

DIPLOMAT

MAGAZINE



**REFLECTIONS ON EIGHT YEARS OF
COLLABORATIVE WORK AND THE FUTURE OF
CHEMICAL DISARMAMENT**
H.E. FERNANDO ARIAS, DIRECTOR GENERAL

BUILDING TRUST BEYOND BORDERS:
MICHAEL SCHMID AND THE FUTURE OF EUROJUST

EL SALVADOR ON THE GLOBAL STAGE
ALEXANDRA HILL TINOCO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

THE MECHANISM IN ITS SUNSET PHASE
H.E. MRS. GRACIELA GATTI, PRESIDENT UN INTERNATIONAL RESIDUAL
MECHANISM FOR CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS



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PRESERVING OUR HUMANITY

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you to this new edition of Diplomat Magazine. Each issue represents more than a collection of articles; it is a symbol of hope and a reminder that dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation remain the most powerful instruments for advancing peace in our world.

From The Hague—the international city of peace, justice, and diplomacy—we reaffirm our shared commitment to the fundamental values of freedom, justice, human dignity, and peaceful coexistence. At a time when these principles are increasingly challenged, Diplomat Magazine remains dedicated to providing a platform where ministers, ambassadors, international officials, academics, and thought leaders can exchange ideas and perspectives.

Regardless of our nationalities, cultures, borders, or religions, we must preserve our sense of humanity, for we share the same aspirations: peace, prosperity, security, and respect. Human dignity transcends geography, politics, and belief. Through dialogue, understanding, tolerance, and genuine appreciation of one another, we can continue to learn, grow, and progress together. In doing so, we can manage our differences, build bridges, and shape a future founded on respect and our common humanity.

This edition brings together remarkable voices and timely reflections. We are honoured to publish Reflections on Eight Years of Collaborative Work and the Future of Chemical Disarmament by H.E. Fernando Arias, Director-General of the OPCW; Building Trust Beyond Borders: Michael Schmid and the Future of Eurojust by the President of Eurojust; El Salvador on the Global Stage by Alexandra Hill Tinoco, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and The Mechanism in Its Sunset Phase by H.E. Mrs. Graciela Gatti Santana, President of



Photography by Chris Ronteltap

the United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

We also celebrate several important milestones: the 10th anniversary of An Experts' Guide to International Protocol, now published in five languages; the 35th anniversary of ProChile in the Netherlands; Uruguay's donation of the sculpture The Totem of the Human Tribe to the International Criminal Court; and the success of the AI Impact Summit in India, highlighting the growing importance of international cooperation in innovation and technology.

Since 2013, Diplomat Magazine has remained committed to promoting dialogue, advancing international understanding, and strengthening the diplomatic community. None of this would have been possible without the trust, support, and collaboration of our readers, contributors, partners, and friends around the world.

To each of you, we extend our sincere gratitude. Together, let us continue to build bridges, encourage dialogue, and preserve the humanity that unites us all.

Dr. Mayelinne De Lara

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Leonardo Royal Hotel

LEONARDO ROYAL HOTEL DEN HAAG PROMENADE

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REFLECTIONS ON EIGHT YEARS OF COLLABORATIVE WORK AND THE FUTURE OF CHEMICAL DISARMAMENT

As his eight-year tenure as Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) draws to a close, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias offers his final reflections to Diplomat Magazine. One of the most senior and respected figures within The Hague's diplomatic community, Ambassador Arias has dedicated more than a decade of service in the Netherlands, including four years as Ambassador of Spain and eight years leading one of the world's most critical multilateral institutions.

Elected by the Conference of the States Parties representing 193 member states, his leadership has coincided with a historic milestone: the verified destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles worldwide. Yet, as he underscores, the mission is far from complete. In an era marked by geopolitical tensions, emerging technologies, and evolving security threats, the OPCW remains at the forefront of safeguarding international peace and security.

In this exclusive final interview, Ambassador Arias reflects on the Organisation's achievements, the persistent risks of chemical weapons, and the challenges that lie ahead—offering a compelling perspective on why the OPCW's work is more essential today than ever before.

As the head of the OPCW, could you explain the key successes of the Organisation over the past 30 years?

One of the OPCW's most notable achievements is its near-universal membership: 193 States Parties, equal to that of the United Nations.

As a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the Organisation has made a significant contribution to international peace and security through its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons. This has been one of its greatest achievements.

By July 2023, all 72,000 metric tonnes of declared chemical weapons worldwide had been irreversibly destroyed by the possessor States Parties under stringent verification by the OPCW.

Hundreds of international cooperation activities have been conducted by the OPCW over the past 30 years. These initiatives have spanned broad areas, including assistance and protection in case of use of chemical weapons or chemical incidents, technical capacity building on national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), and the promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry.

The programmes for enhancing the expertise of customs officials, first responders, investigators and laboratory analysts have been especially valued by States Parties, as has our dedicated Africa Programme, tailor-made to meet the needs of African Member States.

These achievements are the result of the collective vision of the States Parties of a world free of chemical weapons, and of

their commitment to the Convention and the OPCW. The Technical Secretariat of the OPCW has played its crucial role by effectively and professionally implementing its mandate.

You mentioned that all declared chemical weapons stockpiles had been irreversibly destroyed by 2023. What issues is the OPCW currently addressing? What are the remaining risks and challenges in achieving a world free from chemical weapons threats?

Although the stockpiled chemical weapons declared by possessor States Parties have all been destroyed, that does not mean that chemical weapons no longer pose a threat to international peace and security.

Currently, we are working with the new Government of Syria on the comprehensive identification and destruction of all components of the Syrian chemical weapons programme left behind by the Assad regime. We are also working together with relevant States Parties to destroy the old and abandoned chemical weapons from the First and Second World Wars, which continue to be discovered in several places. Apart from that, to provide collective assurances of the adherence to the Convention by all States Parties, we monitor nearly 5,000 chemical research and industrial facilities all over the world, to verify that these facilities are used exclusively for peaceful purposes. We are also working with partners in the international community to prevent chemical terrorism, among other things.

The main challenges fall into two categories: those related to proliferation and re-emergence of chemical weapons; and those related to the emergence of new disruptive technologies.

The Convention bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

Yet, recent conflicts and escalating geopolitical tensions have heightened concerns over continued possible use of chemical weapons on the battlefield.

At the same time, new and emerging technologies present significant challenges, as many of them can be misused in ways that undermine the object and purpose of the Convention, making it possible to acquire, weaponise and use toxic chemicals as weapons, in a faster, easier and more effective way.

Recognising that the Chemical Weapons Convention was negotiated 40 years ago, and that the political and security dynamics as well as the scientific and technological landscape have shifted so much since then, do you believe that the Convention remains effective and sufficient in curbing the chemical weapons threat? Has the OPCW taken any steps to adapt to these developments?

The OPCW is the international organisation tasked with ensuring a chemical weapons free world. It is undisputed that chemical weapons are stigmatised and considered abhorrent by the international community. No State has contested the Convention or legitimised the use of chemical weapons. Consequently, there is widespread political support for the work of the Organisation. In spite of the challenges I have mentioned, the Convention remains resilient and technically sound, with a rigorous verification regime.

However, more than 35 years have passed since the Convention was negotiated, and the text is showing its age. The global political tensions make it extremely difficult to introduce substantive amendments to the Convention. Nevertheless, there have been successful efforts to keep pace with scientific developments. For instance, in response to the use of a variant of the novichok nerve agent in 2018, the States Parties decided to amend the schedules of chemicals subject to OPCW verification, to incorporate a number of new novichok-related chemicals in the coverage of the Convention. I believe more technical changes of this nature will be needed in the future.

More broadly, the Secretariat and the States Parties continue to assess the implementation of the Convention every five years at a Review Conference. The Scientific Advisory Board also provides advice to me on ways that the Convention can be adapted and strengthened. Such mechanisms have proven effective at keeping the Convention fit for purpose in a changing world.

Could you elaborate on new technologies and their implications for the OPCW? How might technological advancements affect the Organisation's work in the future?

New and emerging technologies have a direct impact on the functioning of the Organisation. AI, in particular, improves our laboratory capabilities at the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology, and also has uses in various inspections,



investigations, forensics and sampling techniques involving sophisticated scientific methods.

However, these benefits co-exist with risks. To cite some examples, formulas for new and extremely toxic chemicals can now be generated quickly, easily and cheaply, without the need for extensive manual research and laboratory capacity. Fortunately, for the time being, the step between obtaining the formula and the material production of the chemicals remains complicated. Nonetheless, we must be alert to the reality that these technologies could make it easier for malicious actors to develop and deploy new toxic chemicals as weapons. Equally concerning are technologies such as drones, which can be used as delivery systems for toxic chemicals, extending their reach and causing harm on a wider scale.

New technologies also enable the design of new and powerful laboratories in a small space, making detection difficult in case of illegal activities. 3D printing allows the manufacturing of equipment to take place locally, thereby avoiding the scrutiny usually performed by control regimes that regulate international trade.

Automation enables laboratories to operate with minimal staff, reducing the risks of information leaks and making clandestine illegal activities harder to detect.

These are but a few examples, and there are many more that affect the threat spectrum the Organisation faces.

In this context, could you share insights about the recently inaugurated OPCW ChemTech Centre? What kind of activities are conducted there?

The Centre for Chemistry and Technology (the ChemTech Centre), which was inaugurated in the presence of His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands in May 2023, was the Organisation's response to challenges posed by scientific and technological developments as well as the evolving political context. Its state-of-the-art facilities and capabilities bolster our ability to monitor and react to any potential risk of the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The Centre also serves as a hub for maintaining and improving the skills and knowledge of our experts.

Today, the ChemTech Centre is an invaluable platform where we conduct the

technical work and training programmes I have mentioned. It also constitutes a powerful tool at the disposal of the States Parties, with significant potential to further enhance national implementation of the Convention in all its aspects.

Given everything you have mentioned, what are your thoughts on the future of the OPCW in this turbulent age?

When the Convention was being negotiated, some founding fathers of the Organisation thought with good reason that the OPCW would have completed its most fundamental role with the completion of the destruction of declared stockpiles. They anticipated that, upon reaching this milestone, the Organisation could be reduced to a very small Secretariat, or even be closed. The unexpected reality is that with rising geopolitical tensions and the risks posed by new and emerging technologies, this Organisation's work will continue well into the future. In effect, the OPCW is now more necessary than ever.

H.E. Judge Yuji Iwasawa, President of the International Court of Justice and H.E. Alexandra Hill Tinoco, Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

lens of its past challenges, but as a sovereign nation capable of defining its own future and contributing actively to international affairs.”

Ambassador Agustín Vázquez Gómez highlighted the decisive role played by the Foreign Minister in bringing the tribute to José Gustavo Guerrero to fruition.

“Gracias a la visión y determinación de la Canciller Hill, este homenaje al Juez José Gustavo Guerrero ha sido posible. Su decidido impulso personal y su visita al Palacio de la Paz en septiembre de 2024 marcaron el inicio de este acto de memoria y reconocimiento histórico.”

The Ambassador described Guerrero’s legacy as universal, praising his ability to combine scholarship with action, patriotism with multilateralism, and firmness with empathy. His words also reflected the values that continue to guide Salvadoran diplomacy today.

The permanent installation of Guerrero’s bust at the Peace Palace stands as a reminder that even small nations can make lasting contributions to international law and global governance. It also serves as a symbol of continuity between El Salvador’s diplomatic past and its present aspirations.

Under Alexandra Hill Tinoco’s leadership, El Salvador has embraced a more assertive international role while remaining committed to dialogue, cooperation, and the principles of international law.



ALEXANDRA HILL TINOCO: REPOSITIONING EL SALVADOR ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

The unveiling of a bust of Dr. José Gustavo Guerrero (1876–1958), the first President of the International Court of Justice, at the Peace Palace in The Hague was more than a tribute to the distinguished jurist. It was also a reflection of the diplomatic vision shaping El Salvador’s place in the world today.

The ceremony was presided over by H.E. Judge Yuji Iwasawa, President of the International Court of Justice, and H.E. Agustín Vázquez Gómez, Ambassador of the Republic of El Salvador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Among the distinguished guests was El Salvador’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Alexandra Hill Tinoco, whose presence underscored the significance her government attaches to preserving and promoting the country’s diplomatic heritage.

For Hill Tinoco, José Gustavo Guerrero represents one of the greatest examples of Salvadoran excellence in international affairs.

“He elevated the Foreign Ministry to the highest levels of international law in El Salvador. He was the first President of the International Court of Justice and positioned El Salvador within the global legal elite. His legacy lies in being the Foreign Minister with the greatest international impact in our country’s history,” Minister Hill Tinoco said during the ceremony.

The tribute to Guerrero is particularly meaningful because it mirrors many of the objectives pursued by Hill Tinoco throughout her tenure as Foreign Minister. Since assuming office, she has led an ambitious effort to strengthen El Salvador’s international profile and support President

Nayib Bukele’s vision of a country that speaks with confidence on the global stage. For decades, El Salvador’s foreign policy was largely characterized by discretion and caution. While maintaining constructive relations with international partners, the country rarely sought to shape international narratives or project a strong diplomatic voice. Under Hill Tinoco’s leadership, that approach has evolved significantly.

“Today, Salvadoran diplomacy is more visible, proactive, and diversified. The Foreign Ministry has expanded engagement with traditional partners while simultaneously strengthening relations across Europe, the United States, Asia, and the Middle East. Economic diplomacy, investment promotion, innovation, and cooperation have become central pillars of the country’s external relations strategy.”

At the same time, Hill Tinoco has placed particular emphasis on protecting the interests of the Salvadoran diaspora and promoting a more balanced international understanding of the country’s transformation. Her diplomatic approach recognizes that in today’s interconnected world, perception and narrative are increasingly important components of foreign policy.

“This strategic repositioning reflects a broader ambition: to ensure that El Salvador is viewed not merely through the



Photo: Chris Ronteltrap

THE MECHANISM IN ITS SUNSET PHASE: A RESPONSIBLE CONCLUSION OF THE JUSTICE CYCLE

By H.E. Mrs. Graciela Gatti, President of the United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

When the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda in 1993 and 1994 respectively, it marked a significant expression of the international community's commitment to the rule of law and an effort to restore human dignity in the aftermath of the mass atrocities of the early 1990's. These ad hoc Tribunals, which were later succeeded by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (commonly referred to as "the Mechanism"), achieved groundbreaking results. They authoritatively interpreted and gave concrete effect to the Genocide Convention and international humanitarian law. In relation to nearly 200 indictees, these courts held accountable those most responsible for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, through trials and appeals adhering to the highest standards of fairness.

