gateway for China-Europe cooperation. While China and the Netherlands differ in political systems and cultural traditions, both peoples share a spirit of innovation, perseverance, and the courage to forge ahead.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China and the Netherlands



have consistently upheld the principles of openness and pragmatism. The two countries have long stood at the forefront of China-EU cooperation. For several consecutive years, bilateral trade has surpassed 100 billion U.S. dollars, making the Netherlands China's second-largest trading partner within the EU. Likewise, China is the Netherlands' second-largest trading partner outside the EU. The Netherlands is also China's top investment destination in the EU and the second-largest EU source of investment in China. Bilateral cooperation in agriculture, water management, green energy, and digital economy has achieved fruitful outcomes, fully demonstrating the resilience and vitality of China-Netherlands relations.

In 2014, President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to the Netherlands, during which the two countries established an open and pragmatic partnership for comprehensive cooperation. In recent years, our bilateral relations have continued to grow. Today, unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonism are posing serious challenges to the international trading system and eroding the multilateral institutional framework. The Netherlands has long been a staunch supporter of free trade and a firm advocate of multilateralism on the global stage. China stands ready to strengthen communication, deepen pragmatic cooperation, and expand multilateral collaboration with the Netherlands. Together, the two countries can further unlock the potential of their open and pragmatic comprehensive partnership—delivering greater benefits to both peoples and contributing to the broader advancement of China-Europe relations.

Looking back and looking ahead, in the face of a fast-changing world shaped by profound transformation and uncertainty, China and the EU should remain committed to their comprehensive strategic partnership, uphold the correct direction of development, and make strategic decisions that meet the expectations of their people and stand the test of history. Together, let us bring the world greater stability and certainty, and open a new era of more resilient, autonomous, mature, and forward-looking relations over the next 50 years.



## GHANA @68: CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN GHANA AND THE NETHERLANDS

By H.E. Mr. Francis Danti Kotia, Ambassador of the Republic of Ghana to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

As Ghana attained its 68th Independence Anniversary in March 2025, it is important to take stock of Ghana-Netherlands relations and to preview areas of future focused cooperation between the two Countries. Ghana's relations with the Netherlands dates as far back as 1593 when the first Dutchman Bernard Ericzoon set foot on Ghanaian soil. At the time the Dutch were amongst a group of European explorers who had sailed to the coast of Africa in search of resources that will interestingly finance the all-important movement that came to be known as the Renaissance in Europe. Ghana then known as the Gold Coast was endowed with a bountiful supply of Gold which gave Dutch explorers a reason to mark their territory in West Africa by putting up forts and dungeons in Elmina to consolidate their military position in a strategically lucrative part of the African continent.

These forts will later be used as the assembly point for enslaved Africans who were to be transported to the new world as commodities in what came to be known as the Transatlantic Slave trade. Over the years, the commercial relations between Ghana and the Netherlands have evolved

from an aura of darkness and shame to a stage of equity, fairness, mutual benefit undergirded by humanitarian principles.

The major sectors in Ghana that are beneficiaries of Dutch support are in the domain of health, transportation, water

and sanitation as well as agriculture. Ghana indeed has been one of the Netherlands' development partners since 1998 with cooperation concentrating on areas of mutual interest to both countries. Nonetheless, the developmental assistance lately is undergoing a transformation that places more emphasis on trade instead of aid. A paradigm shift in policy which suits Ghana's attempt to advance through investments and reciprocal free trade predicated on the export of finished products and the structural development of the local economy through the transfer of technology and technical expertise.

It is therefore refreshing to note, that the Netherlands has now become the second destination of Ghana's exports to Europe. The Netherlands Africa Business Council (NABC) has been one of the institutions that continue to create the right platform for entrepreneurs interested in doing business in Ghana. Its counterpart in Ghana, is the Ghana and Netherlands Business and Culture Council (GNBCC) which represents business interests of both Ghanaian and Dutch companies.

In an attempt to make culture one of the mainstays of bilateral ties between Ghana and the Netherlands, the Ghana Mission in the Hague intends to embark upon a series of activities and programmes that will showcase cultural diplomacy as a solid platform for marketing Ghanaian businesses and entrepreneurs in the host country.

Not only have Ghanaians integrated seamlessly into Dutch society, but the ability of second and third generation Ghanaians born in the Netherlands to successfully form a familiar identity by merging cultural values from both sides of their heritage illustrates that the two countries have a lot in common.

The exploits of Ghanaian footballers in the Netherlands have also played a major role in the cultural integration that currently defines bilateral relations between the two countries. Footballers of Ghanaian heritage such as Memphis Depay, Jeremie Frimpong and Brian Brobbey have excelled not only in the Dutch Eredivisie but have also climbed the sporting ladder to represent the Netherlands at the national level in global tournaments such as the World Cup and the European Nations League.

Immigrants from Ghana are noted for their sense of discipline, hardwork, spirituality

and communality. Their offspring and descendants currently identify not only as high-profile sportsmen but as legal practitioners, medical doctors, entertainers and law-abiding citizens contributing meaningfully and positively towards the upward mobility of Dutch society. The good deeds of the Ghanaian Diaspora in the Netherlands have given Ghana a good name and turned the country into a good brand within the annals of Dutch society which can be exploited for the mutual benefit of the two countries. The fact that the Ghana brand is well received in the Netherlands means that our commodities and exports have a comparative advantage on the local market.

The successful cultural synthesis that has been demonstrated by the Ghana community residing in the Netherlands must inform the basis for using culture as a tool for bringing the Netherlands and Ghana closer together.

It is for this reason that, the Ghana Embassy in the Hague in the coming weeks and months intends to leverage on the existing rapport between the peoples of the two countries to stage Film Festivals, Food Fairs, Musical Concerts and Fashion Shows to generate more publicity for Ghana as a national brand in the Netherlands.

It is now for our governments to use this synergy as a platform for further promoting tourism, trade, commerce and multilateral cooperation.

The forts and castles which form part of the Netherlands' colonial legacy in Ghana must give Dutch scholars and academics a reason to travel to Ghana to learn more about their nation and the historical underpinnings which tie their ancestors to Africa. The ability to convert a dark ancient colonial relic into a monument or vehicle for postmodern commercial growth can only be attained through the creative use of cultural diplomacy as a basis for progressive exchange between Ghana and the Netherlands.

## 127<sup>TH</sup> PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY CONCERT

By Roy Lie Atjam

H.E. Ambassador J. Eduardo Malaya delivered inspiring remarks at a musical concert marking the 127th anniversary of the proclamation of Philippine independence, held at Kloosterkerk in The Hague on 28 May 2025.

"This year marks the 127th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence. This momentous event in 1898 is significant as it saw the establishment of the First Philippine Republic, which was then the first democratic republic in our part of the world," Ambassador Malaya noted. With the theme "Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan" (Freedom, Future, History), he highlighted the enduring sacrifices of Filipinos in the struggle for nationhood and the courage to shape a better future. He emphasized the country's resilience: "The Philippine Republic has remained strong and continues to thrive up to this day. With a GDP growth rate of 5.6% last year, the Philippine economy is one of the fastest growing in the Asian region." He pointed to landmark policies that attract foreign investments and reinforce democracy, citing the recent "orderly and peaceful mid-term elections."

Ambassador Malaya underscored strong ties with the Netherlands, recalling the visit of HM Queen Máxima to Manila, the Third Bilateral Consultations Meeting, and the work of the Philippine-Netherlands Business Council. "We are pleased to see the Netherlands as one of the top five investor countries in the Philippines," he remarked, noting that the two countries celebrate 74 years of diplomatic relations this May, and will mark their 75th next year. On multilateralism, he reaffirmed Manila's commitment to "an open and inclusive" approach to global challenges. He highlighted the Philippines' hosting of the Board of the Loss and Damage Fund on climate change and his role as Chair of the Executive Board of the Amsterdam-based Common Fund for Commodities. He also stressed the Philippines' close partnership with international organizations in The Hague, including the PCA, HCCH, Hague Academy, and OPCW.

Turning to the Filipino community, he offered warm thanks: "Sa aking minamahal na mga kababayan dito, taos puso po ang aming pasasalamat sa inyong pagsuporta at pakikiisa sa Embahada." Ambassador Malaya explained why music was chosen to celebrate Independence Day: "Music has the capacity to connect and bring people together. It has the power to break down barriers and overcome differences between and among peoples. We may come from different countries and cultures, but through music we all speak the same language." The evening featured performances by the Philippines' foremost violinist, Diomedes Saraza Jr., pianist Shermaine Velasco, and baritone Cipriano de Guzman Jr.

The Ambassador closed with gratitude: "It is the Embassy team's hope that through this concert, we are able to convey our message of friendship, and most importantly, our heartfelt appreciation to all of you for your solidarity. Maraming salamat. Dank u wel. Thank you! Mabuhay!"



# BOTSWANA CANDIDACY FOR THE ORGANIZATION FOR THE OPCW

Ambassador **Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba**, Botswana's Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, is Botswana's candidate for the position of Director-General of the OPCW's technical secretariat.

This candidacy reflects Botswana's strong commitment to international peace, disarmament, and multilateral cooperation.