While the Mechanism has entered its "sunset phase", it still carries real responsibilities to real people – obligations entrusted to the institution by the Security Council to ensure justice remains fair, effective, and durable. These include judicial oversight of protective measures granted to approximately 3,200 victims and witnesses and ensuring due process and effective implementation of sentences for the 38 convicted persons incarcerated under the Mechanism's authority. Other important residual functions are the Prosecution's assistance to national jurisdictions and the management of the archives of the ad hoc Tribunals and the Mechanism.

As the institution has evolved and its mandate has narrowed, the question of how its remaining functions should be managed — whether through continuation, transfer, or termination — has become increasingly important. In the current biennial review of the Mechanism's progress and work, the Security Council will soon consider two reports by the Secretary-General on the possible transfer of functions and is expected to take decisions on the future jurisdiction of the Mechanism. I consider that there are clear options for the responsible transfer and termination of certain functions and other changes to the Mechanism's mandate will allow it to become a very small, purely judicial institution, carrying out only

limited, non-resource-intensive judicial functions essential to the completion of the justice cycle.

The most pertinent proposals made by the Secretary-General are as follows: The Mechanism's Prosecution currently provides extensive assistance to various domestic prosecution efforts aimed at closing the impunity gap for fugitives and accused suspected of committing international crimes in the former Yugoslavia and during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. However, this technical assistance to national jurisdictions, as well as the Registry's management of the archives, which is vital to preserving an accurate historical record to support research and counter revisionism and genocide denial, do not need to remain embedded within a judicial institution and could instead be transferred to the UN Secretariat. Furthermore, under appropriate circumstances, some administrative functions related to the day-to-day supervision of conditions of imprisonment could also be transferred to States, if compliance with minimum international standards is ensured.

However, the Secretary-General's reports recognize that a limited number of judicial functions must remain at the international level in order to best ensure due process

and the interests of justice. I will address the two most critical ones in turn:

First, the judicial authority to vary protective measures for victims and witnesses. Protective measures assured these individuals' anonymity in proceedings before the ad hoc Tribunals and the Mechanism based on objective safety concerns. Many witnesses continue to fear retaliation or re-traumatization if their identities or testimony are disclosed; nevertheless, their evidence may be critical to key domestic accountability processes and allowing access to it may be necessary to avoid a miscarriage of justice in national cases. International judges are uniquely placed to impartially balance these competing interests and make determinations on varying protective measures fairly and consistently. Witnesses and victims who testified against those responsible for mass atrocities relied on assurances of international judicial protection. Preserving that guarantee is essential not only to the legacy of our work, but also to maintaining confidence in witness protection in future international criminal proceedings.

Second, the authority to designate enforcement States and to decide on pardon, commutation of sentence, or early release. Retaining this function at the international level ensures the most fair and uniform treatment of convicted persons regardless of where imprisonment takes place. Considering that the numerous States enforcing sentences under the authority of the Mechanism have varying early release and sentence remission practices, the transfer of this function to States creates credible risks of arbitrary, disparate and unequal treatment of prisoners.

The Mechanism is working diligently towards its ultimate closure. While the Mechanism's residual judicial functions do not garner the same publicity as the capture of fugitives and the issuance of verdicts, this does not make these processes less important to the justice cycle. Hastily terminating or transferring critical judicial functions risks disparate and arbitrary application of the law, as well as irreparable damage to the entire accountability process. The Mechanism remains committed to guaranteeing the international community's substantial investment in justice and will continue to uphold the more than three decades of groundbreaking advancements in human rights and international criminal law.

BUILDING TRUST BEYOND BORDERS: MICHAEL SCHMID AND THE FUTURE OF EUROJUST

By Diplomat Magazine

Michael Schmid, President of Eurojust, brings to the leadership of the European Union's judicial cooperation agency a rare combination of operational experience, institutional knowledge, and strategic policy insight. His professional journey mirrors the evolution of Eurojust itself. Beginning as a public prosecutor in Vienna specialising in economic crime, he joined Eurojust as a trainee in 2013 and has since served in nearly every operational role within the organisation before being elected President in November 2024. This unique trajectory gives him both a practitioner's perspective and a strategic vision for the future of European judicial cooperation.

"My background is as a public prosecutor from Vienna, specialised in economic crime," he explains. "But my career has been related to Eurojust for a long time. I started here in 2013 as a trainee."

After returning to Austria to work as a prosecutor, Schmid came back to The Hague, serving in several positions at the Austrian Desk and working directly on operational cases. That experience fundamentally shaped his understanding of Eurojust's mission.

"I really know what counts on the ground and what colleagues, prosecutors and judges need from us," he says. "We are a sort of service provider for the judicial authorities of the Member States and, of course, for countries outside the European Union."

His career later expanded to Brussels, where he worked at the Austrian Permanent Representation to the European Union. The experience gave him valuable insight into the EU's legislative process.

"It helps to understand the system well in order to explain to the authorities what we need."

Returning to Eurojust in early 2022 as National Member for Austria, Schmid was elected President in November 2024. The appointment, however, came unexpectedly. "I don't know whether I was really the 'natural President,' as you suggested," he says with a smile. "It came as quite a surprise for me. It wasn't part of my personal planning. I had a very young baby at home."

Following several inconclusive rounds of voting requiring a two-thirds majority, colleagues encouraged him to stand as a candidate. Once elected, he had just three days to prepare before taking office.



Photo: Chris Ronteltrap

"I would not recommend anyone to have such short notice before starting a job," he recalls. "It took me probably a year to really settle in."

Looking back, Schmid believes his years within the organisation made the transition possible. Today his responsibilities extend well beyond operational casework to strategic leadership, diplomacy and representing Eurojust on the international stage.

International Crime Requires International Trust

For Schmid, the greatest transformation in recent years has been the internationalisation of organised crime.

"Criminality has evolved rapidly over the past decade," he says. "It has a truly international dimension—not only across countries, but across entire regions of the world."

Traditional instruments such as mutual legal assistance requests remain important, but no longer suffice on their own.

“What we really need is collaboration built on mutual trust.”

For Schmid, trust is not an abstract concept but the foundation of effective judicial cooperation. In his experience, successful investigations are often built upon long-term personal relationships between prosecutors and judicial authorities across borders. This philosophy underpins Eurojust's international strategy, which today rests on three pillars. The first is a worldwide network of contact points in approximately 100 countries, providing an initial channel for legal discussions, coordination and operational cooperation. The second consists of Working Arrangements with non-EU countries. While these agreements facilitate strategic cooperation, Schmid believes the negotiation process itself is equally valuable because it establishes confidence between institutions. The third and most advanced level is the conclusion of International Agreements, allowing the exchange of personal data and the secondment of liaison prosecutors to Eurojust's headquarters in The Hague.

“This would be a prosecutor from their national system who has an office here in our headquarters,” he explains. “We cooperate with them on a daily basis.”

Eurojust currently hosts liaison prosecutors from countries including the United Kingdom, Norway, Ukraine, the United States and several Western Balkan partners. However, Schmid sees this as only the beginning. “It is our aim to significantly increase this number. We need to go beyond Europe.”

Organised Crime Without Borders

One of Eurojust's major priorities is combating organised crime, particularly international drug trafficking.

“The cocaine comes from Latin America,” Schmid explains. “We have increased our cooperation with Latin American countries.” He offers an analogy that vividly illustrates how organised crime has evolved.

“Criminal groups act sometimes like diplomats. They are all over the world, have contacts and work very well together.”

The consequences are increasingly visible throughout Europe.

“In some countries these criminal networks have become more violent,” he notes, pointing to rising violence associated with drug trafficking, including in the Netherlands.

For Schmid, criminal prosecution alone cannot solve the problem.

“It is very important to have a holistic approach towards drugs and drug trafficking,” he says, pointing to broader issues such as poverty, inequality, education and demand reduction alongside effective law enforcement.

Cybercrime and Artificial Intelligence

Digitalisation has transformed virtually every area of criminal activity.

“Online fraud cases represent approximately one-third to forty percent of our work,” Schmid explains. “Almost all of those offences are now committed online.”

One of the greatest future challenges, he believes, will be ensuring lawful access to encrypted communications and digital evidence while maintaining fundamental rights. Artificial intelligence presents both opportunities and risks.

“Criminals can use artificial intelligence to impersonate other people,” he warns. “A video can quite easily be produced with artificial intelligence.”

At the same time, AI has enormous potential to support investigators.

“We very often encounter enormous amounts of data that no person could realistically analyse on their own.”

For Schmid, artificial intelligence should enhance judicial work, never replace professional judgement.

“AI can help prosecutors—but there must always be human control.”

Preparing Eurojust for the Future

A major priority during Schmid's mandate will be the revision of the Eurojust Regulation.

“We need additional resources,” he says. “Otherwise it is just language on paper that we cannot action.”

One of his principal objectives is ensuring that judicial cooperation develops at the same pace as police cooperation.

“Judicial cooperation must not become the bottleneck.”

Without effective prosecution, he argues, organised crime cannot be deterred.

“Without prosecution there is no deterrence.”

Schmid also hopes the revised legal framework will strengthen Eurojust's ability to combat online crime, recover illicit assets more effectively and welcome additional liaison prosecutors from regions beyond Europe.

Accountability for International Crimes

Another priority remains Eurojust's support for investigations into war crimes committed in Ukraine. The Agency coordinates a joint investigation teams, manages the Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED) and hosts the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression (ICPA), which brings together prosecutors from multiple countries to prepare future proceedings.

“This will probably become the most important platform to prepare the work of the future tribunal,” Schmid explains.

Leading an Organisation Built on Trust

Beyond operational achievements and legislative reforms, Schmid ultimately measures success by the strength of the institution itself. While Eurojust's mission is to support prosecutors and judges across Europe and beyond, he believes leadership also means building an organisation where people are proud to contribute.

“I would like Eurojust to continue growing—to be a place where colleagues from all over Europe and from many other countries want to come to work; a place where they are proud of what we are doing and fully committed to the aims and goals of the Agency.”

For Michael Schmid, the future of Eurojust rests on three pillars: trust, international partnership, and the conviction that effective justice depends equally on strong legislation and strong relationships.



Michael Schmid and Dr Mayelinne De Lara, Diplomat Magazine's Publisher



Photo: Chris Ronteltrap

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

By H. E. Ms. Luz del Carmen Ibanez, Judge of the ICC

The pursuit of global stability, justice, and the strengthening of the rule of law is a central focus of international diplomacy. Yet, in an era of persistent global conflict and widespread human rights violations, can international legal institutions truly serve as guardians of justice and peace?

The complexities of modern conflicts raise important questions about the capacity of international courts to effectively address the root causes of violence and impunity. The International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stand at the forefront of this mission, acting as pivotal actors in the effort to uphold human rights, ensure accountability, and foster peace in regions fraught with instability.

Both, through their distinct but complementary mandates, can collaboratively reinforce the rule of law on a global scale. How do these courts shape international norms, and what challenges must they overcome to remain relevant and effective in an increasingly polarized world? These questions lay the foundation for understanding how international justice mechanisms can address contemporary conflicts and promote a more stable and just world order.

The role of international courts in addressing armed conflicts has evolved significantly, reflecting the growing recognition that justice and accountability are indispensable for sustainable peace. The ICC and ICJ, as integral components of the international legal order, have progressively adapted their functions to confront complex crises, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that the rule of law is reinforced globally.

The ICC and ICJ emerged from distinct historical backgrounds, yet they share a fundamental commitment to international peace and justice through legal mechanisms.

Established by the Rome Statute in 1998, the ICC was designed to address the impunity of individuals responsible for the most egregious crimes, such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression. The creation of the ICC marked a turning point in international criminal justice, as it signalled the international community's resolve to prosecute individuals who threaten global security and violate human rights. By focusing on individual accountability, the ICC seeks not only to bring justice to victims but also to deter future violations and contribute to post-conflict reconciliation.

In contrast, the ICJ, established in 1945 as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, operates primarily at the state level, adjudicating disputes between nations and issuing advisory opinions on pressing legal questions. The ICJ's role in shaping international legal norms has been instrumental in resolving inter-state conflicts and clarifying the legal obligations of states under international law. By addressing state responsibility rather than individual criminal accountability, the ICJ plays a role in fostering diplomatic solutions and reinforcing the principles of international law.

The engagement of both courts in scenarios of armed conflicts exemplifies their complementary approaches. The ICC intervenes by prosecuting individuals directly responsible for war crimes and atrocities committed in the territories of the states members to Rome Statute and by referral of UN Security Council in other

territories. Through investigations and trials the ICC provides a legal avenue for victims to seek redress and reparations and for perpetrators to face justice, breaking the cycle of impunity that often perpetuates violence. Meanwhile, the ICJ addresses conflicts from a structural perspective, adjudicating interstates disputes that underpin broader tensions and offering legal clarity on state actions. At same time ability to expand the protection of the law to novel and complex world concerns and humanity's emerging crucial issues reinforcing values and international legal standards.