Ambassador Masire-Mwamba is a seasoned diplomat and accomplished leader, bringing more than three decades of experience across diplomacy, law, science, and development. Her track record, built on integrity and results, aligns with the core mission of the OPCW.

## A LEADERSHIP ROOTED IN VALUES, SHAPED BY TRADITION

*"I come from a country where dialogue is the first response, not the last resort," Ambassador Masire-Mwamba reflects. "Our traditions teach us that peace is not just the absence of conflict, it's the presence of conversation, even when views diverge."*

Her leadership philosophy is deeply influenced by Botswana's enduring model of inclusive governance. From the village-level kgotla system where every voice, no matter how small, has space to the nation's commitment to diplomacy over dominance, she has absorbed a worldview that sees listening as strength and consensus as strategy.

In global diplomacy, where trust is fragile and stakes are high, she brings a grounded, culturally rich perspective: that durable peace is built through agreements and mutual respect and understanding that precede them. This ethos defines her leadership as principled, transparent, and committed to fairness.

## A FUTURE-FOCUSED VISION

Ambassador Masire-Mwamba envisions an OPCW fit for the future: resilient, representative, and responsive to today's complex security landscape. Her approach

focuses on strengthening the organisation's core mandate while fostering greater inclusion, transparency, and technological readiness.

If elected, she would be the first African, and the first woman to serve as Director-General, marking a powerful step towards greater diversity in international leadership. In this complex and rapidly changing environment with evolving geopolitical challenges, her priorities and areas of focus would be:

- **Promoting the Universality** of CWC signatories, to ensure a holistic and global commitment to the prohibition of chemical weapons, with outreach and renewed focus.
- Adopting enhanced technologies to validate ongoing **Monitoring and Verification** through stakeholder engagement, requisite access and adequate resources.
- **Ensure Outreach and Representation** at all levels to ensure that the OPCW reflects its membership and that all interests are addressed fairly, openly, and transparently with the requisite sensitivity.
- **Harness Artificial Intelligence, Data analytics and other emerging Technologies** to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the OPCW.
- **Leadership, Oversight, and Governance** to ensure that the Technical Secretariat's expertise and mandate are delivered to the highest professional standards.

## STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT, GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Ambassador Masire-Mwamba has held senior leadership roles in some of the world's most respected multilateral institutions. As Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth from 2008-2014, she played a central role in strategic planning, oversight,

and institutional governance across 54 member states. Her responsibilities extended to chairing high-level diplomatic groups such as the OACPS Crisis Working Group of Ambassadors and serving as Vice Chair of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) Strategic Framework Committee.

These roles demanded not only political acuity and executive leadership, but also the ability to navigate complex negotiations and broker consensus in sensitive geopolitical contexts.

## A LEADER WITH SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL INSIGHT

Beyond diplomacy, she brings a strong foundation in science and technology. Trained as a telecommunications practitioner with a BSc in electronics and physics from the University of London, Ambassador Masire-Mwamba has long maintained a professional interest in the ethical implications of emerging technologies. Her scientific literacy positions her to actively engage in technical policy discussions, particularly relevant in the context of chemical weapons, where developments in science and dual-use technologies require informed, vigilant leadership.

Her academic credentials spanning science, business (MBA from the University of Pittsburgh), and law (LLB from the University of South Africa) offer a rare interdisciplinary blend. This triad of expertise equips her with the tools to understand the OPCW's technical mission, the legal frameworks that underpin its work, and the management principles required to lead a diverse international organisation. With additional specialized training programmes throughout her career, she brings both depth and adaptability an essential combination for today's global leadership challenges.



# 80 ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

By H.E. Mr. Vladimir Tarabrin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The 9th of May 2025 marks 80 years since the day of the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War – a Victory that saved Europe from the darkness of fascism, oppression and extermination of millions of people.



For all countries of the former Soviet Union, May 9, 1945 is not just a historical date. Our compatriots who look today at the famous photograph by the Soviet war correspondent Evgeny Khaldei "The Victory Banner over the Reichstag" sees in it the history of their ancestors. Behind the Victory Banner there are more than 27 million human lives that our country lost, thousands of destroyed cities and ruined villages.

The Great Patriotic War has become for us a wound that can't heal. In every Russian city and town you will find a monument to the fallen Soviet soldiers. Any person can tell you a story about his or her relatives' life during the War – where they fought, how they suffered in Nazi captivity and concentration camps, helped the wounded or worked 12-hour shifts in the frozen workshops of the Urals and Siberian defense factories.

In Europe today, this is perceived quite differently – people are usually not very

familiar with the events that took place on the Eastern Front during the World War II (as the Great Patriotic War is called here). Some have heard about the Battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, but the names of Rzhev or the Siege of Leningrad are much less common even in historical literature. And almost certainly only few people here know the true price of European freedom – the Red Army paid for it with the lives of more than one million soldiers. During the liberation of Poland alone, 600 thousands of the Red Army soldiers died. 140 thousands died for Hungary, and another 140 thousands – for Czechoslovakia. These days these facts are often hushed up or, even worse, distorted – and liberation is being labeled "occupation". That is why Russia's primary task is to defend the historical truth and protect the memory of our ancestors.

I would also like to remind you that, having attacked the Soviet Union, the Nazi Germany began the deliberate expulsion and extermination of the local population –

all of this was documented and established by the verdict of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Russia calls on the international community to recognize this as a fact of genocide of the peoples of the Soviet Union. We will work tirelessly, including in the UN, to achieve justice for the memory of the millions of our dead.

This year, the Netherlands is also celebrating the 80th anniversary of the liberation from the Nazi invaders. And we remember what the Dutch people endured during the occupation – the brutality of the Gestapo, mass deportations of the Jewish population to concentration camps, the bombing of Rotterdam and Nijmegen. We also remember what the Nazis did to the Soviet prisoners of war in concentration camps. These atrocities are the subject of an exhibition at the newly opened museum at the "Soviet Field of Glory" Memorial Cemetery near Leusden.

I am glad that there are people in the Netherlands who do not forget the role of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazism.

Unfortunately, today we see that in many European countries that suffered greatly from the Nazi occupation, the lessons of that terrible war are being revised and forgotten. Russia cannot allow this to happen, and we will do everything to resist it. This is our duty, both to ourselves and to future generations.





# 60 YEARS OF MALTA-NETHERLANDS DIPLOMACY: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Diplomat Magazine had an insightful conversation with H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Curmi, Ambassador of the Republic of Malta to the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malta and the Netherlands. The discussion highlighted the evolution of bilateral ties, Malta's role in multilateral diplomacy, and the country's commitment to international peace and security.

**How would you describe the key milestones in Malta-Netherlands relations over the past 60 years?**

This year, we are marking the 60th anniversary since Malta and the Netherlands established Diplomatic relations in 1965. Whereas our diplomatic ties were officially recognised just a few months after Malta gained its Independence, for the last twenty years Malta has also been cooperating closely with the Netherlands as a fellow EU MS.

**What are the main priorities for Malta's engagement with the Netherlands and international institutions in The Hague?**

The 60th anniversary instils in us a sense of responsibility which will hopefully push both countries to continue to enhance our bilateral relations while working closely on a wide range of files.

Besides our bilateral relations with the Netherlands, as an Embassy, we also cover several International Courts and Tribunals, while also serving as Malta's Permanent Representation to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

In the last couple of years, Malta has played a key role in the multilateral field. Our country has proudly served as an elected member of the UN Security Council between 2023-2024, while also Chairing the OSCE in 2024. In both endeavours, Malta has successfully demonstrated its strong credentials in serving as an honest broker and bridge builder, through the

adoption of concrete resolutions. This is obviously a manifestation of the hard work and dedication which has been undertaken by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg and all officials at our Ministry and Missions, especially those which have been dealing directly with these files.

Malta's UNSC term continued to reinforce Malta's commitment towards multilateralism, peace and security. It is worth mentioning that although the current international political climate is not very conducive towards cooperation due to several ongoing wars, two Malta led UNSC Resolutions; a resolution on Children and Armed Conflict and a resolution on the Israel-Gaza war, were successfully adopted. Within the OSCE, we are proud of Malta's achievements in providing the organisation with the stability it needs to continue to serve as a forum for dialogue and trust building between participating States. Despite the challenging times during which Malta assumed the Chairpersonship, Malta successfully managed to achieve continuity and to steer the organisation forward by securing a decision on the top four positions within the organisation, and a decision on the 2026 Chairpersonship.

**Malta has been actively involved in multilateral diplomacy—what do you see as opportunities in today's global political climate?**

Our Embassy and Permanent Representation in The Hague seeks to build on Malta's global reputation by promoting multilateral initiatives that

restore trust, cooperation, and justice. At the OPCW, Malta continues to call for full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and has highlighted the risks of AI across weapons of mass destruction, urging greater information-sharing in international fora.

Regrettably, efforts to raise doubt about the impartiality of the Technical Secretariat politicises the organisation and could potentially hamper its effectiveness. Conscious of the challenging environment in which the OPCW is operating, Malta underscores its full trust in the professionalism of the OPCW Director General and Technical Secretariat.

Amid global challenges, the ICJ is seeing a surge in cases while the ICC addresses several sensitive ones. Malta stresses full adherence to international law and reaffirms its unwavering support for The Hague's Courts and their staff, who remain committed to peace and justice despite external pressures.

In addition to the current international legal framework, the Embassy is also participating in efforts to ensure accountability for crimes of aggression. Following the establishment in The Hague of the Register of Damage for Ukraine in 2024, we are now engaged in efforts to set up a Claims Commission for Ukraine.

# A HISTORIC VISIT: STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND CYPRUS

Interview with H.E. Ambassador Spyros Attas following the State Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Netherlands

King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands paid a state visit to Cyprus on March 4–5, 2025, at the invitation of President Nikos Christodoulides. Caspar Veldkamp, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, accompanied the Royal Couple.

The visit focused on strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in the areas of security cooperation, education, culture, and sustainable economic development. Their Majesties met with local leaders, participated in discussions on regional security, and visited cultural and educational institutions.

This state visit marked a milestone, as it was the first-ever visit by a Dutch head of state to Cyprus. "It was a very important visit, both diplomatically and symbolically. It was an excellent opportunity to advance both our bilateral relations and our common goal of promoting peace in Europe and the wider region," said Ambassador Spyros Attas.

"Cyprus plays a crucial role as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East. We have always enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, excellent relations with our neighbors—Arab countries and Israel—built on mutual respect. Cyprus actively promotes a regional cooperation agenda through institutionalized dialogues with Greece, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and others," Ambassador Attas concluded.

**HUMANITARIAN AID DELIVERY VIA MARITIME ROUTE**

Cyprus reaffirmed its commitment to humanitarian assistance, particularly in times of crisis. One notable initiative was the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza via a maritime route. "Providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza through the Mediterranean was a critical operation," the ambassador stated. "I would like to publicly thank the Netherlands for its support and participation in this project. At the time, there was no other way to get aid to the Gaza population. This

operation highlighted Cyprus's strategic role in regional humanitarian and security efforts."

Cyprus also played a key role in evacuating foreign nationals from crisis zones. "The Netherlands sees Cyprus as a trustworthy partner and a friend," the ambassador emphasized. "They cooperated with us in the evacuation of Dutch citizens from Sudan, as they did during similar operations in Lebanon in 2006 and more recently last year."

**CYPRUS-NETHERLANDS COOPERATION IN INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURE**

The King's visit also addressed sustainable economic and environmental development, particularly the responsible use of natural resources and the fruitful cooperation between Cyprus and the Netherlands in innovative agricultural methods.

"Cyprus cultivates 32 different potato varieties, and interestingly, many of the seeds come from the Netherlands and the produce is then exported to European countries and the United Kingdom," he explained.

**CULTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL COOPERATION**

Another important area of cooperation between the two nations is culture and archaeology. Since 2015, Leiden University collaborated with the University of Cyprus on excavations at two major prehistoric archaeological sites: the Chalcolithic site of Chlorakas-Palloures near Paphos and the Choroikoitia site.

**CYPRriot STUDENTS IN THE NETHERLANDS**

Education remained a growing link between the two countries. "There are around 1,000 Cypriot students in the Netherlands, studying in Maastricht, Amsterdam, Utrecht, and at the Royal Conservatory, among others,"

the ambassador shared. "After Brexit, the Netherlands became a popular educational destination due to its high-level international study programs."

His Majesty also met with Cyprus-Dutch alumni, further strengthening people-to-people ties between the two nations.

**THE DIVISION OF CYPRUS AND POLITICAL PROSPECTS**

"Cyprus is a divided country due to foreign aggression and occupation. Our efforts aim to reunite the island and its people, based on UN Security Council resolutions and international law. The current foreign occupation, which results in division and violations of the human rights of all Cypriots, is a manifest anachronism and needs to be terminated."

**TOURISM ON THE RISE**

Tourism from the Netherlands to Cyprus stood at around 5,000 visitors annually and continued to grow steadily. "It's an important number, especially for a country with a population of less than one million," said the ambassador.

Cyprus received approximately 3.2 million tourists each year. The ambassador noted that four airline companies operated direct flights from the Netherlands to Cyprus: KLM, Ryanair, Transavia, and EasyJet.

"The good weather, beautiful scenery, rich history and culture, beaches, and, of course, the food, are very attractive incentives for visiting Cyprus."



# ON CHILE'S DIPLOMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Ambassador of Chile, Jorge Antonio Carvajal San Martín, brings a wealth of experience and a clear vision for strengthening the bilateral ties between the two nations. With a career deeply rooted in diplomacy, Ambassador Carvajal has always been committed to promoting international collaboration, addressing regional and global challenges, and advancing Chile's interests abroad.

Under his leadership, and with the support of an excellent team of diplomats and professionals at the Embassy, PROCHILE and the Consulate General in Amsterdam, the embassy aims to advance cooperation in key areas such as trade and investment, water management, agriculture, green hydrogen development, sustainability, human rights and responsible business practices.

*How would you describe the current state of Chile-Netherlands relations, and what are the most significant opportunities for collaboration?*

Chile and the Netherlands maintain an excellent level of bilateral relations, which is due to our common belief in the importance of multilateralism and the fact that we share fundamental objectives such as the defence and promotion of human rights, gender equality, the need to address in a collective way the challenges of climate change and the promotion of open markets. In addition to the continued growth of our bilateral trade, there are great opportunities to further advance our collaboration in water management, desalination, agriculture, energy transition and the role of green hydrogen.

This year we are commemorating 200 years of relations between Chile and the Netherlands, so we are planning several political, commercial and cultural activities to mark this milestone and to give a new impetus to our bilateral relations. To this end I am in contact with the Dutch Ambassador to Chile, Elke Merks-Schaapveld: she's an active and enthusiastic representative of her country and I had the pleasure to meet her in Santiago before

taking up my post in The Hague. By the way, I think it was a good omen/sign that we both presented our letters of credence on the same day, on 4 December 2024. This can't be a coincidence, isn't it?

In terms of new areas of cooperation, in addition to the long-standing work on water management and water use in agriculture, I believe that Chile, as a mining country, can benefit more from the Dutch technology in recycling and in sustainable use of water in that sector. Other promising areas in which we can learn from the Dutch experience are logistics and port infrastructure, both vital for our export sector.

Another area with potential for strengthening the bilateral cooperation is that of critical raw materials, such as lithium, copper, nickel. The Netherlands and Europe are in need of new sources of those materials for their energy transition and digital economy. 79% of the lithium that reaches Europe comes from Chile. In this sense, the Netherlands and Chile are destined to be natural partners. Chile has the opportunity to strengthen its role in the global supply chain and attract investment for that sector.

I would also like to highlight that the AFA (Advanced Framework Agreement) and the Interim Trade Agreement signed by the European Union and Chile on 13 December 2023, are instruments that I am sure could make an important contribution to further cooperation between Chile and the Netherlands. It should be noted that the AFA is not a completely new agreement, but the modernization of the Association Agreement already in force between Chile and the EU since 2003. In fact, the

European Parliament, considering that this is a mutually beneficial agreement, gave its consent to the new instrument on 29 February 2024. The Advanced Framework Agreement includes a new chapter on trade and sustainable development, as well as regulations on labor conditions, environment, gender equality, and responsible business conduct, to mention just a few the new chapters. Taking into account the importance that The Netherlands attaches to those matters I think it should not be a major problem for The Netherlands to ratify the AFA. Anyhow, the Interim Trade Agreement will enter into force in February this year.

*The Netherlands is Chile's largest European investor. What industries do you see as the most promising for further Dutch investment?*

At this moment, the sustainable energy sector is the biggest sector for Dutch investments. With big investments in for example transmission lines to transport the energy from solar and wind farms to the cities and industrial areas. The ambitions of Chile to become a big exporter of green hydrogen will require a lot of foreign investments. The institutional investors like Dutch pension funds are very interested in this for Chile promising sector. If Chile advances in making the mining industry and the refining of critical raw materials more sustainable, we might spark interest from Dutch investors for this sector as well.



# AMBASSADOR DR. ENIOLA AJAYI NIGERIA'S CANDIDACY FOR DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE OPCW

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has nominated Ambassador Dr. Eniola Ajayi for the position of Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)—a candidacy that brings together scientific precision, diplomatic experience, and an unwavering commitment to peace and security.

With nearly four decades of professional experience, she exemplifies the blend of technical knowledge and principled diplomacy essential for leading the Organisation into a new era.

"I am a bridge between science and diplomacy," Dr. Ajayi explains. "My training as a clinician has taught me to make decisions based on evidence, and my years as a diplomat have taught me the importance of listening, inclusivity, and consensus-building."

## A CAREER AT THE CROSSROADS OF SCIENCE AND DIPLOMACY

Dr. Ajayi began her career as an optometrist and ocular pathologist, operating a successful private eye care practice in Nigeria for 28 years. Her journey from clinical science into governance saw her serve in the Executive Arm of Government, where she held cabinet positions as Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology, and later, Environment. In both roles, she introduced reforms advancing sustainable development, innovation, and science-based policymaking. "When I entered public service, I carried my commitment to evidence-based solutions with me," she says. "Whether in education, technology, or environmental policy, I advocated for strategies that were not only smart, but sustainable."