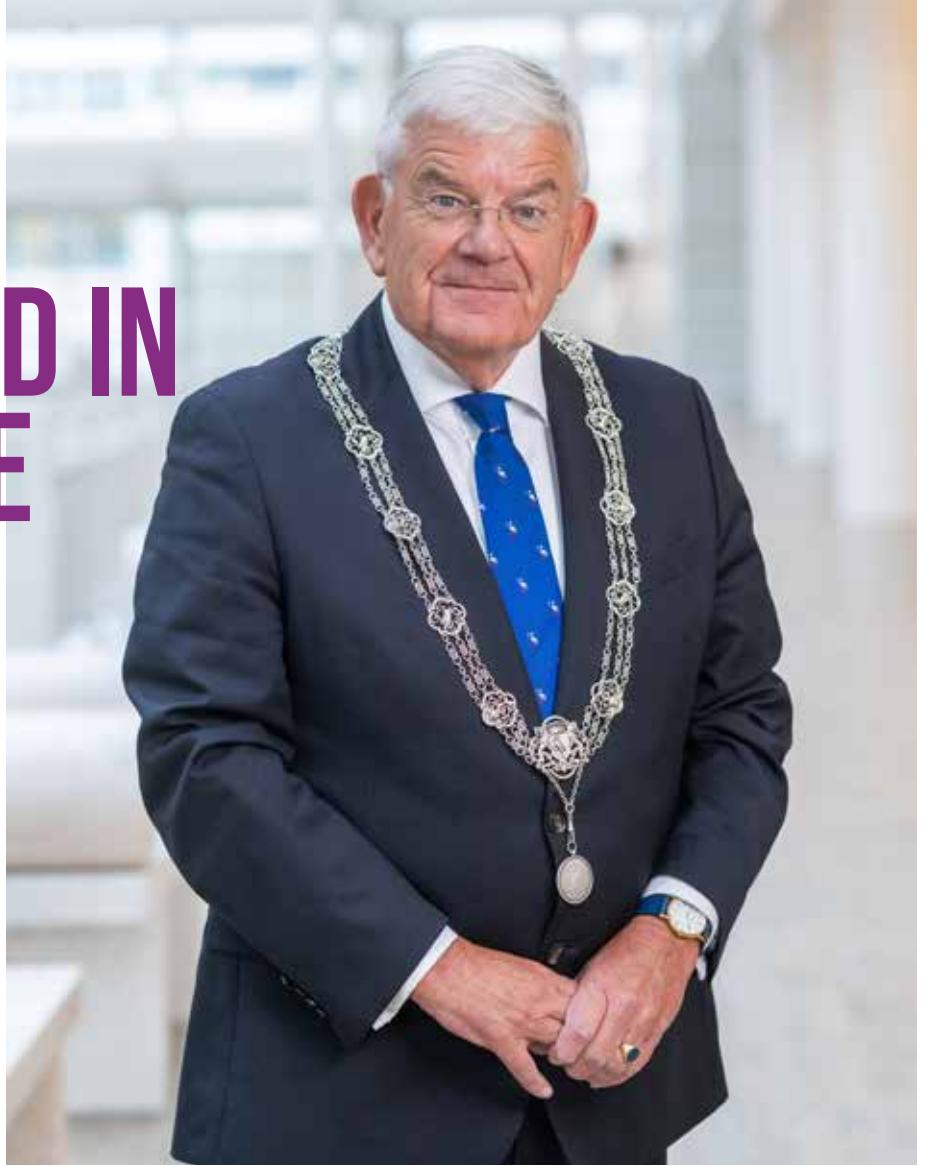
The complementary nature of the ICC and ICJ is crucial for addressing the multifaceted dimensions of armed conflicts. While the ICC focuses on the prosecution of individuals, the ICJ's emphasis on state responsibility ensures that justice operates on both micro and macro levels. This dual-track approach not only strengthens the accountability framework but also reinforces the preventive function of international justice. The ICC's issuance of arrest warrants and the ICJ's binding rulings create legal precedents that deter future violations and promote adherence to international norms. Moreover, the contributions of both courts to post-conflict reconstruction are vital in fostering reconciliation and building resilient societies.

This is how both institutions lay the groundwork for long-term peace and stability and Strengthen the Global Rule of law and Huan rights.

THE HAGUE: THE WORLD IN MINIATURE

**By the Honorable Jan van Zanen,
Mayor of The Hague**

Nowhere does the Netherlands look as organised as in Madurodam; I realised this again during a recent visit. My eyes swept over the Amsterdam canals, with the Westerkerk standing as a proud landmark. A little bit further, I admired the Frisian Wouda pumping station. With a few more steps, I was standing next to the Peace Palace in The Hague. Trains ran on schedule, and traffic jams were non-existent. Welcome to the ideal society, scale 1:25.



Outside the gates of Madurodam, the real city of The Hague was waiting. Not The Netherlands in miniature, but rather, the world pocket-sized. Because with 180 nationalities, 110 embassies, and at least 550 international organisations, our city is literally a 'global village.'

You notice it daily on the streets. An embassy employee parks their bike next to a family cargo bike. In a coffee bar near the Anna Paulownaplein, a team from an international organisation discusses its plans, while at the bar, someone is on a call with New York or Nairobi. English is a given, but you hear French, Spanish, or Arabic just as often. No one even blinks.

The Hague does not have a diplomatic district set apart from the rest of the city. Embassies are housed in old stately townhouses; international organisations share their neighbourhoods with homes, schools, and shops. International work happens in the midst of daily life. The distance between a high-level meeting and a tram stop is often shorter than the distance between theory and practice.

In Madurodam, the Binnenhof always looks complete and fully in use. In The

Hague, the real Binnenhof is hidden behind fences and scaffolding. It is being renovated and is temporarily closed, while political work continues elsewhere. That difference is telling. Our city cherishes its symbols, but it will not be paralysed by them. When work has to be done, the work moves.

This is equally true for The Hague as the international city of peace and justice. The Peace Palace is not a stage set, but it is an office where people walk in every day carrying files and notes. A little further down are the institutions dealing with war crimes, human rights, cybersecurity, or conflict mediation. The conversations are seldom spectacular. They are about definitions, case law, and wording that must hold up under scrutiny.

For diplomats and other internationals, The Hague is often an interim stop. Postings last a few years, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter. Yet, a routine quickly takes hold. Regular lunch spots, familiar faces at gatherings, the same walking routes through the city. In this respect, The Hague shows surprisingly clear similarities to Madurodam. Everything here is in close proximity. Distances are short, the connection between institutions is visible.

But while little to nothing changes in the miniature park, The Hague is in constant motion. Teams rotate, priorities shift, and new crises emerge. Our city doesn't resist these flows; it adapts fluidly where possible and facilitates where necessary.

Now that the international legal order faces global pressure, The Hague remains unwavering in its support. A steadfast commitment for which U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres explicitly expressed his appreciation during our meeting in April, when he visited our city for the 80th anniversary of the International Court of Justice.

Those who visit Madurodam see the Netherlands as an idealised concept. Those who work in The Hague see international cooperation as it truly functions: as daily work involving concrete issues, agendas, and interests.

That work is carried out by people like you. By people who give our city colour, weight, and international grandeur. People who bring the world to The Hague and The Hague to the world. As you can see: we are happy to have you.



AI IMPACT SUMMIT 2026: WORLD LEADERS UNITE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF AI

“ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE MARKS A
TRANSFORMATIVE CHAPTER IN HUMAN HISTORY”:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

With a population of 1.4 billion, India's growing importance in the field of AI cannot be overlooked. It is for this reason, the India AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi from 16–20th February at the iconic Bharat Mandapam, brought together not only 22 Heads of State/Government but also policy makers, tech tycoons, and innovators. The fourth in a series of such summits - Bletchley Park (UK, 2023), Seoul (2024), and Paris (2025) – its magnitude was unmatched with 100+ participating countries, 500+ sessions, 3,250+ speakers and 300+ exhibitors.

Amongst the many prominent political figures attending the event were French President Emmanuel Macron, and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The bigwigs of the tech industry included Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, Demis Hassabis, CEO of Google DeepMind, Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic, Matthew Prince, CEO of Cloudflare, Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries.

M.A.N.A.V. Vision

Inaugurating the Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed that India's vision for AI is ‘Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya’ (Welfare for All, Happiness of All).

To translate this vision into action, PM Modi presented MANAV, the Hindi word for “human”, which serves as an acronym representing five core principles for

human-centric AI governance: M – Moral and Ethical Systems: AI should be based on ethical guidelines; A – Accountable Governance: Transparent rules and robust oversight; N – National Sovereignty: Respect for national rights over data; A – Accessible and Inclusive: AI should be a multiplier, not a monopoly; V – Valid and Legitimate: AI should be lawful and verifiable.

Major Investment Announcements

Significant investment commitments across the AI value chain which were announced during the Summit include the following:

- Over USD 200 billion in AI-related investments are expected across infrastructure, foundation models, hardware and applications.
- Reliance Industries pledged USD 110 billion over seven years towards AI-focused infrastructure.
- Tata Group & OpenAI announced a partnership to scale AI-ready data centres.
- Adani Enterprises announced plans to invest USD 100 billion by 2035.
- General Catalyst announced a USD 5 billion investment commitment over five years, while Lightspeed Venture Partners announced USD 10 billion in investments.
- Google announced investments including new India-US subsea cable routes and a USD 15 billion AI hub in Andhra Pradesh; support for AI innovation and digital skills development.

- Larsen & Toubro joined Nvidia to build one of India's largest AI computing facilities.

Adoption of New Delhi Declaration

Endorsed by 92 countries and international organisations, the India AI Impact Summit 2026 Declaration set a shared global vision for an equitable, ethical, and inclusive AI. Inspired by the motto “Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya”, it lays out a comprehensive framework built on seven key pillars, including democratising AI resources, utilising AI for economic growth and social good, ensuring secure and trusted AI, expanding AI in science, enabling social empowerment, developing human capital, and building resilient and energy-efficient systems.

The Legacy of the Summit

The Summit truly democratised AI. Unlike prior global AI gatherings confined to small rooms of CEOs and experts, it brought students, youth and common citizens into the conversation — providing them with direct access to the world's leading AI thinkers. This inclusive outreach is the defining legacy of the AI Impact Summit 2026, promoting fresh and innovative ideas.

India in the Global AI Spotlight

India brings unparalleled scale and energy to everything it does and this Summit was no exception. With the presence of world leaders, major technology companies, and innovative startups, the event clearly demonstrated the country's capability to convene global conversations on the future of technology.

Hosting one of the world's largest youth populations and technology talent driven by its diversity, democracy and demographic dynamism, India's energy capacity and policy clarity uniquely position it to harness AI's full potential.



FROM SOLIDARITY TO PARTNERSHIP: AMBASSADOR VUSI MADONSELA REFLECTS ON 30 YEARS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

This milestone also recalls the international solidarity that supported South Africa's democratic transition, particularly the historic relationship between South Africa and the Netherlands.

In this special interview, H.E. Mr. Vusi Madonsela, Ambassador of South Africa to the Netherlands, reflects on the enduring significance of the Constitution, Nelson Mandela's historic visit to the Netherlands, the evolution of bilateral relations, and South Africa's achievements over the past three decades.

This year marks 30 years since the adoption of South Africa's Constitution. What does this milestone represent for South Africa today?

The adoption of South Africa's 1996 Constitution marked a historic turning point, ushering in a democratic era founded on human rights, dignity, equality, and fundamental freedoms for all citizens.

Thirty years later, the Constitution remains South Africa's "North Star" — a living instrument guiding the country's pursuit of social, political, and economic justice, as well as its commitment to human rights-driven diplomacy and global mediation.

Nelson Mandela's first official visit abroad after his release was to the Netherlands. How do you interpret the significance of that visit, and how has Dutch support influenced South Africa's democratic journey?

Tata Nelson Mandela (affectionately known as Madiba) paid a visit to the Netherlands in June 1990, just four months after his release from prison. Against the backdrop of the famous statement by the Dutch

In 2026, South Africa marks 30 years since the adoption of its democratic Constitution, widely recognised as one of the world's most progressive rights-based constitutions. Beyond ending apartheid, it laid the foundation for a society built on human dignity, equality, and freedom.

Queen, Her Majesty Juliana, who told the Prime Minister of apartheid South Africa, Mr Daniel François Malan, in 1949 that she would "never set foot in his country as long as apartheid reigned", Madiba's visit was a deeply emblematic move which served as a profound acknowledgment of the role played by the Dutch in both our country's painful history and its struggle for freedom and democracy. Queen's Juliana's stance marked a major royal objection to the apartheid regime.

It was also never lost on Madiba that in 1961 the Netherlands became the only Western country to vote in favour of an anti-apartheid resolution at the UN, which also saw a burgeoning Netherlands Anti-Apartheid Movement which actively isolated apartheid South Africa. Clearly, the prioritisation of an early visit to the Netherlands was both deliberate and purposeful. Madiba honoured the Dutch citizens who fought against apartheid while planting a seed for fostering a new, cooperative relationship based on human rights. In his own words, Madiba described the historic visit as a "transformation of international solidarity into a "partnership for peace and development".

Crisply put, the success of that visit serves as a powerful reminder of what humanity can really achieve when the international community unites against oppression.

During the struggle against apartheid, the Netherlands played a visible role in supporting freedom and justice for South Africans. How do you see this legacy reflected in today's bilateral relationship between South Africa and the Netherlands?

The legacy of the Netherlands' support for the people of South Africa's protracted struggle against apartheid remains visible today through a special relationship that has evolved from moral solidarity into a strategic, multi-sector partnership. Today, our shared history is reflected in several key pillars of our bilateral relations which are governed through a Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC), co-chaired by our Foreign Ministers.

One of the highlights of these deep bilateral pertains Trade and Investment which has created economic Interdependence between the two nations. The Netherlands has become one of South Africa's largest trading partners in the EU and a top source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

In addition to the foregoing, since the start of the democratic transition in 1994, the Netherlands continues as a key partner to South Africa's post-apartheid government, in a range of areas which include, but are not limited to: Education; Arts and Culture; Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation; Digitisation and Cyber Security; Environment and Climate



about safeguarding freedom and constitutional values?

As South Africa's Ambassador to the Netherlands, also accredited to the International Organisations and International Courts based in The Hague; as a lawyer by profession and former Director-General of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, my message to the youth in both our nations and the world is rooted in the active protection of human rights and democratic institutions, as well International law and the International Courts that administer and apply it.

The youth must be vigilant against the erosion of constitutional guarantees. Freedom is never a permanent "given." Constitutional values must be actively defended against contemporary threats which often assume the form of the shrinking of civic spaces, misinformation, disinformation.

Drawing from South Africa's history of struggle against apartheid and the role played by international solidarity in bringing an end to apartheid in our country, I sincerely believe the youth ought to appreciate the importance of the indivisibility of freedom. As the future belongs to them, the youth must recognise that a denial of rights to one person anywhere diminishes the freedom of all across the globe. I encourage the youth to see justice as a universal, rather than local, responsibility.

Finally, I wish to stress that no individual is above the law and that the trust placed in present and future leaders comes with a profound responsibility to adhere to ethical conduct and the rule of law – especially international law to safeguard international peace and security.

Change; Agriculture; Water Management; Green Energy and Just Energy Transition Partnership; Finance; Social Development, Migration, Human Rights Advocacy; and Addressing Colonial Legacies.

What achievements over the past three decades do you believe deserve greater international recognition?

Firstly, over the past 30 years South Africa has achieved a stable transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy.

As part of its fight against the stubborn legacy of apartheid, which still manifests in high levels of extreme poverty among the historically excluded sections of the population, South Africa has implemented one of the most comprehensive social protection systems in the developing world.

South Africa has also rolled out a system of free basic education for learners from poor families. South Africa has also put together a National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NFSAS) which enables South African students from poor families to access opportunities to pursue their studies in South Africa's higher education institutions.