Her transition to diplomacy was marked by similar distinction. She served as Ambassador to Hungary, concurrently accredited to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. Most recently, she was Ambassador of Nigeria to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, representing Nigeria to a host of international institutions, including the OPCW, International Criminal Court (ICC), Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

"Serving as Ambassador to the Netherlands placed me at the heart of global justice and disarmament," she notes. "It was a profound responsibility and a tremendous learning experience."

## A PROVEN RECORD AT THE OPCW

Ambassador Ajayi's experience within the OPCW is both extensive and substantive. She has held key roles, such as:

Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Council, representing the Africa Group for two consecutive terms

Chairperson of the Chemical Industry and Article VI Issues Cluster

Chair of the 99th Session of the Executive Council, which she successfully presided over at a critical juncture in the Organisation's history

## VISION FOR THE OPCW: CONTINUITY, INNOVATION, AND INCLUSION

In outlining her vision for the future of the OPCW, Ambassador Ajayi pledges to uphold the foundational mandate of the Organisation: that "chemical weapons shall never be used by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances." Her six-point strategic vision includes:

Achieving Universality of the CWC – Championing global adoption and full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with no exceptions.

Modernizing for Impact – Enhancing budget efficiency, optimizing the new ChemTech Centre, and aligning resources with evolving threats in an era shaped by artificial intelligence and rapid technological change.

People-Centered, Mission-Driven Leadership – Promoting geographic diversity, inclusive

participation, and institutional memory within the OPCW's non-career structure.

Concluding Outstanding Files – Resolving pending issues, including Syria, through transparent, respectful processes grounded in the tenets of the Convention.

Staying Vigilant in a Changing World – Strengthening verification mechanisms and improving cooperation to confront threats from non-state actors and rogue regimes.

Leadership with Integrity – A commitment to fairness, firmness, and approachability, creating a culture of trust and principled diplomacy.

## A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR REPRESENTATION

Ambassador Ajayi's candidacy carries historic significance. If elected, she would be the first African and the first woman to serve as Director-General of the OPCW since its inception. Her candidacy is not just symbolic; it is rooted in demonstrated leadership, deep expertise, and a strong moral compass.

She currently chairs the Federal Government of Nigeria Women Ambassadors Network, where she promotes gender equality in diplomacy. She is also a published author; her recent book "Mastering Diplomacy" reflects her insights and experience in international affairs.

Ambassador Ajayi's leadership philosophy is guided by three pillars: integrity, inclusivity, and impact. Her diplomatic approach is shaped by Nigeria's foreign policy doctrine of "friendship to all, enmity to none," making her a natural consensus-builder and advocate for peaceful solutions.





# ALGIERS PREPARES FOR IATF 2025, A LANDMARK IN AFRICA'S TRADE INTEGRATION

The Algerian capital, Algiers will become the epicentre of African trade as it prepares to host the 4th edition of the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF 2025) from 4 to 10 September 2025.

With a view to this landmark in Africa's trade integration, Diplomat magazine conducted an interview with H.E. Ms. Salima Abdelhak, Ambassador of Algeria to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

***Your Excellency, Algeria will host the 4th Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF 2025) this September. What is its significance for Algeria and the continent?***

"IATF 2025 is far more than a trade exhibition—it is a landmark moment for Africa's economic integration and a key platform for intra-African cooperation. For Algeria, hosting this 4th edition from September 4 to 10 in Algiers is both an honor and a reflection of our long-standing commitment to African unity and development.

This event comes at a critical time when global geopolitical balances are shifting. The fair will serve as a beacon of exchange, ambition, and reciprocity, positioning Algeria as a strategic crossroads and reaffirming our role as a champion of continental development. To ensure that IATF 2025 becomes a benchmark event for the entire continent, all necessary resources are being mobilized under the leadership of the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune—a committed Pan-Africanist who firmly believes in Africa's ability to harness its own capacities to drive a new growth dynamic, fuelled by prosperous intra-African trade and strengthened through cooperation with global partners, particularly Europe, given its geographical proximity."

***What is IATF's significance within the AfCFTA framework?***

"The IATF is a tangible outcome of the African Continental Free Trade Area

(AfCFTA), one of Africa's most ambitious and transformative projects. It aims to promote intra-African trade, boost investment, and accelerate the continent's integration into global commerce.

As a former negotiator for Algeria in the AfCFTA process, I witnessed Africa's determination to build a unified economic space—aligning diverse economies, regulations, and a shared vision for the future. It required diplomacy, perseverance, and above all, a deep belief in the power of integration.

To witness one of the key instruments of that vision—the Intra-African Trade Fair—being hosted in Algeria is a profound source of pride for the Algerian nation and for me personally."

***What can we expect from Algeria's participation in IATF 2025, particularly in trade and economic outreach?***

"Algeria's participation will be dynamic and multidimensional. The fair will offer a powerful opportunity to highlight our country's export potential, industrial strengths, and growing logistical infrastructure. Algerian businesses—across sectors—will be able to network, build partnerships, and access new opportunities across the continent.

At the same time, Algeria's positioning as a regional logistics and trade hub will be on full display. With strategic connections to Africa, Europe, and the Mediterranean, we are well placed to play a bridging role that supports both continental and international trade flows. This is in line with our broader economic vision: to diversify our economy and solidify our presence in African markets through innovation, investment, and cooperation."



***What role do international partners, especially the Netherlands, play in IATF 2025?***

"While the IATF is a platform for African integration, its reach is global. With AfCFTA opening access to a market of 1.4 billion people and a GDP of over \$3.5 trillion, international partners—especially European countries like the Netherlands—have much to gain.

IATF 2025 provides a unique setting for them to explore investment opportunities, forge trade alliances, and support inclusive growth across the continent. Algeria welcomes this engagement and stands ready to facilitate dialogue between African and international partners."

"IATF 2025 represents a collective African ambition to trade with itself, to innovate from within, and to grow together. At the same time, it represents a dynamic and open continental market that actively seeks meaningful cooperation with partners around the world. I warmly invite all international stakeholders, including European and particularly Dutch to show strong interest in leveraging this platform to deepen trade and investment ties with Africa."

More details can be consulted in <https://2025.iatf.africa/newfront/page/home>

For Algeria, this is more than hosting an event—it is about reaffirming our historic commitment to African solidarity and our belief in Africa's potential.



How do you view the current state of India–Netherlands political and economic relations, and where are the main opportunities for growth?

India and the Netherlands share a longstanding partnership that has evolved into a trusted and valued friendship, grounded in shared democratic values and mutual respect. Bilateral cooperation spans political, economic, and technological domains, with regular high-level exchanges reinforcing our ties. Recent interactions include External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar's visit to the Netherlands in May 2025, where discussions with Prime Minister Dick Schoof and Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp focused on enhancing collaboration in trade, technology, and security. Foreign Minister Veldkamp visited India earlier in April 2025, when he held detailed discussions with his counterpart Dr. S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. Water, agriculture, and health remain cornerstones of our cooperation, while we are increasingly exploring strategic areas such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and green hydrogen.

Economically, the Netherlands is India's 11th largest merchandise trading partner globally and the largest in the European Union. In FY 2023-24, bilateral merchandise trade reached USD 27.33 billion, accounting for 2.45% of India's total merchandise trade. The Netherlands is India's largest merchandise export destination in Europe and third largest globally, with exports including key items like petroleum products, telecom instruments, and pharmaceuticals. Investments are robust, with cumulative FDI from the Netherlands to India totaling over USD 52 billion and from India to the Netherlands being about USD 25 billion between April 2000 to September 2024.

# STRENGTHENING INDIA–NETHERLANDS TIES IN A NEW ERA OF COOPERATION

The Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Kumar Tuhin, recently spoke with Diplomat Magazine about the latest developments in India–Netherlands relations. In the conversation, he reflected on the growing political and economic partnership between both countries, India's engagement with international legal institutions in The Hague, and ongoing collaborations in water management, sustainable agriculture, and innovation.

Over 300 Dutch companies operate in India, including Philips, NXP, Signify, Akzo Nobel, DSM, KLM, Rabobank, Heineken, TomTom, Paques, Boskalis, Van Oord, Damen Shipyards, Vopak, and Aegon. Conversely, more than 300 Indian companies are present in the Netherlands, such as TCS, HCL, Wipro, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Sun Pharmaceuticals, and Apollo Tyres.

The greatest opportunities lie in infusing a strategic dimension into our technology partnership, leveraging the Netherlands' expertise in innovation. We are prioritizing new and emerging technologies, including semiconductors, clean energy solutions like green hydrogen, and digital domains. Our economic partnership continues to expand, offering immense potential to strengthen ties through enhanced investments, joint ventures, and sustainable development initiatives.

***How is India engaging with The Hague's key international legal institutions, and what are your priorities as India's representative to them?***

India has consistently played a constructive role in global affairs through active participation in multilateral institutions, and The Hague's status as host to the OPCW, ICJ, PCA and many other institutions underscores its importance for international diplomacy.

As an original signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, India attaches great importance to its full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation. While the destruction of declared chemical weapon stockpiles marks a significant OPCW achievement, India emphasizes vigilance to prevent re-emergence and advocates for universal adherence, urging non-party

states to join at the earliest. We engage actively in OPCW meetings.

Regarding the ICJ and PCA, India participates regularly at appropriate levels, contributing to discussions on international law and dispute resolution. India has been involved in several ICJ cases, and supports the court's role in upholding international justice. For the PCA, India utilizes its arbitration mechanisms for resolving disputes in accordance with international law and promotes peaceful settlement of conflicts.

As India's representative, my priorities include advancing India's commitment to multilateralism, ensuring our representation in these institutions, and fostering dialogue on global challenges like disarmament, climate justice, etc. We aim to collaborate with the Netherlands to enhance these platforms' effectiveness. Strengthening these engagements aligns with India's broader aspirations to uphold equity, justice, peace, and a rules-based international order.

***What concrete projects are underway between India and the Netherlands in water management, agriculture, and innovation?***

The Netherlands' global leadership in water technologies, innovation and sustainable agriculture aligns well with India's priorities, leading to robust collaborations under our Strategic Partnership on Water, launched in 2021. In water management, we are working together on the National Mission on Clean Ganga Programme for river rejuvenation, pollution abatement, and conservation, drawing on Dutch expertise. We are also partnering in initiatives in Tamil Nadu, particularly Chennai, focused on urban resilience against droughts,



floods, and water quality issues. For flood management, we are adapting the Dutch “Room for the River” model in Kerala, following the 2018 floods, with ongoing risk reduction programs that could extend to other states. The Joint Working Group on Water, elevated to ministerial level, held its first meeting in April 2023 and continues to drive these efforts.

In sustainable agriculture, we are establishing a number of Centres of Excellence across India with Dutch partnership, of which 7 are already functional, focusing on advanced farming techniques, agri-innovation and food processing. Many Dutch seed companies are present in India. In health and innovation, under the MoU on Healthcare, we are progressing on digital health cooperation, including interoperability, AI applications, disease surveillance, and antimicrobial resistance surveillance. Planned efforts include expanding our cooperation in health and pharmaceuticals with joint research and policy dialogues, and initiatives on cooperation between Ports, green hydrogen, etc.

*Drawing on your ICCR experience, what cultural diplomacy initiatives are you planning to strengthen people-to-people ties here?*

Cultural diplomacy is vital for enhancing India's connection with our global partners, and the Indian diaspora plays a pivotal role in bringing our nations closer by preserving and promoting India's rich heritage through music, dance, Indian cinema, Ayurveda, and Yoga. The diaspora in the Netherlands, well-integrated locally yet connected to their roots, serves as advocates for India's interests and cultural projection.

Leveraging my experience as DG ICCR, I plan to bolster initiatives such as exchange programs, scholarships, youth exchanges, the Distinguished and Academic Visitors Programme, visits of artists in performing and visual arts, India studies in academic institutions, cultural festivals, etc. Our Gandhi Culture Centre at Parkstraat in The Hague, operational since 2011, offers free classes in Yoga, Indian dance, Hindi and Sanskrit, hosts regular programs to foster people-to-people connections, and serves as a thriving hub for Indian culture. We will expand collaborations like the International Day of Yoga events, explore residency programmes to deepen artistic exchanges, and forge collaborations between cultural institutions of both countries. These efforts aim to celebrate our shared 400-year cultural history and build enduring ties.

## SAUDI ARABIA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY IN THE HAGUE

On 28 May 2025, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Netherlands, led by Chargé d'Affaires His Highness Prince Jalawi Al Saud, hosted a distinguished gathering at the Hotel Des Indes in The Hague to commemorate International Museum Day and World Heritage Day. The event brought together ambassadors, Dutch government officials—including from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture—members of the business community, students, and friends of Saudi Arabia for an evening dedicated to cultural dialogue and heritage diplomacy. Following the opening remarks by Prince Jalawi, the program featured a keynote address by Dr. Faisal Al-Jubrin from the Saudi Heritage Commission, who outlined the Kingdom's efforts in documenting and preserving its vast cultural landscape. A presentation by the Saudi Museums Commission followed, showcasing initiatives focused on museum development, public engagement, and heritage education.

The evening also included a compelling presentation on Al-Faw Heritage City, one of the most important archaeological and cultural sites in the Kingdom. Guests then had the opportunity to tour a curated exhibition from the Saudi Museums, featuring items and visuals that offered insight into Saudi Arabia's historical depth and cultural diversity.

Dr. Al-Jubrin noted that the Heritage Commission has already completed the first phase of an extensive national cultural inventory, cataloging more than 10,000 cultural elements across six regions of Saudi Arabia. A second phase of this important initiative is already planned, aiming to broaden the scope and ensure comprehensive national coverage.



The event highlighted Saudi Arabia's dedication to heritage preservation as a bridge for international cooperation. As Prince Jalawi stated:

And he added, “Museums serve as custodians of identity and knowledge, while World Heritage Day reminds us of our collective responsibility to protect cultural treasures for future generations.” “We deeply value the strong cultural partnership between Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands, and we thank the Saudi Museums Commission and the Heritage Commission for their exceptional work in promoting our heritage internationally.”

The celebration concluded with an elegant reception dinner, reinforcing the spirit of hospitality and shared appreciation for cultural heritage.

The evening at Hotel Des Indes was not only a diplomatic and cultural success, but a clear reflection of Saudi Arabia's commitment to building cultural bridges, elevating awareness of its heritage, and collaborating with international partners to protect and promote global cultural legacies.



## VARIOUS JUBILEES COMING UP AT THE RC CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR IN THE HAGUE

The year 2025 is a worldwide year of jubilee for the Catholic Church. All cathedrals in the world open a special Holy Door, once every 25 years, to allow a new generation to find their pilgrim path in the long line of 2025 years of Christianity. Every generation has its own identity and aspirations and should not be held back by debts or burdens from the past. This principle comes from the Book of Leviticus 25. A Jubilee year is a time of reflection, finding a new relevant way forward, and for making a pilgrimage to one of these open doors. Rome is expecting around 30 millions of such pilgrims this year. But for those who want to avoid crowds there are many other spiritual paths that lead to inner renewal and resetting of one's goals and values.

At the international Roman Catholic English-speaking parish Church of our Saviour, in The Hague, over 1000 people from 65 different nationalities gather for worship every Sunday, or for meetings in one of the 60 groups that the community hosts. The programs range from activities with homeless and refugees, to addiction groups, catechesis, liturgy and many social and charity events. The annual Food Fair draws about 3000 people to her culinary stands. The proceeds support many charity projects around the world.



The parish appointed her first pastor in 1952 to assist the English-speaking soldiers who remained in The Netherlands after the 2nd world war. Since then, it has grown into one of the vibrant and largest catholic communities in The Netherlands where many people find a family far away from home. After an initial start in rented school halls, the parish now owns a beautiful church in The Hague located between Parliament and the Royal Palace on the Bezuidenhoutseweg 157. In 1950 the building procedure started which means that in 2025 the church building celebrates her 75th anniversary.

The current pastor, fr. Sjaak de Boer was appointed to the parish in 1998. After having worked for 11 years in Nairobi and Rio de Janeiro, coming to The Hague meant a radical change in pastoral ministry. His first years in The Netherlands were focused on the Millennium Goals from the year 2000. It meant looking for alliances to reduce poverty and promote gender equality. Many contacts with UN institutions and embassies were sought to see how these goals could be implemented combining the possibilities offered by faith, politics and economics. The parish doubled in mass attendance and pastoral activities.



One of the most active outreach programs during the last 15 years has been the Justice and Peace group. This group brings together hundreds of volunteers for refugee and homeless support, amnesty international, fair trade, soup kitchen and food pantries, buddy programs, outings, dinners and fundraising for the needy. In the year 2000 also the first symposium for pastors in English speaking parishes in European capitals was held at the Peace palace. Since then, every year this meeting was held in a different city. The silver jubilee of the European Pastors Symposium will return to The Hague in 2025.

Last, but not least, two more jubilees are coming up and will be combined into one big celebration. In October 2026, fr. Sjaak will celebrate 40 years of priesthood, and the parish community Church of our Saviour will celebrate her 75th anniversary in 2027. This big party will be celebrated with the extensive network of alumni from The Hague who still follow the parish online. It will be an occasion to invite the global family to come back to The Hague for the celebrations.

For more information follow the parish on [www.pariah.nl](http://www.pariah.nl)





# DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

By Ruard Ganzevoort

For a small country, the Netherlands has always played an impressive international role. Not only in international trade, but also – and related to it – in science. The world would have been different without the law of the sea of Hugo Grotius and the humanism of Erasmus. In the field of diplomacy and development, the country has also for many years been willing to contribute to stable and mutually beneficial international relations. The constitution of the Netherlands makes this responsibility explicit in art 90: The Government shall promote the development of the international legal order. That is why there has been much support to develop The Hague into the international city of peace and justice. It has also led to strong commitment to international development cooperation.