In recent times, following the covid-19 pandemic, South Africa has also extended its social safety net to provide social relief of distress to South Africans of employable age who either lost employment or are unable to

enter the labour market due to the lingering impact of the pandemic on the economy. In addition, based on credible statistical data, South Africa has also built the largest HIV and AIDS treatment programme in the world, thereby saving millions of lives.

Based on its highly developed economic infrastructure, the most level of industrialisation on the continent and the size of its economy, South Africa has established itself as a leading African voice in global affairs and a key player in BRICS.

Looking ahead, what role do you see for South Africa–Netherlands cooperation in strengthening democratic values?

The relationship between South Africa and the Netherlands has evolved into a strategic "partnership of equals" based on shared democratic values, mutual interests, and global responsibility.

Cooperation continues to deepen through academic and scientific exchanges, cultural and social initiatives, innovation, migration management, and skills development. Today, both nations work closely to promote multilateralism, technological collaboration, and reform of global governance institutions, including the United Nations and the Security Council.

What message would you like to convey to younger generations in both countries

As we celebrate the 18th anniversary of the Republic of Kosovo, we mark more than a milestone in the life of a young nation. Eighteen is the age of adulthood—a moment to reflect on how far we have come, to acknowledge those who made our journey possible, and to look ahead with confidence and responsibility.



KOSOVO AT EIGHTEEN: A NATION BUILT ON HOPE

By H.E. Dr. Dren Doli

Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

What began with the international community's humanitarian intervention has evolved into one of Europe's youngest and most dynamic democracies. Kosovo's story demonstrates what can be achieved when the principles of justice, the rule of law, and international solidarity prevail over violence and oppression.

Yet beyond political achievements and economic progress, there is one lesson that has defined Kosovo's journey above all others: hope.

Hope carried our people through the darkest chapters of our history. It sustained us when our future seemed uncertain and taught us resilience when our very existence was under threat. Hope inspired us to imagine a country where future generations could live in freedom, peace, and prosperity. It also enabled us to build lasting friendships with nations and partners who believed in our cause and continue to stand with us today.

Eighteen years after declaring independence, Kosovo stands as a democratic, sovereign Republic committed to peace, multilateralism, and the protection of human rights. These accomplishments are not an endpoint but part of a longer journey envisioned by previous generations.

They honour the sacrifice of all those who gave their lives for Kosovo's freedom and independence.

Our democratic institutions continue to mature. During the past year alone, Kosovo successfully conducted two rounds of general elections, all free, competitive, and fair. Such democratic continuity reflects the strength and resilience of our institutions. At the same time, our economy recorded GDP growth of 4.5 percent, among the highest in both the European Union and the Western Balkans, demonstrating our determination to build a prosperous future.

Kosovo remains firmly committed to peace, regional cooperation, and good-neighbourly relations throughout South-East Europe. We also remain deeply grateful to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, whose political, diplomatic, and economic support has been instrumental in strengthening our strategic partnership.

The friendship between our two countries has deep roots. During Kosovo's struggle for liberation, Dutch soldiers serving within NATO stood alongside our people in defence of freedom and human dignity.

Many of those veterans continue to support Kosovo today, serving as guardians of historical truth and reminding us that peace is built upon courage, solidarity, and shared values.

Looking ahead, Kosovo's strategic objectives remain clear: membership in NATO and the European Union. These aspirations are not merely political ambitions; they reflect our identity and our place within the family of democratic European nations.

Hope continues to guide us. It is hope that gives us the determination to keep knocking on every door until our voice is heard. We do not seek special treatment, nor do we ask for what we have not earned. We seek our rightful place in a united Europe because we share its values, its responsibilities, and its vision for the future.

As Kosovo enters adulthood, we do so with confidence, humility, and hope. Our journey has shown that hope is not passive optimism; it is the determination to persevere, to build, and to believe that a better future is always within reach.

Hope never dies. It simply transforms into the courage to keep moving forward.

AT THE POLISH EMBASSY IN THE HAGUE, HISTORY MEETS AMBITION

When I arrived at the Polish Embassy, the first thing that struck me was the building itself: elegant, historic, steeped in diplomatic tradition. Yet today Poland is a European tiger eager to play a greater role in Europe and the World. And it is precisely at this intersection of history that I met Ambassador Margareta Kassangana.

Meeting here in this beautiful historic building, I think about how much Poland's image has changed in recent years. Is that shift also visible here in The Hague?

Absolutely. And I think it is one of the most interesting developments in how Poland is perceived internationally. Today's Poland is a country of remarkable economic dynamism, resilience, and ambition. We are not only a key political actor in Europe, but also a country that is becoming more visible through innovation, scientific progress, and strategic thinking in the World. From The Hague, this transformation is very tangible.

Poland and the Netherlands seem to have grown even closer in recent years. What is driving that deepening partnership?

In an increasingly unpredictable world, trusted partnerships matter more than ever. Few bilateral relationships in Europe illustrate this truth as clearly as the ties between Poland and the Netherlands. This alignment is reflected in concrete actions. When Russia violated Polish and NATO airspace in September 2025, the swift and resolute response by Dutch pilots sent a powerful signal. It was a vivid demonstration of partnership and unity at a moment of heightened tension.

But there is also a strong economic dimension to Polish–Dutch relations?

Yes, and it is a very important one. The Netherlands is already one of our top export destinations and key suppliers of goods, but I am still exploring where this relationship can go next. There is enormous potential in high-tech and innovation-driven sectors: IT/ICT, semiconductors,

advanced manufacturing, space innovation and energy transition. These are sectors that are not just commercially attractive — they are strategically vital and that matters enormously.

And there is also a very human layer to this relationship, isn't there?

Absolutely. Around 400,000 Poles live in the Netherlands today. Their contribution to Dutch society and economy is substantial and widely recognised. They are valued for their professionalism, expertise, work ethic, and reliability. But they also form a living bridge between our societies.

You've said before that what makes this embassy unique is its multilateral dimension. Why is that so central for you personally?

Because this is exactly what makes this posting so distinctive — and, for me, especially meaningful. One day you are working on political dialogue with the Dutch authorities, economic cooperation, or defence matters. The next, you are engaged in discussions on chemical disarmament, accountability for war crimes, support mechanisms for Ukraine, or developments in international law. These spheres increasingly overlap and interact.

Let's stay for a moment with the multilateral side. Where is Poland most active here in The Hague?

Poland is very active in several key formats. At the OPCW Poland is also a member of the OPCW Executive Council, where I hold the position of Vice-Chairperson from the Eastern European Group. We also finalised



Photo: Chris Ronteltap

a voluntary financial contribution to support the OPCW's work related to Syria and Ukraine. This reflects not only our political commitment, but also a practical willingness to help the organisation carry out its mission.

At the same time, Poland is highly active in the world of international justice. This engagement has been recognised in our work with the International Criminal Court. I currently serve as Vice-President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, which is both an honour and a responsibility. It is a sign that Poland is seen as a serious and constructive actor in these debates.

And, of course, Poland strongly supports international efforts aimed at helping Ukraine secure justice and redress. That commitment was clearly reflected in our accession, in December 2025, to the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

So Polish Embassy operates almost like several institutions in one?

In a sense, yes. And that is exactly why it is such a fascinating place to work. Not only it requires diplomatic skills, but also high flexibility. You need to be able to move between very different registers: history and memory, defence cooperation, innovation policy, labour mobility, chemical disarmament, international criminal justice, and support for Ukraine.

It truly seems fascinating. Thank you very much.

Thank you. It was a pleasure.



THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT AS A CORNERSTONE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

By H.E. Mrs. Carolina Olarte Bácares, Ambassador of Colombia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands Colombian candidate for the International Criminal Court judge election (2027-2036)

International law has never had an easy path to fulfilling its mission. The aspirations of equality and fraternity promoted for human society have eventually been contrasted with the irrational use of force and discrimination in the actions and motivations of States. However, if we examine the workings of international law there are outstanding milestones that illustrate how it has been able to address highly complex problems and seemingly insurmountable controversies.

A great example that crystallizes such consideration is the International Criminal Court (ICC). Its institutional mandate to ensure that international crimes are investigated, prosecuted, and punished according to the highest standards of retributive and restorative justice, embodies the aims of legal innovation, the opportunity of deliberation, and the moral standing over violence.

The ICC represents the international community's tradition of prosecuting the most heinous crimes, established in Nuremberg and Tokyo and progressively developed in both national courts and ad-hoc international tribunals. Therefore, the establishment of the Rome Statute System should be seen as a milestone for all humanity.

Be as it may, the Court's consistent commitment to upholding human conscience in the context of criminal responsibility for atrocities and heinous

crimes is being faced through actions focused on preventing its functioning and discrediting its achievements. Such actions have come to dispute its very existence and continuity as a cornerstone of international law.

Against this backdrop, and with the conviction that the ICC should be supported to remain the arena for the most significant developments in the field of international criminal justice, Colombia decided to support its continuity by submitting my candidacy as an ICC judge for the next election process, corresponding to the period 2027-2036. I am originally and have conducted most of my professional work in Colombia, a country that suffered a prolonged and degrading internal armed conflict. Therefore, I believe its experience in seeking a just and lasting peace through transitional justice could be instrumental for empowering the already prevailing work of the ICC. Moreover, to reaffirm the latter's legitimacy as a unique mechanism for maintaining global peace and security while promoting the rights of the victims and social reconciliation.

From my work as an international law practitioner before international tribunals, I have observed that the system is under considerable pressure from those who tend to discredit norms and decisions when they do not align with their particular interests. However, since its inception in the post-war era, international criminal law has been conceived as a means of holding those responsible for the graves offenses accountable, thus preventing a relapse of violence and other structural causes of such crimes. Therefore, ensuring consistency in the application of international decisions is crucial, as selectivity cannot be an option in a rules-based international order.

In turn, the many years I have devoted to international law, human rights and

transitional justice scholarship in a complex context such as Colombia's, have conveyed a powerful idea to me: that the already legitimate objectives of international criminal justice can be amplified even further if, in addition to fulfilling its retributive function, it can also promote the redress of harm caused by such illegal conduct. Whereas the ICC has already taken important steps in such direction, I think that more can be done to ensure that the scope of the ICC is leveraged to contribute to international peace and security from the perspective of the victims, who are the ones who remind us why we are here and why we do what we do.

Finally, the ICC embodies one of our species' greatest aspirations: to coexist despite our differences, so that the social conflicts that naturally arise from these divergences — including international crimes — can be addressed through non-violent means and thus meet social expectations on accountability. As a diplomat based in the City of International Peace and Justice, I have been able to deepen my capacity to fully apprehend the mechanisms involved in the quest for cooperation and consensus, which happen to be fundamental for the exercise of judicial functions under the constant pressure of multifaceted political dynamics.

All in all, the ICC is a cornerstone of the international justice system, whose objective is to protect individuals from the indiscriminate use of violence and to promote accountability for human rights violations and the commission of international crimes. With this in mind, my candidature seeks to draw upon the experience gained by many countries and more recently condensed by Colombia's peace laboratory, with its transitional justice and peacebuilding project, to strengthen the mechanisms the Court already uses to fulfill its mandate.

THE NATIONAL DAY OF RUSSIA: CONTINUITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES

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



For Russia, June 12 is a special date – the National Day of Russia. This day symbolizes the continuity of modern Russian statehood throughout history. For millions of our citizens, this Day serves as a reminder of the importance of national unity.

As President of Russia Vladimir Putin stated: «Over the course of more than a thousand years, our statehood has passed through different eras, including brutal invasions by enemies, fragmentation, and the tragedies of internal strife. Yet each such difficult period ultimately ended in the rebirth of the Fatherland. Heroic generations of our people overcame hardships and adversity, endured every trial, created and enhanced the greatness of our Motherland, and brought glory to their names».

Today, Russia seeks to strengthen its position on the global stage. Despite unprecedented external pressure and sanctions, our economy demonstrates resilience and the ability to adapt effectively to new conditions. Sound macroeconomic policies and the development of domestic production help ensure economic stability and the implementation of long-term national objectives.

Particular attention is being devoted to strengthening technological and industrial sovereignty. Russia maintains leading positions in a number of strategic sectors, including energy, nuclear industry, space technologies, agriculture, and the defense-industrial complex.

The nuclear industry serves as a prime example. Russia is the first country in the world to actively develop fourth-

generation nuclear technologies aimed at closing the nuclear fuel cycle. Furthermore, it is the only country in the world with a fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers that utilize nuclear technology to maintain a permanent national presence in the Arctic. This allows for year-round navigation on the Northern Sea Route, one of the most promising trade routes of the 21st century. The Russian Federation remains one of the world's largest suppliers of food products and energy resources, making a significant contribution to global food and energy security. Amid instability in international markets, our country continues to fulfill its obligations to partners and advocates equitable economic cooperation free from the politicization of trade and sanctions.

An integral part of Russia's national identity remains its immense cultural and scientific heritage. Russian scientists, writers, composers, and artists have long been a part of the world's cultural legacy.

Throughout its history, Russia has evolved as a country of dialogue among cultures, where the diversity of traditions and identities serves as a source of development and internal resilience. It is precisely this historical experience that enables our country to consistently advocate for the establishment of a fair multipolar system of international relations based on equal and indivisible security, respect for the cultural and civilizational identity of nations, and the right of every state to independently determine their own paths of development. As stated in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation approved by President Vladimir Putin, our key priority is "striving for a system of international relations that guarantees reliable security, preservation of its cultural and civilizational identity, and equal opportunities for development for all states, regardless of their geographical location, territorial size, demographic

profile, resource base, military potential, or political, economic and social systems". Russia is actively developing relations with the countries of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, while strengthening cooperation within BRICS, the SCO, and other multilateral frameworks. Expanding ties with Global South countries reflects objective trends in the modern world and contributes to a more stable and balanced international system.

At the same time, Russia consistently advocates for maintaining open dialogue and seeking diplomatic solutions to international problems. Russian diplomacy has traditionally been guided by the principle of considering the interests of all parties and preventing escalation of conflicts.

Preserving the memory of the Victory over Nazi Germany during the Second World War is of particular importance for Russian society. It was achieved through the unparalleled courage and self-sacrifice of millions of Soviet citizens. This memory must never be forgotten!

12 June symbolizes the continuity of our nation's history, which has endured and overcome many challenges throughout the centuries. Modern Russia looks confidently toward the future, relying on its own resources, historical experience, and the potential of its people. Strengthening sovereignty, ensuring security, improving citizens' quality of life and developing international cooperation on the basis of equality remain key objectives of our country.