As diplomats from the global south will know, many young people from the global south have made their way to study in the Netherlands or another European country. Some of our educational institutions are even specifically tailored to the needs and interests of students from the global south. Many mid-career professionals attended training programs under the rubric of ‘capacity building’. Whether it is in agriculture and food security, water or energy technology, or management and social sciences, global south education has become an important part of knowledge diplomacy since the 1950s. We might even call this the ‘development decades’. In returning to their home countries, the alumni have proven to become important connectors between the two countries. Many of them build mutually fruitful collaborations over decades.

But times are changing. European governments, including the Dutch, are cutting down on scholarships for the global south. They put restrictions on the number of foreign students generally. They focus more on internal issues than on international collaboration, especially with the global south. And they are more interested in securitization and defence than in development and conflict prevention.

The crucial challenges today – climate change, international stability, food security, and more – require more collaboration, not less. Diplomats, as well as international

NGOs and knowledge institutions are tirelessly trying to build and maintain that collaboration. Against the Zeitgeist, they hammer home the message that we need to work together because we only have one planet, and our common future depends on keeping that planet a viable place to live.

There are many beautiful stories to tell about these collaborations. European cities learn from counterparts in Africa and Asia how to cope with heatwaves. Countries like the Netherlands and Bangladesh share experiences of being river deltas. Multicultural societies are all navigating diversities and a search for identity. The economic and ecological challenges around fossil resources are discussed around the globe. Researchers, NGOs and grassroots organisations share their insights. Together they inform policymakers and politicians. Students bring experiences from their home country to Europe and return with new knowledge and possibilities. Diplomats build bridges to make all these stories known and to forge connections. As important as these collaborations were in the past, they are even more relevant today.

Fortunately, the changing attitude of western governments is not the end of the story. Since the development decades, many countries have evolved from low-income countries to middle-income countries or even better. Parallel to that, they developed from aid recipients to trade partners. And internally, they often started to invest significantly in education, health care,



and technology. That does not mean that collaboration for global south education has become irrelevant. Instead, it means that this collaboration is becoming truly mutual. We are learning that knowledge from the north and the south complement each other and colleagues from north and south increasingly work together on common challenges.

As economic possibilities and traditional differences in political power are still there, countries in the north still have a responsibility to contribute financially to this cooperation. The common good of humanity and of the planet requires continuing our investments in global south education. Diplomats from the south should not hesitate to urge countries like the Netherlands to maintain the effective scholarship programs for global south students as well as funding for joint research. But they should also urge their home countries to expand or start their own scholarship and research funding programs. Jointly investing in education and science will continue to be the key driver to flourishing people, societies, and international relations, as well as addressing the global challenges we jointly face.

Ruard Ganzevoort is rector of the International Institute of Social Studies (Erasmus University Rotterdam) and chair of the network of Dutch development institutes SAIL.

Claire Hallewas is managing director of the TU Delft | Global Initiative (Delft University of Technology) and chair of the Dutch Platform for International Education (PIE).

# THE DIPLOMATIC GALA 2025

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Hague, 8th May 2025. The Leonardo Royal Hotel Den Haag Promenade and Diplomat Magazine, hosted the Diplomatic Gala 2025.

The gala served to celebrate ongoing collaboration between the Diplomatic Corps, Diplomat Magazine and Leonardo Royal Hotel. Scores of Ambassadors and diplomats attended the gala.

The Diplomatic Gala 2025, as the inaugural event of its kind, achieved significant success by providing a platform for meaningful interactions and facilitating networking opportunities within a welcoming atmosphere.

In their feedback the Ambassadors expressed their appreciation and enjoyment by describing the gala as a prestigious, gathering that without doubt, was the finest event we have had the pleasure of attending - in terms of the quality of participation, the elegance of the setting, the music, the colour, and the sheer grandeur. Dr. Mayelinne De Lara, the publisher and founder of Diplomat Magazine, delivered the following welcome remarks: “Tonight, we celebrate our collaboration and unwavering commitment as we move into a year filled with opportunities, solutions, and achievements. In a world where the values of freedom, justice, and dignity are increasingly challenged, the role of diplomacy becomes critical.

We must confront the growing obstacles, including the rampant spread of disinformation, with steadfast unity in our dedication to truth and the principles that bind us as a global community. Every step we take, no matter how small, brings us closer to a future where justice and freedom prevail. Let us take this moment to acknowledge our accomplishments and the hope that continues to inspire us all. Thank you for being here tonight. Enjoy the wonderful evening!”

Mr Thomas Kortleve was the next speaker, he stated. “Excellencies, distinguished guests, good evening, on behalf of the Leonardo Royal Hotel Den Haag Promenade, it is my

distinct honor and pleasure to welcome you all to this special gala event. I am Thomas Kortleve, the General Manager of this esteemed hotel, which has proudly served as a diplomatic hub since its opening in 1971.

As many of you know, this event is a substitute for our beloved annual Herring Party—a cherished tradition that we sadly cannot hold this year due to the NATO Summit taking place in The Hague. While we will miss the familiar flavors and festive spirit of that occasion, tonight’s gala presents us with a unique opportunity to celebrate together in a more elegant and equally warm setting.

This evening is, above all, a tribute to collaboration—the valuable partnership between our hotel and the distinguished diplomatic community in The Hague. It is your loyalty, continued trust, and support that make events like this possible. More than just professional relationships, we recognize the genuine partnerships that have developed between our teams and many of you here tonight. In a world where diplomacy and dialogue are more vital than ever, the Leonardo Royal Hotel is honored to serve as a welcoming space for international exchange and hospitality.

We remain committed to providing the highest standard of service and creating an environment where our shared values of respect, cooperation, and excellence can flourish.

Once again, thank you for your loyalty, presence, and ongoing support. We hope you enjoy this evening filled with culinary delights, celebration, and meaningful connections. Here’s to continued partnership and many more memorable moments together.”

The Red Carpet 2025 Diplomatic Gala triumphed, creating a remarkable platform for Ambassadors to connect and collaborate in a warm and inviting atmosphere.





# THE POWER OF DIALOGUE

## FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

The Hague | June 10, 2025

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in collaboration with Diplomat Magazine, hosted a reception at the emblematic Peace Palace in The Hague. Held in the Peace Palace’s auditorium, the event welcomed a carefully selected group of guests from the diplomatic corps, international courts, media, and academia—creating a unique platform to honour the values of dialogue, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence.

The event began with opening remarks delivered by Mr. John Dunkelgrün, Editor of Diplomat Magazine, standing in for the magazine’s Publisher and Founder, Dr. Mayelinne De Lara, who was unexpectedly abroad on a personal trip. In his speech, Mr. Dunkelgrün reflected on the importance of the day:

“Here, in the very halls of international law and diplomacy, we reaffirm our shared commitment to the permanent values of freedom, justice, dignity, and peace. In a world where these values are too often tested, dialogue among civilizations remains our most powerful tool—for managing differences, for building bridges, and imagining a future rooted in respect and shared humanity.”

The program continued with a short video highlighting the global call for intercultural dialogue, followed by a keynote address by H.E. Mr. Jian Tan, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In his address, Ambassador Tan recalled China’s role in proposing the UN resolution that established June 10 as the International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations—a resolution adopted unanimously by all UN member states in 2023. He praised the Peace Palace as a symbol of the international rule of law and emphasized that diversity is a strength—not a source of division.

“The International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations is meant for better understanding, enhanced cooperation and human progress, for peace and development. Each civilization has its own strengths,”

the Ambassador stated. “There is no such thing as a superior or inferior civilization... Harmony is a salient feature of Chinese culture. Confucius said, ‘Do not do to others as you would not have them do to you.’”

He also reminded the audience of the importance of people-to-people exchange, and highlighted the deeper principle guiding China’s foreign engagement:

“President Xi Jinping in the Global Civilization Initiative put forward in 2023, said that China advocates the respect for the diversity of civilizations, advocates the common values of humanity: peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom.

Yes, these are common values, not exclusive to any one culture. They belong to all mankind. Dialogue is to break barriers and build bridges. Dialogue is to enhance understanding and cooperation.”



Ambassador Tan emphasized that China does not export ideology but rather seeks cooperation through trade and dialogue, and he praised the Netherlands for its global leadership in climate change adaptation. “China will continue working with all other countries under the UN framework to build a world where diverse civilizations coexist, justice is upheld by law, and inclusiveness benefits all.”

Following the speeches, guests enjoyed a culturally inspired reception in the Peace Palace’s celebrated gardens, with refreshments reflecting Chinese culinary traditions and ample opportunity for diplomatic and cross-cultural exchange.

The event concluded with a warm acknowledgment of all attendees, including members of the International Court of Justice. Organizers expressed special appreciation for the presence of Judges and the Registrar, who were able to join following the conclusion of their duties.

With its iconic setting at the Peace Palace and its message of unity and dialogue, this commemoration marked a meaningful beginning to what is expected to become an annual tradition of intercultural understanding and global cooperation.

Diplomat Magazine is proud to have supported this historic moment and remains committed to creating platforms for diplomacy and intercultural exchange.

# WESTLAND GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF HORTICULTURE REGIONS

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Municipality of Westland in collaboration with Diplomat Magazine organized an information session for the heads of diplomatic missions regarding the proposed Westland Global Alliance of Horticulture Regions which will be officially launched during the first week of September at EXPO 2025 in Osaka, Japan. A field trip to Westland will be organized after the trip to Osaka in September 2025.

The opening of the important information session was done by Dr. Mayelinne De Lara, Publisher of Diplomat Magazine. Her opening remarks were, “The Netherlands has established itself as a global leader in innovative horticulture, and Westland is at the forefront, setting international benchmarks in food production, environmental responsibility, and economic development.

Diplomat Magazine has played a crucial role in connecting the diplomatic community, actively supporting your initiatives, and uncovering new opportunities to advance your agendas in the Netherlands.

World Network of Horticulture Region, the impactful journey began in early 2023 when I met with the Mayor of Westland to launch the first field day for ambassadors at Westland’s horticulture centre. On December 1, 2023, a select group of ambassadors and diplomats gathered in Westland for an introductory meeting, effectively facilitated by Mayor Bouke Arends and Diplomat Magazine.

Following this, we held a second successful visit to Westland in 2024.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Her Excellency Sahar Ghanem, whose invaluable support has been invaluable, as well as to the Leonardo Royal Hotel for their contributions.

Mayor Bouke Arends: “Silicon Valley of Greenhouse Horticulture”

Mayor Arends highlighted Westland’s global importance: “Westland is the epicenter of Dutch horticulture, home to the world’s largest concentration of greenhouses. Dutch horticulture is renowned for its expertise and technology, enabling the production of fruits, vegetables, and flowers that

reach millions worldwide. Our cluster of government, business, and academia fosters innovation, making Westland the Silicon Valley of greenhouse horticulture.” He stressed that global food security is under pressure from climate change, resource scarcity, geopolitical risks, and a growing population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050. “Food is increasingly being used as a weapon. Local, sustainable production is key to resilience, and horticulture must be central to any global food strategy,” he argued.

Westland has signed MoUs with around 30 regions worldwide, from Europe to Central Asia and the Far East. But most agreements are bilateral. The new Global Alliance, Arends explained, will provide a multilateral platform to address shared challenges: food security, biodiversity, climate adaptation, robotics, and food diplomacy.

He cited recent visits to Jordan, Kazakhstan, and Vietnam, praising their entrepreneurial drive in horticulture. Westland will lead a major trade mission to Osaka in September, working closely with partners Aichi, Mutsu, and Kochi. “Our companies contribute daily to the UN Sustainable Development Goals,” he said. “It is time to unite efforts and develop a solid global food strategy.”

“Our work is more important than ever. Daily, companies in Westland are striving to enhance the horticultural sector, thereby contributing to several Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations and promoting global food security. It is long overdue for us, along with our partners, to begin developing a solid food strategy. I believe that the greenhouse horticulture sector is essential for creating a successful food strategy.

We aspire to unite our efforts in tackling the global challenges related to food safety and security that we encounter daily.



The Mayor of Westland Mr. Bouke Arends.



Mr. Bouke Arends, Mayor of Westland and Dr Mayelinne De Lara, Diplomat Magazine's Publisher.



H.E. Mr. Huong Nam Ngo, Ambassador of Vietnam and the Mayor of Westland.



Mark Verheul, Director of the Global Alliance of Horticulture Regions Establishment.



H.E. Ms Ana Cristina Rodriguez Pineda, Ambassador of Guatemala, H.E. Mr. Alvaro Gonzalez Otero, Ambassador of Uruguay, H.E. Ms. Sally Loo Hui, Ambassador of Panama, H.E. Ms Eva Silva Walker, Ambassador of Cuba, H.E. Ms. Franca Deza Ferreccio, Ambassador of Peru and H.E. Mr. Arnoldo Brenes Castro, Ambassador of Costa Rica.



I would also like to invite all of you to an engaging field visit to Westland right after the World Expo trade mission on Wednesday, September 10, 2025. This will be an opportunity to further explore potential cooperation with regions in your countries as part of the pre-launch phase of the Global Alliance of Horticulture Regions,” he said, before handing over to Mark Verheul, Director of Alliance Establishment.

Mr. Mark Verheul captivated his audience and ignited enthusiasm for his vision. He firmly articulated the necessity of building a Global Horticulture Network through robust collaboration among government, business, and academia—an approach that exemplifies Dutch development.

Verheul stressed the importance of actively practicing food diplomacy, which includes securing observer status in key United Nations bodies and other multilateral organizations. He asserted that we must cultivate the future together by leveraging cutting-edge food technologies, including robotics and artificial intelligence, to significantly enhance agricultural productivity.

To firmly establish Westland as the Capital of World Horticulture, several strategic initiatives must be implemented. This includes the official launch of the Global Alliance for Horticulture with all participating regions and the expansion of global partnerships. Westland has already forged exchange and development agreements with Kazakhstan, and this initiative will undoubtedly strengthen global horticultural cooperation while driving sustainable food production worldwide.

The afternoon concluded with everyone leaving motivated to join the Global Alliance of Horticulture.

# UZBEKISTAN KARSHI STATE UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION IN WESTLAND

By Roy Lie Atjam

A delegation led by the Rector of Karshi State University, Uzbekistan, Professor D. Nabiyeu, visited the World Horti Centre International Exhibition and Trade Centre in the Netherlands as part of a business trip to Europe. A meeting was held with Marga Vintges, Strategic Advisor to Westland Municipality, West-Holland Greenport Project Manager, Dr. Caicheng Huang, Professor of Plant Breeding and Biotechnology at the Inholland University of Applied Sciences, and Professor Li Zeng, International Project Manager of the Lentiz Education Group is located in South Holland. The parties exchanged views on agribusiness, biotechnology, and safe food supply, innovative educational methods and prospects for international cooperation. At the end of the meeting, the parties agreed to establish cooperation in important areas such as agriculture, water resource conservation, environmental sustainability, and food security.

Ahead of the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference Conference to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, this autumn, a delegation led by the rector of Karshi State University, Professor Dilmurod Nabiyeu visited Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to widely promote the rich historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan on an international scale. A comprehensive presentation on the topic “The Priceless Heritage of Uzbekistan” was held in Amsterdam. It showcased the national art, crafts, and Uzbek national cuisine. The exhibition and cultural programs aroused great interest among the guests. The event was attended by many students and guests.

The Karshi State University presentation concluded with a vibrant Uzbek lunch buffet, accompanied by engaging music and dance. Attendees enjoyed a showcase of exquisite Uzbek fashion items, while also seizing valuable networking opportunities.

# CELEBRATING BASTILLE DAY AT THE FRENCH RESIDENCE IN THE HAGUE

On the occasion of France’s National Day, H.E. Mr. François Alabrune, Ambassador of France to the Netherlands, hosted a reception at the French Residence in The Hague. The event brought together more than 200 distinguished guests from the diplomatic, military, judicial, economic, cultural, and institutional spheres.

Among those in attendance were the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Caspar Veldkamp, Mr. Fernando Arias González, Director-General of the OPCW; Dr. Marcin Czepelak, Secretary-General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration; H.E. Ms. Graciela Gatti, President of the United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals; Mr. Philippe Gautier, Registrar of the International Court of Justice; Prof. Jean-Marc Thouvenin, Secretary-General of The

Hague Academy of International Law; Mr. Jan van Zanen, Mayor of The Hague; and H.E. Dr. Jan Anthonie Bruijn, President of the Senate of the Netherlands.

The reception highlighted the enduring friendship and partnership between France and the Netherlands. Both Ambassador Alabrune and the Dutch Foreign Minister delivered well-received speeches reflecting on the shared values, history, and growing cooperation between the two nations. Their remarks emphasized collaboration in fields such as sustainable energy, food technologies, culture, and security. The Ambassador also underscored the flourishing artistic exchange between France and the Netherlands, mentioning recent partnerships between the Centre Pompidou and the Rijksmuseum.

# EL SALVADOR AND INTERNATIONAL LAW: REFLECTIONS FROM THE AMBASSADOR LECTURE SERIES AT MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

On 27 May 2025, H.E. Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Ambassador of El Salvador to the Netherlands, delivered a lecture at Maastricht University’s Faculty of Law titled “El Salvador in International Law: From Historical Challenges to a Legal Framework for Security and Development.”

A senior career diplomat, Ambassador Vásquez Gómez is currently serving his second mandate in The Hague. His previous postings include President of the Fourth Review Conference of the OPCW, Chairman of its Executive Council, El Salvador’s first Ambassador to Türkiye, and later Permanent Representative to the OAS. Since 2000, he has held senior roles in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focusing on multilateral diplomacy, security, and development.

**From Challenges to Transformation**  
The Ambassador traced El Salvador’s journey from the struggles of the 19th century to the post-civil war era. While peace brought hope, transnational influences and organized crime later fueled widespread insecurity,

leading to the country being ranked the most violent in the world in 2015. Since 2019, however, reforms have strengthened institutions, improved security, and rebuilt civic trust, marking a turning point in the nation’s trajectory.