KENYA: THE ORIGIN OF WONDER AND A PARTNER FOR AFRICA'S FUTURE

By H.E. Ms. Halima Mucheche, Ambassador of Kenya to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

In a rapidly changing global landscape, nations are increasingly measured not only by economic performance but by their capacity to connect people, ideas, markets, and innovation. Kenya exemplifies this dynamic. Widely recognised as the birthplace of the safari and home to some of the world's most celebrated wildlife experiences, Kenya today is equally distinguished as a regional economic leader, diplomatic centre, and innovation hub.

In a rapidly changing global landscape, nations are increasingly measured not only by economic performance but by their capacity to connect people, ideas, markets, and innovation. Kenya exemplifies this dynamic. Widely recognised as the birthplace of the safari and home to some of the world's most celebrated wildlife experiences, Kenya today is equally distinguished as a regional economic leader, diplomatic centre, and innovation hub.

The country's influence is reflected in the role it plays across East Africa and beyond. The Port of Mombasa serves as the principal maritime gateway for several neighbouring countries, while Nairobi has become one of Africa's leading centres for diplomacy and international cooperation, hosting the United Nations Office at Nairobi alongside numerous international organisations, multinational companies, and development institutions.

Kenya's active participation in the East African Community and the African Continental Free Trade Area provides businesses with access to a regional market of more than 300 million consumers. Combined with a stable financial sector, expanding infrastructure, and an increasingly favourable investment climate, these partnerships continue to strengthen Kenya's position as a destination for trade and investment.

The country has also earned international recognition as one of Africa's leading centres for digital innovation. Kenya pioneered

mobile financial services and continues to advance digital inclusion through a vibrant technology ecosystem supported by expanding broadband infrastructure, entrepreneurial talent, and forward-looking public policy. New opportunities are emerging in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital finance, health technology, and education, reinforcing Kenya's reputation as a creator of solutions with regional and global relevance.

This innovation-driven economy is complemented by sustained investment in transport, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure, while ongoing reforms continue to improve the business environment and foster sustainable economic growth.

Alongside these achievements, Kenya's natural and cultural heritage remains one of its greatest strengths. From the vast plains of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and the elephant herds of Amboseli National Park, framed by Mount Kilimanjaro, to the white-sand beaches of the Indian Ocean and the historic streets of Lamu Old Town, Kenya offers an exceptional diversity of landscapes and experiences. Equally remarkable is the richness of its many communities, whose traditions contribute to the country's distinctive cultural identity.

Tourism continues to play a vital role in Kenya's economy, increasingly shaped by a commitment to sustainability, wildlife conservation, and community development. The country's internationally recognised conservation initiatives demonstrate how protecting biodiversity can go hand in hand with supporting local livelihoods and creating lasting economic value.

Kenya remains home to the iconic Big Five, the spectacular Great Wildebeest Migration, and some of Africa's most successful conservation programmes. Beyond wildlife, visitors discover adventure tourism, cultural heritage, world-class conference facilities,

and the renowned hospitality for which Kenya is known.

As governments, businesses, and investors seek new partnerships across Africa, Kenya offers an environment where innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and international cooperation reinforce one another. It is a nation that embraces technological progress while safeguarding its extraordinary natural heritage, creating opportunities that extend well beyond its borders.

Kenya's story is therefore not defined solely by its breathtaking landscapes or remarkable wildlife. It is the story of a confident nation investing in its future while remaining deeply connected to its people, culture, and environment. Whether engaging as an investor, diplomat, entrepreneur, or traveller, those who come to Kenya encounter a country where opportunity and inspiration go hand in hand.

Kenya's Iconic National Parks and Reserves

PARK / RESERVE	HIGHLIGHTS	REGION
Maasai Mara National Reserve	Big Five wildlife and the Great Migration	Southwest Kenya
Amboseli National Park	Large elephant herds with views of Mount Kilimanjaro	Southern Kenya
Lake Nakuru National Park	Rhinos, flamingos, and exceptional birdlife	Rift Valley
Tsavo East National Park	Red elephants and vast wilderness	Southeast Kenya
Tsavo West National Park	Volcanic landscapes and rich biodiversity	Southeast Kenya
Samburu National Reserve	The unique Samburu Special Five	Northern Kenya
Meru National Park	Untouched wilderness and authentic safari experiences	Eastern Kenya
Aberdare National Park	Forest wildlife, waterfalls, and mountain scenery	Central Kenya
Nairobi National Park	The world's only wildlife park within a capital city	Nairobi
Ol Pejeta Conservancy	Rhino conservation, chimpanzee sanctuary, and eco-tourism	Central Kenya

For further information on tourism, culture, and travel opportunities, visit [Magical Kenya](https://experience.magicalkenya.com/): <https://experience.magicalkenya.com/>

PAKISTAN, THE NETHERLANDS AND THE EU: TURNING STRONG TIES INTO FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS

By H.E. Mr. Syed Haider Shah, Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands



Pakistan and the Netherlands share a relationship that is both longstanding and practical. Since the Netherlands recognized Pakistan in 1948, our two countries have built ties based on mutual respect and steady cooperation. The bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the Netherlands combines long-standing cooperation with fresh opportunities across trade and investment, water management, agriculture, education, and innovation. The Netherlands brings globally recognized strengths in logistics, ports, sustainable solutions, and supply-chain efficiency, while Pakistan offers a large market, a geo-strategic location, and a fast-developing business ecosystem, particularly in agribusiness and technology.

As Pakistan modernizes its agricultural and food systems, Dutch capabilities in seed technology, controlled-environment farming, cold-chain logistics, and sustainable dairy and horticulture can support climate-smart production and higher-value exports. Beyond food, textiles and responsible supply chains offer scope to move from volume to value through sustainability, compliance, and circularity, while digital innovation and IT-enabled services are emerging as new growth drivers.

While Pakistan–The Netherlands relationship stands firmly on its own, it also gains momentum from Pakistan's broader engagement with the European Union. The Netherlands is not only a trusted bilateral partner; it is also a key European voice and a global leader in innovation, logistics, water expertise, and sustainable solutions.

This is why Pakistan views its partnership with the European Union guided by three major frameworks as central to shaping the environment in which our cooperation with European partners, including the Netherlands, can grow. These comprise the EU–Pakistan Cooperation Agreement (2004), the granting of GSP+ status (2014), and the EU–Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (2019). Together, these frameworks have helped move the relationship beyond periodic interaction toward structured

cooperation, shared priorities, and a more future-oriented partnership.

Since 2014, the European Union's Special Incentive Arrangement for Good Governance and Sustainable Development (GSP Plus) has expanded market access for Pakistani exports and provided a framework for structured dialogue on international commitments relating to human rights, labour rights, environmental protection, and good governance.

Implementation of the 27 International Conventions spanning human rights, labour rights, climate change, and good governance is pursued as part of Pakistan's overarching governance and development framework. To ensure effective coordination and implementation, the Government of Pakistan has established a Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC) at both federal and provincial levels, with the Ministry of Commerce serving as its Secretariat. The Cell includes representation from the National Commission on Human Rights, Pakistan Workers Federation, UN Women, and the International Labour Organization, reflecting an inclusive and institutionalised approach to treaty implementation.

As a result of these coordinated and sustained efforts, the outcomes of the four Biennial Assessments conducted in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2023 were positive. The EU Monitoring Mission visited Pakistan in the last week of November 2025 for the fifth Biennial Review of GSP Plus. During the visit, the Mission held detailed consultations with relevant stakeholders on progress achieved since 2023 across the four thematic clusters of human rights, labour rights, environment, and good governance.

In Pakistan's bilateral trade with the EU, rice sector offers a particularly positive story. Pakistan is globally recognized for premium aromatic rice, especially Basmati, and the industry is steadily moving toward higher quality, improved processing, stronger branding, and better traceability. European consumers are increasingly focused on origin, quality, and responsible production.

This creates real opportunities for long-term sourcing partnerships, premium positioning in retail and food service, and investment across the value chain from modern milling and packaging to logistics and marketing.

The third framework, the EU–Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan (2019), broadened the relationship further reflecting the reality that today's challenges cannot be addressed through trade alone. The Plan covers cooperation in peace and security, governance and democracy, migration and mobility, trade and investment, sustainable development, education and culture, science and technology.

Looking ahead, Pakistan is positioning itself to respond constructively to global challenges such as climate change, sustainability, and regional stability. Climate resilience especially water security, agricultural adaptation, and disaster preparedness is a national priority. Pakistan is eager to expand cooperation with the Netherlands and European partners on climate-smart agriculture, efficient water use, renewable energy solutions, and green innovation. Pakistan's growing technology sector can also contribute to this transition through digital tools that improve efficiency, transparency, and service delivery.

In essence, Pakistan–The Netherlands relations are strongest when seen alongside a wider Pakistan–EU partnership shaped by the 2004, 2014, and 2019 frameworks. Pakistan remains committed to constructive engagement and to building relationships that deliver measurable outcomes: stronger trade, greater value addition, sustainable supply chains, and deeper cooperation in areas that matter to our shared future. With sustained dialogue and practical collaboration, Pakistan, the Netherlands, and the European Union can continue to strengthen a partnership that honours its history while actively shaping a more resilient and prosperous tomorrow.



TOTAL FOOTBALL AND THE KOREA-NETHERLANDS SEMICONDUCTOR ALLIANCE

In the early 1970's, The Orange Legion – the Dutch National Team – caused a shift in the global football paradigm through their infamous “Total Football”. With the players moving fluidly across the field, the result of the game was determined by the performance of the systematic strategy rather than an individual player's prowess. The modern semiconductor industry, the “oil of the twenty-first century”, is no different. It reaches its highest level of competitiveness when materials, equipment, design, and manufacturing come together a synergistic ecosystem. Due to complex processes and intertwined nature of supply chains, it is virtually impossible for any single country to create a complete ecosystem. In today's turbulent geopolitical environment, Total Cooperation with the Netherlands, our trustworthy ally, is the best path to success.

In stark contrast to the idyllic scenery of windmills and tulip fields, the Netherlands is also home to ASML, the world's sole manufacturer of EUV lithography equipment. As such, the Netherlands is an indispensable partner for Korea, as we aim to evolve from a memory chip giant into an AI powerhouse. In December 2023, our countries declared a semiconductor alliance, laying the institutional foundation for a total cooperation system. Building upon the well-established interconnected system between ASML, Samsung Electronics, and SK Hynix, our governments declared their partnership on the semiconductor supply chain resilience and technological collaboration.

Korea and the Netherlands shared policy approaches on semiconductors, economic security, and strategic material through consistent dialogue while actively searching for avenues of cooperation on R&D, talent development, and supply chain stability. Since February 2024, Korean universities and research institutes have taken part in the “Korea-NL Advanced Semiconductor Academy” alongside global companies. Every year, over 100 students and engineers visit the Netherlands to experience the frontier of semiconductor innovation. Furthermore, the Foreign Ministers and Trade Ministers held the inaugural “2+2 Foreign and Industry High-Level Dialogue” in February, reaffirming their commitment to maintain and strengthen strategic cooperation between our respective semiconductor ecosystems as expressed in the joint statement.

To guard against the fierce geopolitical winds sweeping across the globe, our countries are also strengthening cooperation in diplomacy and security. Our leaders have maintained close communication on the highest level, including a phone call

on the inauguration of the new Korean government in August 2025 and the Dutch Prime Minister's participation in the UN Security Council Open Discussion on AI chaired by the Korean President in September of the same year. Notably, the Netherlands plans to dispatch a naval vessel to the Indo-Pacific this April, contributing to the region's peace and stability.

Today, the world is engaged in an unprecedented, holistic competition – not only in semiconductors but across multiple sectors, such as new technologies, cyber, and supply chains. This further necessitates close cooperation with a trusted partner, coordinating a well-equipped posture to analyze the field from every angle while being prepared. The organic cooperation of 20th century ‘Total Football’ was once enough to take on the world from within a single nation. Now heading into the mid-21st century, we need collaboration that transcends national borders. Korea and the Netherlands are strategic partners that complement each other's semiconductor supply chains seamlessly, and together we look forward to establishing the ‘Total System’ that stretches from Busan to Rotterdam.

DIVERSIFYING ANGOLA'S ECONOMY THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

By H.E. Ambassador Lizeth N. Satumbo Pena,
Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to the Kingdom of the Netherlands



The relationship between Angola and the European Union has grown steadily over the years, supported by a strong framework of political dialogue and economic cooperation. Instruments such as the Cotonou Agreement and the Angola–European Union Joint Way Forward have reinforced our shared commitment to sustainable development, investment and mutual prosperity. Seven high-level meetings under this framework have already produced encouraging results, paving the way for an even closer partnership.

Within this context, the Netherlands has emerged as an important partner in Angola's economic diversification strategy. While Angola remains one of Africa's leading energy producers, our vision extends far beyond oil. We are committed to building a diversified, resilient and competitive economy that offers opportunities across agriculture, logistics, renewable energy, digital governance and human capital development.

A significant example of this cooperation is the European Union's Global Gateway initiative, through which more than €2 billion has been committed to the development of the Lobito Corridor. This strategic infrastructure project, linking Angola with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, is becoming a major economic gateway for Southern and Central Africa and an engine for regional integration.

Dutch expertise has already contributed to several landmark initiatives. The Caála Logistics Platform will strengthen Angola's agricultural value chain by improving the storage, preservation and distribution of agricultural, industrial and mineral products while creating an efficient connection between the Central Plateau and the Lobito Economic Development Corridor.

Equally promising is the Angola Highlands Avocado Cluster, an initiative that is positioning Angola as a competitive supplier of premium avocados to European markets. Benefiting from the unique microclimate of Huambo Province, the first certified shipment reached the Port of Rotterdam in 2025, demonstrating Angola's growing capacity to meet the highest international quality standards. The successful export of dried mango, papaya, pineapple and ginger from Benguela to Rotterdam further illustrates the expanding potential of our agricultural sector.

These achievements confirm that agriculture and logistics are becoming important pillars of Angola's economic transformation. At the same time, opportunities for Dutch investors extend to renewable energy, water management, technical and vocational education, healthcare, digital governance, public finance management and sustainable infrastructure.

Energy, however, remains a strategic sector for Angola. The volatility of global oil and gas markets reminds us of the importance of balancing immediate economic realities with long-term sustainability. We believe that closer cooperation with strategic partners such as the Netherlands—recognized worldwide for its expertise in renewable energy and energy logistics—can accelerate Angola's transition towards a more diversified energy mix.