### Three Milestones of International Engagement

El Salvador’s relationship with international law has been defined by:

- Peaceful dispute settlement, using international courts to resolve territorial and regional issues.
- Support for democratic transition, showing that even small states can defend their rights through principled engagement.
- Commitment to the rule of law, reinforcing its place in a just, rules-based international order.

### Reform and Security Today

The Ambassador highlighted the transformation under President Nayib Bukele since 2019 and the Territorial

Control Plan, which combined security measures with investments in education, health, and infrastructure. Over 82,000 gang members have been imprisoned, reducing homicide rates dramatically. Addressing concerns about prisoners’ rights, he noted: “Where were these voices when entire communities were being held hostage by criminals?” stressing the balance between individual rights and the collective right to live in peace.

### A Platform for Dialogue

The lecture formed part of The Ambassador Lecture Series, convened by Professor Fabián Raimondo and supported by ELSA Maastricht under the auspices of the Maastricht Centre for Human Rights. The series provides a platform for ambassadors to reflect on international law, diplomacy, and international relations. This event concluded the 2024–2025 academic year, with sessions resuming in September. Authors: Magdalena Latalaska, Ester Špaková, Gaia Ziliani, Maya Herrlett, Nehir Tuyluoglu and Lena Einhorn



Ambassador Alabrune warmly acknowledged the close cooperation between the intelligence services of both countries and congratulated the Netherlands on its successful organization of last month’s NATO Summit. He further praised the international institutions based in The Hague—such as the ICJ, ICC, OPCW, Eurojust, Europol, and The Hague Academy—for embodying the principles of international law and multilateralism. Special recognition was given to Mr. Fernando Arias for his “extraordinary



achievements” as Director-General of the OPCW, as his mandate approaches its conclusion later this year.

Looking to the future, the Ambassador highlighted joint Franco-Dutch projects in science and technology, including research in sustainable aviation, marine innovation, and renewable energy. He concluded by expressing gratitude to his team, partners, and sponsors, whose support made the National Day celebrations possible.



The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivering his remarks in flawless French, congratulated France on its National Day and reaffirmed the ever-strengthening ties of friendship and cooperation between the two nations.

The reception, hosted in the warm setting of the French Residence, was the legendary celebration of Bastille Day and a joyful occasion for guests to reconnect, exchange ideas, and renew their commitment to a shared future of partnership and peace.



# THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ICJ ADVISORY OPINION ON KOSOVO

The Hague, July 3, 2025 – The Embassy of Kosovo, in partnership with the Asser Institute (Centre for International & European Law), proudly convened an engaging academic conference to celebrate the momentous 15th anniversary of the International Court of Justice’s crucial advisory opinion on Kosovo’s declaration of independence.

The panel discussion explored the legal reasoning behind the ICJ’s Advisory Opinion and its meaning for international law, the Opinion’s impact on contemporary international relations and state building, and it contributed to unfolding the role of international legal mechanisms in the resolution of disputes.

The conference was followed by a reception, offering a valuable opportunity for networking and further discussions. The programme included welcoming remarks by Ambassador Dren Doli, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of the Netherlands; and a panel discussion moderated by Dr Machiko Kanetake, Academic Director of the Asser

Institute, featuring the expertise of the following guest speakers:

- H. E. Pieter Faith, former Dutch diplomat serving as the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) and as the International Civilian Representative in Kosovo;
- Sir Michael Wood, Barrister at Twenty Essex, London and Honorary Fellow of the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law at the University of Cambridge;
- Dr. Daniel Muller, Founding partner of FAR Avocats;
- Dr. Vjosa Musliu, Associate Professor of International Relations at the VUB;
- Prof. Dr. Jure Vidmar, Chair of Public International Law at Maastricht University;
- Prof. Dr. Qerim Qerimi, Professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Pristina in Kosovo and Vice Rector of the University.

Final remarks were given by Dr Kushtrim Istrefi, Associate Professor of Human Rights Law and Public International Law at Utrecht University and substitute member of the Venice Commission.



The conference successfully united members of the diplomatic community, academics, international law experts, and emerging researchers.

It culminated in an engaging networking reception that invited participants to delve deeper into the profound insights and themes illuminated during the panel discussions, fostering meaningful connections and inspiring dialogue.



# LUXEMBOURG NATIONAL DAY BARBECUE

To celebrate Luxembourg’s National Day, H.E. Mr. Mike Hentges, Ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, hosted a warm reception and garden barbecue on June 17, 2025, at his residence in The Hague. Guests enjoyed Luxembourg delicacies, wine, and music in a relaxed summer atmosphere.

Welcoming his guests in Lëtzebuergesch, Dutch and English, the Ambassador remarked: “My team, Michèle and I are happy to welcome you again for the Luxembourg National Day Barbecue.”

He reflected on recent high-level visits, including those of Prime Ministers Schoof and Frieden, and looked ahead to major events: the NATO Summit in The Hague,

the Benelux Summit in Luxembourg, and an October trade mission to Eindhoven and Rotterdam focused on tech, defense, and automotive.

Ambassador Hentges highlighted a historic moment for his country: the abdication of HRH Grand Duke Henri on October 3rd and the accession of his son Guillaume. “Grand Duke Henri has served with dedication for 25 years. Prince Guillaume and Princess Stéphanie stand ready to take over, anchoring their role in tradition while looking to the future.”

On global affairs, he stressed Luxembourg’s commitment to the rules-based multilateral order: “Luxembourg, just like The Netherlands, will stand with Ukraine and

continue to support it on the quest for a just and lasting peace.” He also underlined the need for diplomatic solutions in the Middle East.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the Schengen Treaty, he recalled its vital importance: “For Luxembourg, where 45% of the labour force crosses the border daily, a well-functioning Schengen area is of vital interest.” The evening concluded with traditional Luxembourg specialties—sausages, brochettes, Gromperekichelcher, Riesling, crémant, and beer from Esch-sur-Alzette. Raising his glass, the Ambassador toasted: “To the friendship between Luxembourg and The Netherlands, as well as to Grand Duke Henri and King Willem-Alexander. Cheers!”

# OPENING THAILAND GRAND FESTIVAL EDITION 2025

By Roy Lie Atjam

The grand opening of the Thailand Grand Festival 2025, organized by the Royal Thai Embassy in The Hague. This is the largest festival in the Netherlands that showcases the very best of Thailand.

Lange Voorhout, The Hague, Saturday 12th July 2025. The annual Thailand Grand Festival has triumphantly outdone last year’s attendance, marking an extraordinary celebration of Thai culture. The beautiful weather played a vital role in inviting crowds to join in this joyous celebration. This year’s carefully crafted program highlighted the richness of Thai traditions, from enticing cuisine to the exhilarating Songkran Thai New Year celebration, reminding us all of the vibrant spirit of togetherness and heritage.

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Asi Mamane.** “We’ve brought together the mouthwatering street food, refreshing drinks, authentic Thai products, dazzling performances from all regions of Thailand presented to you by Tourism Authority of Thailand and the prestigious “Banditpatanasilpa” Institute of

Fine Arts under our Ministry of Culture. This year, we are especially proud to highlight Songkran, the Thai New Year, as part of our show. Songkran is one of our most beloved traditions — a time of renewal, family, respect, and joy.

Through this celebration of Thai cultural heritage, we hope to deepen the bond of friendship between Thailand and the Netherlands and between our two peoples which has lasted over four centuries. I hope you will enjoy the spectacular performances, and feel the spirit of our friendship throughout this festival. But this is just the appetizer — so stay tuned for more showstoppers, including our much-anticipated raffles and competitions!

This year’s raffle prizes include a return air ticket from Amsterdam to Bangkok on EVA Air, luxury hotel stays in Bangkok, Phuket, and Chiang Mai and many more surprises. Who knows — you could already be on your way to Bangkok and beautiful islands in Thailand after this event! So please try your luck at the raffles, which will be drawn at 7 PM today.



We hope this festival rekindles your passion for Thailand and look forward to welcoming you to Thailand very soon. We invite you to help us spread the joy of today event— by sharing your pictures on Facebook and tagging us.

Last but not least, I wish to sincerely thank our wonderful partners: Thai Beverage, Carabao Group, PTT GC, TIPCO Asphalt, EVA Air, บริษัท ท่าอากาศยานกรุงเทพ, บริษัท ทวีภัณฑ์ ภูเก็ต บริษัท Artra Lux, บริษัท Crown Aviation, ECCO Group and Tourism Authority of Thailand and all others generous sponsors for making today possible. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to all the vendors showcasing the very best of Thailand. Mr Van Zanen, Mayor of the Hague also addressed the crowd.”

Another Thailand Grand Festival 2025, what an extraordinary day it has been.

forax

Exclusive for diplomats & military

Tax exceptions done right.

We simplify the process of accessing tax exceptions, delivering a seamless experience to all eligible individuals and organisations in Europe.

forax.com





# AGAM

At AGAM Mercedes-Benz, we understand that every diplomatic customer has unique needs. We offer tailor-made, one-stop shopping with a wide range of additional benefits: from advice and sales to maintenance, service, and flexible financing solutions.

**AGAM is your reliable partner in mobility – anytime, anywhere.**

AGAM, Donau 42 – The Hague



Discover AGAM.nl