The Government of Angola is pursuing this transition through ambitious projects that complement our traditional energy sector. These include the Caraculo Photovoltaic Project in Namibe Province, developed by Sonangol and ENI; the Quilemba Solar Project in Huíla Province, in partnership with TotalEnergies; a Green Hydrogen Project, currently in its feasibility phase; biofuel initiatives involving ANPG, Sonangol and ENI; and an innovative reforestation

programme designed to restore arid regions while contributing to environmental sustainability.

Economic diplomacy, however, is not measured solely by trade figures or investment flows. Long-term development depends equally on people, knowledge and innovation.

For this reason, education and vocational training occupy a central place in Angola's National Development Plan 2023–2027. Through the 2026 Annual National Development Plan, our Government has prioritised human capital development with thousands of development activities and public investment projects designed to improve skills, increase employability and strengthen national competitiveness.

In this area, the Netherlands offers valuable experience. Its internationally respected education system, closely aligned with labour market needs, provides an excellent model for cooperation. Expanding partnerships between Angolan and Dutch universities, technical institutions and research centres would facilitate knowledge transfer, promote innovation, strengthen vocational training and prepare a new generation of professionals capable of driving Angola's economic transformation.

The future of Angola–Netherlands relations rests on complementary strengths. Angola offers abundant natural resources, a young and dynamic population, expanding infrastructure and strategic access to regional markets. The Netherlands contributes world-class expertise in logistics, agriculture, water management, renewable energy and innovation.

Together, we can build a partnership that goes beyond traditional trade—one that creates sustainable growth, generates opportunities for both our peoples and contributes to a more resilient and prosperous future.



Upon my arrival in the Netherlands, I often heard an interesting observation when speaking with local residents. Whenever Montenegro was mentioned, someone would inevitably smile and remark that Montenegrins, together with the Dutch, are among the tallest people in the world.

“We are a modest nation,” I would usually reply. “We would gladly accept slightly lesser proportions if it meant standing alongside you as the tallest members of the European Union.”

Behind this friendly exchange lies a sincere national aspiration. Full membership in the European Union remains the cornerstone of Montenegro’s foreign policy. Guided by this strategic objective, Montenegro made the decision to establish, for the first time, a resident Embassy in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, thereby strengthening its presence in a country with which we share both friendly bilateral relations and allied ties within NATO.

The opening of the Embassy of Montenegro in The Hague therefore represents far more than a diplomatic formality. It is a clear signal of our determination to deepen cooperation with a country that strongly supported Montenegro’s accession to NATO and that continues to play an important role in maintaining political momentum for European integration.

The Dutch approach to EU enlargement is well known and widely respected. It rests on the principles of individual merit, measurable progress and full respect for the Copenhagen criteria, with particular emphasis on reforms in the rule of law. The

MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, AND THE NEXT CHAPTER OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

By H.E. Mr. Milisav Raspopovic, Ambassador of Montenegro

message from The Hague has always been consistent: the process must remain strict but fair, guided by standards rather than shortcuts or exceptions.

For Montenegro, which today stands as the frontrunner among EU candidate countries, such an approach is not an obstacle but an additional motivation. The year 2026 carries particular symbolism for us. It is a year in which we continue to intensify our dialogue with Dutch institutions, members of parliament and the broader public, explaining why Montenegro is determined to conclude the technical phase of accession negotiations and move decisively toward our strategic objective: becoming, symbolically, the 28th member state of the European Union by 2028.

This year is also significant for another reason. Montenegro marks twenty years since the restoration of its independence and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It is an anniversary that invites reflection, but also confidence in the future. As a reliable NATO ally, fully aligned with the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, Montenegro contributes to stability in a region that remains strategically important for Europe. At the same time, our size and population mean that our accession would represent not a burden but an added value for the Union.

Our commitment will also be reflected through an active international role in the coming period. Later this year Montenegro will host the EU–Western Balkans Summit and is currently chairing the Berlin Process, providing an opportunity to further promote regional cooperation, stability and development guided by European values. Toward the end of the year, Montenegro will also assume the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, further demonstrating our readiness to contribute actively to strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights across the European continent.

Although Montenegro views its European path as a one-way road, we are fully aware

that EU accession is not a unilateral journey. It is a partnership. As we approach what we hope will be the final phase of negotiations, the continued support and engagement of our friends in the Netherlands will be particularly valuable.

For that reason, we expect the coming period to be dynamic in bilateral terms as well. Beyond the anniversaries we celebrate this year, we hope to see intensified political dialogue, more frequent high-level visits and a stronger presence of Dutch experts and credible investors in Montenegro. Such engagement would send an important signal that Montenegro is approaching the final stretch of its European journey, while also reminding the wider region that progress toward the European Union remains both possible and achievable.

From time to time one hears that Montenegro is moving rapidly toward the European Union. I would suggest that our journey has been less about speed and more about direction. For over a decade we have patiently and consistently aligned our institutions and legislation with European standards. In our view, sustainable European integration is achieved not through shortcuts but through steady reforms, and this is the path Montenegro has chosen to follow.

Finally, it is impossible to speak about diplomacy in the Netherlands without acknowledging the unique role of The Hague, widely regarded as the legal capital of the world and a city with a remarkable multilateral dimension. At a time when the international order is facing increasing pressure and global tensions continue to rise, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to work in such an environment alongside colleagues from the diplomatic corps and representatives of numerous international organisations. Together, we share the responsibility of safeguarding a rules-based international order, effective multilateralism, and promoting a world founded on universal values, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as sovereignty and territorial integrity.

A NATURAL PARTNERSHIP: DEEPENING NEW ZEALAND- NETHERLANDS COOPERATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

By H.E. Mrs. Charlotte Frater, Ambassador of New Zealand to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

I arrived in The Hague in January, travelling 18,000kms over two days and swapping summer sun for winter snow. Despite the distance and change of season, I've received an incredibly warm welcome, and the Netherlands already feels like a second home.

The Netherlands and New Zealand are natural partners with shared values: we are practical, open, hardworking, and adventurous - and we both eat a lot of cheese! People-to-people links remain the foundation of our relationship, and the steady stream of young people heading in both directions under our Working Holiday Schemes, strengthens our bonds, and enriches both societies.

Our shared history dates back more than 380 years to Abel Tasman's voyage to New Zealand, and has been shaped by significant experiences including shared campaigns and sacrifices during World War Two, and the large wave of Dutch migration to New Zealand in the post-war period. Consequently, thousands of New Zealanders trace their heritage back to the Netherlands. These connections underpin a vibrant relationship spanning political, economic and cultural spheres, and in 2025 we were delighted to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations.

Our societies are built on strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and a commitment to sustainable development and international cooperation. These principles guide policy choices at home and abroad, and matter deeply at a time of heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

During our Prime Minister's visit to the Netherlands last year, our leaders recognised that prosperity cannot exist without security, and acknowledged the interconnected nature of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security. They also emphasised the importance of cooperation between New Zealand and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), including through

the Indo-Pacific Four Group, comprising New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

Just as New Zealand values the Netherlands' engagement in the Indo-Pacific, New Zealand stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the Netherlands in condemning, unequivocally, Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine. New Zealand has provided Ukraine with significant military and humanitarian assistance, and has implemented a broad range of sanctions in response to Russia's actions. This reflects our commitment to upholding the rules-based international order that underpins global peace and prosperity.

As someone who has spent much of my career working in international law and trade, I have seen first-hand how clear rules enable trade, investment, and innovation to flourish. In this context, New Zealand welcomed the entry-into-force of the EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement in 2024 which saw bilateral trade increase by 20% in its first year. The agreement is creating new business opportunities, and allowing ideas, talent, and capital to move across borders with confidence. The Netherlands remains New Zealand's second most important export destination in Europe, and our leading source of European investment.

Research partnerships through New Zealand's association with Horizon Europe, provide another strong platform for growing the bilateral relationship. We are also modernising our Double Taxation Agreement, to provide greater certainty for businesses and investors in both markets.

It is easy to see why New Zealand companies such as Fonterra Dairy, Gallagher, Dawn Aerospace, and Mainfreight Logistics have chosen the Netherlands as their European base. With world-class logistics, English-speaking talent, agricultural expertise, and a thriving innovation ecosystem, the Netherlands is a natural gateway to the



wider European market. More than fifty New Zealand businesses already operate here across sectors spanning agritech, food technology, advanced manufacturing, engineering, aerospace, logistics, and digital services.

For Dutch companies, New Zealand offers a stable democracy, transparent regulation, and an economy consistently ranked among the easiest places in the world to do business. Distance can even be an asset, with New Zealand's counter-seasonal production benefiting the Netherlands' iconic bulb industry and wider horticultural sector. At a time when supply chain resilience matters more than ever, partnerships built on trust, quality, and sustainability are invaluable.

Diplomacy is ultimately about people and relationships. In my first weeks in the Netherlands, I have already seen how deeply our communities are connected - from a Dutch windmill in New Zealand to a Māori canoe in Leiden. These connections reflect something even more valuable: trust. As Ambassador, my goal is simple: to help ensure that New Zealand and the Netherlands continue to turn that trust into tangible results that contribute to both societies.

THE ONE-CHINA PRINCIPLE IS NOT TO BE CHALLENGED

— THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS ONCE AGAIN REJECTED THE PARTICIPATION OF TAIWAN REGION IN THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

H.E. Mr. Bo Shen, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

On May 18, the General Committee and the Plenary Session of the 79th World Health Assembly (WHA) respectively decided to reject the so-called proposal of "inviting Taiwan to participate in the WHA as an observer" submitted by certain countries. This marks the 10th consecutive year that the WHA has rejected such a proposal. This outcome once again demonstrates that the one-China principle is a prevailing consensus of the international community and a fundamental principle that the World Health Organization must uphold. Any attempt to challenge this principle under the pretext of public health issues will receive no support from the international community.

Recently, the authorities of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and a small number of countries have continuously hyped up the so-called issue of "Taiwan's participation in international organizations" and even claimed that "Taiwan is excluded from the global health system." Although such statements are made under the guise of public health and humanitarian concerns, their true purpose is to politicize health issues and use them as a pretext to challenge United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and the post-war international order.

There is but one China in the world. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China. This is both a historical fact and a principle of international law. The Taiwan question has a clear historical background and legal context. In 1895, Japan forcibly occupied Taiwan after invading China. During World War II, the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation clearly stipulated that all territories Japan had stolen from China should be restored to China. In 1945, China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Taiwan. In 1971, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758, restoring all lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations and explicitly resolving the question of the representation of the whole of China, including Taiwan, in the UN system.

This resolution not only confirmed the lawful seat of the Government of the People's Republic of China within the United Nations system, but also established an indisputable fact: Taiwan is not a country, and China has only one

seat in the United Nations. Therefore, the World Health Organization, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, must abide by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and World Health Assembly Resolution WHA25.1. The participation of China's Taiwan region in activities of international organizations must be handled in accordance with the one-China principle. This is an established international norm, rather than what some describe as a "unilateral demand" by China.

In the past, China's Taiwan region participated in the World Health Assembly under the name "Chinese Taipei." This was not a so-called "right granted to Taiwan by the international community," but rather a special arrangement reached through cross-strait consultations on the basis that both sides adhered to the one-China principle. Since 2016, the DPP authorities have refused to recognize the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle, and have stubbornly adhered to the separatist position of "Taiwan independence," thereby causing this arrangement to lose its political foundation. The responsibility lies entirely with the DPP authorities themselves.

More importantly, the claim that "Taiwan is excluded from the global health system" is completely inconsistent with the facts. The Chinese central government attaches great importance to the health and well-being of compatriots in Taiwan. Provided that the one-China principle is upheld, channels for information and technical exchanges between China's Taiwan region and the World Health Organization have always remained open and unimpeded. Over the past year alone, the central government approved applications from 18 medical and health experts from China's

INDONESIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE NETHERLANDS PRESENTS LETTERS OF CREDENCE

The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. L. Amrih Jinangkung, presented his Letters of Credence to King Willem-Alexander at Noordeinde Palace, on February 25, 2026.

During a meeting after the ceremony, the Ambassador conveyed warm greetings from the President of the Republic of Indonesia and reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.

"The presentation of the Letters of Credence marks my official mission to advance a more concrete and impactful partnership. Indonesia is ready to strengthen sustainable economic collaboration, innovation, and other strategic cooperation with the Netherlands," stated Ambassador L. Amrih Jinangkung. The strong, equal, mutually respectful, and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship has been outlined in the Joint Declaration on a Comprehensive Partnership. Both countries have also agreed on a Plan of Action as a guideline for implementing the Joint Declaration on a Comprehensive Partnership declaration.

The Netherlands is one of Indonesia's key partners in Europe. The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in The Hague will follow up on this momentum through high level meetings and cooperation in the fields of economy, development, education, culture, and consular affairs.



Taiwan region to participate in WHO technical activities, covering areas such as immunization strategies, vaccine development, mental health, and digital health. Under the framework of the International Health Regulations, China's Taiwan region is able to promptly access and report health emergency information to the WHO. The two sides across the Taiwan Strait also maintain smooth information-sharing mechanisms on infectious disease outbreaks and have continued exchanges and cooperation in the field of medical and health care. These facts fully demonstrate that the so-called "gap in the international pandemic prevention system" is nothing more than a fabricated narrative.

In recent years, a tiny minority of countries have repeatedly attempted to distort United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and the fundamental fact that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. This not only challenges China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also undermines the post-World War II international order and the authority of the United Nations. The international community clearly recognizes this. During this year's World Health Assembly, the overwhelming majority of countries explicitly reaffirmed their commitment to the one-China principle, supported United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758, opposed the participation of Taiwan region in the World Health Assembly, and expressed support for China's position through measures such as sending letters to the Director-General of the World Health Organization. This once again demonstrates that upholding the one-China principle represents international

justice, the will of the people, and the prevailing trend of the times.

As the global landscape becomes increasingly complex and unstable, it is all the more important for all countries to jointly uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law, rather than create ambiguity and confrontation on issues concerning the core interests of other countries.

The Taiwan question is entirely China's internal affair and brooks no foreign interference. No matter what the DPP authorities say or do, they cannot change the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same China and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. Nor can they alter the historical trend toward China's ultimate and inevitable reunification. Upholding the one-China principle, safeguarding the authority of the United Nations, and maintaining the post-World War II international order serve the common interests of the international community and are also conducive to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.



Dr Shqipe Doli at work on professional capacity.

BETWEEN LAW AND LIFE: BUILDING BRIDGES WITH QUIET POWER

By Alexandra Paucescu

'I grew up in a city that teaches you resilience without putting it in a textbook,' she tells me with a smile. Pristina, she says, shaped both her professional determination and her instinct to look at institutions not as abstract constructions, but as living frameworks that affect daily life.

Her academic path began in law. 'Law fascinated me because it's not just about rules, it's about balance,' she explains. After completing her legal studies, she pursued a Master in European Legal Studies at the University of Hamburg. 'Germany taught me discipline,' she laughs. 'And punctuality. Very punctual punctuality.' Later, she completed a Doctorate in Political Science, focusing on governance, public policy and the relationship between legal systems and political realities.

Her career spans more than two decades across national institutions, NGOs and international organizations. She began in legislative drafting and legal reform. 'At the beginning, I was literally working on texts that would shape institutions. It's a strange feeling, you type a sentence and you know it might outlive your entire career.' Over time, her work expanded into broader institutional reform and, more recently, into human rights. 'Without human rights, governance is just administration,' she says simply.

Languages have been a constant thread. Growing up in the former Yugoslavia meant early exposure to linguistic diversity. 'I've always loved languages. They are not just tools to speak, they are tools to understand. When you switch languages, you almost switch personality slightly.' She pauses. 'It's the closest thing to peaceful shape-shifting.'

Beyond her professional life, she is first and foremost a mother of two sons. 'They keep me grounded. They also keep me technologically updated,' she adds dryly. Artistic expression, especially painting and photography, offers balance. Ancient history remains a passion. 'History is humbling. You realize that most political crises are not as original as we think.'

Some life stories follow a straight line. Others move across borders, disciplines and historical turning points. When I sat down with Shqipe Hajredini Doli, it became clear that her journey belongs firmly to the second category.

When I ask about food, her answer is immediate: 'Cuisine is diplomacy without microphones.' Coming from Kosovo, Mediterranean flavors remain emotionally close. 'Food carries memory. One dish can bring back an entire decade.' She firmly believes gastronomy is a powerful tool of cultural diplomacy. 'When people share a table, they lower their defenses. It's very difficult to argue aggressively while asking someone to pass the olive oil.'

Her international mobility began early. As a teenager, she moved independently to Austria and later to the United States. 'Moving abroad alone teaches you two things: independence and how to pack efficiently.' Germany played a key role during her academic years, but she has also developed a strong appreciation for the Netherlands. 'I admire the Dutch balance between structure and openness.' Still, she admits she feels emotionally split between Southern Europe's warmth and Northern Europe's order. 'Ideally, I would like Southern weather with Northern administration.'

Speaking about Kosovo, she becomes both reflective and proud. 'Kosovo is young, energetic and sometimes impatient, but in a good way.' She describes it as a country with 'a big heart and an even bigger ambition.' For her, resilience is not a slogan but a lived experience. 'We learned to build while still healing.'

Her view of the diplomatic community is pragmatic. 'Diplomacy is about relationships. Policies matter, of course. But trust is built over coffee, not only in conference rooms.' She finds the international diplomatic environment intellectually stimulating and culturally rich. 'You are constantly learning how other societies think.'

The conversation naturally turns to diplomatic spouses. 'People often assume

we simply attend events,' she says with a knowing smile. 'In reality, many diplomatic spouses have their own careers, expertise and ambitions. Sometimes we pause them. Sometimes we reinvent them.' She sees the role as complementary to official representation. 'We are informal bridges. We connect with communities, professional networks, cultural initiatives. It's soft influence, but it's real.'

Do diplomatic spouses have power? 'Absolutely,' she replies without hesitation. 'Not institutional power, but relational power. The power to create understanding. To reduce prejudice. To open doors that formal titles sometimes cannot.' She adds, 'It's quiet power. But quiet doesn't mean weak.'

One of her proudest professional moments came in the period following Kosovo's Declaration of Independence. 'Those years were intense. We were building institutions almost in real time.' She was directly involved in legal and policy development processes critical to state consolidation. 'It was demanding, complex and sometimes exhausting. But also incredibly meaningful. You could see the impact of your work.'

As our conversation draws to a close, I ask about her life motto. She reflects for a moment. 'Live intentionally,' she says. 'Commit fully to what you do but stay curious.' Growth, for her, comes from stepping beyond comfort zones. 'If something challenges you slightly, it's probably good for you.' She smiles again. 'Except maybe extreme sports. I prefer intellectual risk.'

In a world of shifting alliances and complex negotiations, her perspective is a reminder that diplomacy is not only conducted in official halls. It is also shaped by personal conviction, cultural intelligence and the quiet determination to build bridges, one conversation at a time.

35 YEARS OF PROCHILE IN THE NETHERLANDS: BUILDING BRIDGES FOR TRADE, INNOVATION AND TRUST

By Diplomat Magazine

In 2026, ProChile's office in the Netherlands marks 35 years of uninterrupted presence in one of Europe's most strategic markets. For more than three decades, this trade representation has served as a bridge between Chile and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, fostering trade, investment, innovation, and long-term business partnerships.

The Netherlands is one of Europe's principal gateways to international trade. With the Port of Rotterdam—the largest and busiest seaport in Europe—serving as the continent's primary logistics hub, the country provides Chilean companies with efficient access to millions of European consumers.

Since its establishment in the early 1990s, ProChile's office in The Hague has supported hundreds of Chilean companies in their international expansion. What began with the promotion of traditional exports such as fresh fruit, wine, and seafood has evolved into a far more diverse agenda encompassing innovative food products, global services, technology, renewable energy, creative industries, and sustainable solutions. Green hydrogen and critical minerals have also become prominent areas of bilateral trade cooperation, reflecting the evolving commercial relationship between the two countries.

The economic partnership between Chile and the Netherlands is built on strong complementarity. Chile offers a high-quality export portfolio backed by internationally recognized sanitary, sustainability, and production standards, while the Netherlands contributes world-class expertise in logistics, agricultural innovation, precision farming, the circular economy, and technological development.

Over the past three decades, ProChile has played a pivotal role in organizing trade missions, coordinating participation in international trade fairs, facilitating business matchmaking, and promoting key export sectors. Chile's non-traditional exports to the Netherlands—excluding copper and lithium—have reached record



levels for two consecutive years, surpassing US\$1.7 billion in 2025.

Today, ProChile's Trade Office in The Hague continues to strengthen Chile's presence in Europe under the leadership of Commercial Attaché Osvaldo Marinao and a multicultural team working closely with companies, importers, investors, and institutions in both countries. From its offices on Parkstraat, in the heart of The Hague, ProChile continues to promote business opportunities and deepen economic cooperation between Chile and the Netherlands.

The celebration of this 35-year milestone is a tribute to the thousands of entrepreneurs,

exporters, business partners, and public officials who have helped build this strong bilateral relationship. It also offers an opportunity to look ahead to a future driven by innovation, sustainability, and ever-closer cooperation between two countries that share a strong international outlook.

At a time when supply chain resilience, the energy transition, and digital transformation are becoming increasingly important worldwide, ProChile reaffirms its commitment to connecting Chilean talent, products, and services with global markets, while strengthening the Netherlands' role as one of Chile's most important commercial platforms in Europe.

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY: THE JOURNEY OF AN EXPERTS' GUIDE TO INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOL

By Mark Verheul

On 18 April 2016, it was a privilege for Gilbert Monod de Froideville and myself to present the first copy of "An Experts' Guide to International Protocol – Best Practice in Diplomatic and Corporate Relations" to Professor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, as former Secretary-General of NATO, in International Press Center Nieuwspoor in The Hague. He had also contributed to our book with an interview about the role protocol played throughout his career, including diplomatic sensitivities, political gains, strategic choices and some great anecdotes. In the presence of dear family members, friends, colleagues, representatives from several ministries, the Dutch Royal Household, as well as numerous foreign diplomats, it was a wonderful start to our global endeavor.

Throughout the past decade, we've been fortunate to see that our book has offered guidance on international protocol and its associated practices, for a wide range of readers around the world. From seasoned diplomatic professionals, to young novices in the field of global trade. From the first online order (by the Socialist Party in Albania), to personally signing copies in the authors' corners of the PDI-POA Annual Forums in San Diego, San Antonio, Montreal and Miami. Or at additional book launches in Amsterdam, Brussels, Chicago, Madrid and at EXPO 2020 in Dubai.

Being extremely grateful for the many positive reviews, interesting articles in numerous renowned Dutch newspapers and Diplomat Magazine over the years, as well as a pleasant interview on a regional radio morning show, yesterday. And smiling heavily, after reading a 5-star review by ChatGPT, at the time this platform just started to be 'a hot topic'...

On LinkedIn: "I'm a Master student in International Relations in Belgrade, and am conducting a research project titled 'Protocol as a Global Language'. After having read your book, with all its delightful behind-the-scenes moments that make the

experience even more engaging, I would really appreciate having a conversation with you to discuss the fascinating insights of this highly specific part of diplomacy." Which I obviously gladly did.

Finding our book on a shelf in a book store in Kathmandu. Or in the library of the Council of the European Union in Brussels or the United Nations Office in Geneva. Or hearing that it's placed on someone's Christmas wish list... Being considered mandatory reading material. Or being told that at least 50 yellow sticky notes are placed throughout the copy of a fellow protocol professional in Argentina.

Bumping into a member of the oldest student rowing club in the Netherlands, at Leiden University, during a strategic networking reception two years ago: "Sir, are you really the author of that book on protocol with all those country flags on the cover...? I have it on my book shelf, and certainly want to learn more about it!" In April 2021, adding an extra chapter on the consequences of Covid-19 with contributions from professionals in over 25 cities around the world, ranging from Accra, Geneva, and New Delhi to Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, and Washington, D.C.



Gilbert Monod de Froideville, Professor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Mark Verheul

After the first heavily affected year by the pandemic, a multitude of personal examples, struggles, creative solutions, and lessons learned related to protocol, high-level event management, and stakeholder engagement were shared.

Proudly looking back on the publication of four translated editions. In Spanish in collaboration with Comillas Pontifical University in Madrid in September 2019, followed by Mandarin in collaboration with the National Administration Press in Beijing in June 2020, as well as in Arabic in collaboration with 3zProtocol, a Riyadh-based protocol institute, and Madarek Publishing House, in March 2022, and in French at Amsterdam University Press in November 2025.

And truly looking forward to the times to come. In which AI will definitely play a key role; also in our field of expertise. Artificial Intelligence is a given. Human skills are a gift. Critical thinking remains key. We can't wait to add an additional chapter to our book related to this matter in collaboration with our new publishing house Routledge. By including the input of a large panel of young protocol professionals. Because they own the future. Stay tuned!



Published in 5 languages

HOSPITALITY AT THE HEART OF DIPLOMACY: A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE HAGUE'S INTERNATIONAL FUTURE

By Thomas Kortleve

The Hague has long stood at the crossroads of diplomacy, international law, and global cooperation. As Chairman of the Hague Hotel Consultation (Haags Hoteloverleg), I have had the privilege of experiencing first-hand how deeply our hospitality sector is intertwined with this international ecosystem. It is a role I have come to value not only professionally, but personally.

Over the years, I have genuinely enjoyed building relationships with the many embassies based in our city. What began as practical cooperation has grown into something far more meaningful. There is a shared understanding that hospitality in The Hague is not just about offering rooms, but about facilitating dialogue, trust, and connection. Working closely with embassy teams—often under time pressure and with high expectations—has shown me the strength of collaboration when mutual respect and clarity are in place.

Hotels in The Hague have become reliable partners to the diplomatic community. We provide spaces for meetings, quiet negotiations, and moments of informal exchange that often prove just as valuable as formal discussions. These interactions have reinforced my belief that our sector plays a subtle yet essential role in supporting the city's diplomatic mission.

This role was never more visible than during the NATO Summit in 2026. For me, it was not only a professional milestone, but also a moment of pride. Welcoming heads of state, ministers, and international delegations required an extraordinary level of coordination. What stood out most was the spirit of collaboration—between hotels, embassies, government institutions, and security services. The success of the summit confirmed that The Hague can operate at the very highest international level, and that our hospitality sector is ready to meet that responsibility.

At the same time, experiences like these also highlight the work that still lies ahead. The Dutch hospitality sector, and particularly that of The Hague, is facing increasing pressure. Rising costs, labour shortages, and regulatory complexity such as the increase on vat on overnight stays from 9% to 21%, continue to challenge our ability to remain competitive. Meanwhile, other European cities are moving quickly, investing heavily in infrastructure and positioning themselves effectively in the international market.

For The Hague, the challenge is also one of focus. We are globally recognized as the city of peace and justice, yet we have not fully translated that identity into a strong and consistent position as a leading conference and business destination. Our facilities are excellent, but not yet sufficient in scale or integration to capture the full potential of the international market.

This is why the coming years will be decisive. With new policymakers shaping the future of our city, we have a clear opportunity to make strategic choices that will define our long-term success. One of my key wishes is the development of a stronger and more coherent international zone. Such an environment would not only benefit embassies and international organizations, but also create a more attractive ecosystem for global companies.

Equally important is the expansion of our conference capacity. The World



Thomas Kortleve

Forum remains an iconic venue with enormous potential. By investing in its growth and better connecting it with surrounding hotels and infrastructure, we can position The Hague once again as a leading European congress city. This is not simply about prestige—it is about creating sustainable economic value and ensuring that we remain relevant in an increasingly competitive landscape.

At the same time, we must strengthen our efforts beyond the city itself. Our lobbying—both nationally and internationally—needs to become more focused and effective. If we want to attract corporates, international organizations, and (b)leisure visits, we must tell a clearer and more compelling story about what The Hague and Scheveningen have to offer. This requires alignment between public and private stakeholders, and a willingness to invest in long-term positioning.

Ultimately, a strong hospitality sector is inseparable from a strong economy. When we succeed in attracting international visitors and events, the benefits extend far beyond our hotels. They support local businesses, cultural institutions, and the broader urban economy.

Looking ahead, I remain optimistic. The relationships we have built with embassies, the experience gained during events such as the NATO Summit, and the commitment within our sector provide a solid foundation. What we need now is ambition and direction.

By strengthening our international zone, expanding our conference infrastructure, and sharpening our global positioning, The Hague can continue to grow—not only as a centre of diplomacy, but as a vibrant, competitive, and internationally connected city.

URUGUAY DONATES SYMBOLIC SCULPTURE TO THE ICC

On 22 May 2026, H.E. Mr. Álvaro González Otero, Ambassador of Uruguay to the Netherlands, together with H.E. Ms. Tomoko Akane, President of the International Criminal Court (ICC), unveiled the sculpture "The Totem of the Human Tribe" at the ICC headquarters in The Hague.

The monumental artwork, previously exhibited at the Venice International Art Biennale, was created by renowned Uruguayan artist Roberto Vivo and donated by the Government of Uruguay to the ICC, as a symbol of fraternity, diversity, and international justice.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by Roberto Vivo, who travelled to The Hague



to personally present his magnificent oeuvre, alongside a distinguished gathering of ambassadors, heads of mission, judges, art collectors, and distinguish friends of Uruguay.

Among the notable guests were H.E. Sahar Ghanem, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps; H.E. Graciela Gatti Santana, President of United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals; Luis Moreno Ocampo, first Prosecutor of the ICC; and Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi, former President of the ICC.

A special message from Yamandú Orsi, President of Uruguay, was read in person by ambassador González Otero during the ceremony.

In his message, President Orsi declared "The sculpture evokes the idea of a diverse humanity and embodies universal values such as dignity, peaceful coexistence, and respect among peoples. This donation is a source of national pride, and its installation within the premises of the Court amplifies a message of peace that is especially necessary at this delicate moment, when wars are multiplying and threatening the very foundations of the international order." Ambassador González Otero underscored the symbolic importance of installing the sculpture at the Court.

"If there is one place where this idea acquires concrete meaning, it is precisely here, at the International Criminal Court," he said. "An institution that represents the collective effort of States to affirm that, beyond geographical, cultural, political and religious differences, there exist fundamental values that must be safeguarded through law and justice."

Ambassador expressed "Uruguay has historically demonstrated its commitment to international law, and the current Government continues to promote the strengthening of multilateralism. Uruguay's role as a contributor to international public goods – such as the maintenance to international peace and security, the consolidation and development of international law through participation

in norm-setting fora and international courts, support for disarmament, food, security, global health, and commitment to addressing climate change – has distinguished our country as a cooperative actor in advancing solutions to global challenges."

"The presence of this work at the Court carries profound symbolic value evoking the idea of a shared humanity, diverse yet interconnected, united by common principles and by the conviction that human dignity must be universally protected".

Roberto Vivo an internationally renowned sculptor, writer, and painter with a remarkable artistic trajectory developed primarily in the United States, Italy, and Uruguay; and author of the book *War: A Crime Against Humanity*, stated: "Today we are unveiling 'The Totem of the Human Tribe'. This sculpture invites the public to become part of a novel global concept: Humanity."

Vivo expressed: "In a nuclear age, war as a mechanism to manage conflict is obsolete. Worse still, nuclear war threatens to make the Human Tribe itself obsolete, rendering it subject to self-inflicted extinction."

Addressing the audience during the ceremony, Judge Akane highlighted the profound relevance of the artwork to the Court's mission.

"The Human Tribe Totem is particularly fitting for the International Criminal Court because it speaks to our shared humanity," she stated. "Its symbolism reminds us that the ICC was created not for the interests of any single nation or region, but for humanity as a whole."

She continued by emphasizing the contemporary significance of the sculpture: "At a time when conflicts and human suffering continue to make headlines, this artwork serves as a reminder of the importance of solidarity, accountability, and the rule of law. It reminds us that justice is not an abstract principle, but a responsibility shared by all nations and peoples."

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AMBASSADOR'S WELCOME DINNER AT HOTEL DES INDES

On 14 April, Hotel Des Indes in The Hague hosted an elegant Ambassador's Welcome Dinner in honour of newly arrived ambassadors accredited to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



Organised by General Manager Yvonne van der Klaauw and Sales Manager Camilla Vaselli, with the support of Diplomat Magazine, the event gathered ambassadors from The Hague and Brussels appointed in 2025 and 2026, alongside senior protocol officials from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Municipality of The Hague.

Set within one of the city's most historic landmarks, the evening reflected the hotel's long-standing tradition of hospitality and diplomatic engagement. Originally built in 1858 as the residence of Baron van Brien, the hotel has welcomed generations of royalty, world leaders, and cultural icons, including Winston Churchill, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Michael Jackson.

This tradition continues today. Recently, Princess Sirivannavari, daughter of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, visited The Hague to launch the first stop of her global tour showcasing Thai textiles, further highlighting her Grandmother who had also been a guest of the hotel.

The Ambassador's Welcome Dinner provided a refined setting for dialogue

and networking, reaffirming Hotel Des Indes' role as a cornerstone of The Hague's diplomatic life, where history and international exchange meet.

Among the guests, Ambassador of Korea, Rwanda, Dominican Republic, Cuba, New Zealand, Suriname, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Lebanon, Belgium, Tajikistan, Serbia, Indonesia, Ghana, Kazakhstan, also Gabriela Sancisi, director of protocol, Hans Akerboon deputy director of Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Camilla van Koten director of protocol of The Hague.

Following an extensive renovation led by renowned designer Jacques Garcia, Hotel Des Indes continues to embody a unique blend of classical opulence and modern sophistication. Its membership in The Leading Hotels of the World further underscores its status among the world's most distinguished hospitality destinations.

As the evening concluded, the Ambassador's Welcome Dinner reaffirmed Hotel Des Indes identity as a historic landmark and a living symbol of The Hague's diplomatic identity.



**THE HAGUE, 22 APRIL
2026 – RUSSELL
ADVOCATEN, IN
COLLABORATION WITH
DIPLOMAT MAGAZINE,
SUCCESSFULLY
HOSTED THE 2026
EDITION OF ITS
ANNUAL EMBASSY
SEMINAR ON DUTCH
EMPLOYMENT LAW
FOR EMBASSIES AND
CONSULATES IN THE
NETHERLANDS.**

With decades of experience assisting diplomatic missions with legal matters, Russell Advocaten welcomed more than 90 participants, including ambassadors, deputy heads of mission, and HR officers.

The seminar, held from 9:30 to 12:00, followed by a lunch, was led by Mr. Jan Dop, LL.M., specialist in Employment Law, together with Reinier W.L. Russell, Managing Partner of the firm. Their presentations focused on the practical application of Dutch labour law for diplomatic missions, helping embassies better understand local legal obligations concerning locally hired staff in the Netherlands.

The conference addressed important issues including employment law, dismissal procedures, employee illness and sick leave obligations, personnel policies, handbooks and codes of conduct, employee participation, and works councils. The lawyers also explained the legal responsibilities of employers regarding

CHESS TOURNAMENT FOR DIPLOMATS IN THE HAGUE “LET FRIENDSHIP PREVAIL”

By Roy Lie Atjam

Organized by Diplomat Magazine and hosted at the cozy Leonardo Royal Hotel The Hague, these gatherings are a wonderful opportunity to build friendships among the diplomatic corps, international institutions, and the host country, the Netherlands.

Organized by Diplomat Magazine and hosted at the cozy Leonardo Royal Hotel The Hague, these gatherings are a wonderful opportunity to build friendships among the diplomatic corps, international institutions, and the host country, the Netherlands.

On May 30, 2026, our fun tournament welcomed dozens of participants from various countries, reminding us all how sport can bring people together.. Chess, a game that exercises the mind and sharpens decision-making skills.. In a heartwarming move, the UN General Assembly celebrated chess by adopting Resolution 74/22 on December 12, 2019, thanks to Armenia's initiative, and designated July 20 as International Chess Day.

This year, we were thrilled to see players of all ages participating, including the remarkable seven-year-old Master Uliks Doli from Kosovo! Competitors came from far and wide, including Angola, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Montenegro, the OPCW, Senegal, the USA, and the Netherlands.

After a series of exciting matches showcasing impressive tactical skills and strategic thinking, Felipe Ferreira Marques of Brazil emerged as the champion of the 5th Diplomat Chess Tournament in The Hague. Henry Pierre of Senegal secured second place, while Hong Li of the OPCW claimed third position.

Diplomat Magazine also took the opportunity to bid farewell to two outstanding players and longtime participants, Felipe Ferreira Marques and Henry Pierre Sarr, who will be leaving The Hague later this year at the conclusion of their diplomatic assignments in the Netherlands. “Over the years, both diplomats have achieved notable results in previous editions of the tournament and have become familiar faces within the chess community.

Four years ago, they met during a Diplomat Magazine Chess Tournament and quickly became close friends. Since then, they have met regularly at diplomatic events and for friendly chess matches.

Their story perfectly illustrates one of the core objectives of Diplomat Magazine's events: creating meaningful connections among

diplomats and encouraging friendships that continue beyond official duties, bringing people together across cultures and nationalities. Said Dr Mayelinne De Lara, Diplomat Magazine's Publisher.”



Hong Li of the OPCW, Felipe Ferreira Marques of Brazil and Henry Pierre Sarr of Senegal.



Some diplomats participating in the Diplomat Magazine's V Chess Tournament edition 2026.



Mr. Aliaksandr Makrahin, Counsellor from the Embassy of Belarus and H.E. Mr. Milisav Raspopovic, Ambassador of Montenegro. Diplomat Magazine's V Chess Tournament edition 2026.



4 - Uliks Doli from Kosovo playing with Felipe Ferreira Marques of Brazil

The atmosphere during the tournament was filled with joy and relaxation, offering everyone a delightful break from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

Dr. De Lara, proudly presented the trophies to the well-deserved winners.



sick employees, including the mandatory involvement of the Arbo/company doctor and the financial consequences of non-compliance.

Particular attention was given to Dutch regulations concerning employee illness, including the principle that, in general, an employee cannot be dismissed during the first two years of illness. Through practical examples and interactive discussions, the seminar provided participants with a clearer understanding of complex Dutch labour regulations applicable to diplomatic missions.

Mr. Dop and Mr. Russell were assisted by four additional lawyers from Russell Advocaten, who answered numerous questions from participants and commented on specific cases raised during the seminar.

Beyond its legal value, the seminar also provided an excellent opportunity for representatives of diplomatic missions to exchange experiences with colleagues in a professional and discreet environment.

Russell Advocaten Diplomatic Desk and Diplomat Magazine also shared the seminar notes and presentation materials with all attendees following the conference. Participants with additional questions or specific legal matters are invited to contact Russell Advocaten and its Embassy Desk specialists for further assistance regarding Dutch employment and labour law applicable to diplomatic missions in the Netherlands.



CONCERT 75TH ANNIVERSARY DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS PHILIPPINES- NETHERLANDS

By Roy Lie Atjam

On May 21, 2026, the Embassy of the Philippines, in collaboration with Diplomat Magazine, hosted a concert to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Philippine-Netherlands diplomatic relations. This remarkable evening featured the renowned soprano **Rachelle Gerodias**, who captivated the audience with her powerful voice, accompanied by the talented pianist **Shermaine Velasco** and a special performance from baritone **Byeong In Park**.

The concert drew a distinguished audience, including ambassadors; ICJ President Yuji Iwasawa and Madame Iwasawa, CFC Managing Director Sheikh Mohammed Belal and his spouse; ambassadors from ASEAN countries; respected judges of the ICJ and ICC, the Secretary General of the Hague Academy, Mr. Jean Mark Thouvenin, and representatives from international organizations in The Hague.

The highlight of the evening was a compelling speech from the guest of honor, Permanent Secretary **Mr. Christiaan Rebergen** of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Speaking on behalf of the Dutch government, he emphasized, "This week, marked by high-level exchanges and collaboration across various fields, showcases the strength of our ties."

Rebergen went on to say, "an anniversary like this signifies not just history, but also our cooperation in trade, education, and culture—most importantly, it's about the people and the connections we forge. Let us honor these connections in the most beautiful way possible: through music. Music transcends language; it resonates with everyone, tells our stories, honors our memories, and touches our hearts."

Featuring on the program, Rachelle Gerodias-Park treated the audience with a well-appreciated rendition of the Dutch song "Maria, schone vrouwe" (Maria, fair



lady), composed by the renowned Dutch composer Hendrik Andriessen.

In his welcome remarks, Philippine Ambassador to the Netherlands J. Eduardo Malaya stated that the commemoration's theme "aptly characterizes the bilateral relations, which covers a multitude of areas, notably trade and investment, smart agriculture, water management, semi-conductors, sustainable development, renewable energy, academic exchanges, and the list continues to grow."

"As we navigate an increasingly complex global landscape, our close relations have equipped us to confidently address challenges, including sustainability, reliable energy supply chains, and maritime security. Our shared commitment to international law, the law of the sea, and democracy serves as a solid foundation for our collaboration," the Ambassador added.



The 75th anniversary celebration was further amplified by the significant visit of Foreign Secretary **Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro** to the Netherlands, which took place from May 17 to 19, 2026, the first visit by a Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary in 33 years., marking an important moment in the Philippines- Netherlands diplomatic journey.

During the visit, Secretary Lazaro met with Dutch Foreign Minister **Tom Berendsen** and high-level officials of international organizations. Earlier, in March 2026, Trade and Industry Undersecretary **Allan Gepty** visited the Netherlands, while Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development **Aukje de Vries** traveled to Manila in February for meetings with Trade and Industry Secretary **Ma. Cristina Aldeguer-Roque**.

The concert opened with selections of celebrated opera duets and solos including *Quando me'n vo* from *La Bohème* before moving to beloved Filipino classics such as *Katakataka*, *Sa Kabukiran*, *Mutya ng Pasig*, and *Dahil Sa Isang Bulaklak*. A special highlight of the evening came when Ambassador Eduardo Malaya surprised guests by accompanying Gerodias on the piano for *Payapang Daigdig* (Peaceful World). The Prayer, brought the anniversary concert to a memorable conclusion.



The Honorable Mr. Wang Yi, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs of China



H.E. Shen Bo, Ambassador of China

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS

By John Dunkelgrün

On 7 June 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/78/286, declaring June 10th as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. The resolution, originally proposed by the People's Republic of China, was quickly seconded by eighty nations.

On June 10th of this year, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Netherlands, in partnership with Diplomat Magazine, hosted an event at the Peace Palace to commemorate and highlight this vital initiative for the second time.

The event introduced by Dr Mayelinne De Lara, Diplomat Magazine's Publisher by saying "we must preserve our sense of humanity and remember that, despite our different origins, borders, and religions, we share the same aspirations: peace, prosperity, and respect." It was attended by ambassadors, judges of international courts, religious leaders, academics, representatives from peace organizations, Chinese business diaspora and the medias. At a time when the global order that has brought unprecedented prosperity and well-being to billions is threatened by war, mass migration, and climate change, it is easy to grow cynical about such efforts. Yet, to quote Sir Winston Churchill:

"To talk-talk-talk is always better than to war-war-war."

China clearly takes this initiative very seriously. The Honorable Mr. Wang Yi, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs, recorded a keynote speech for the occasion that was broadcast to Chinese embassies

worldwide, anchoring the event at the Peace Palace. He was followed by H.E. Mr. Shen Bo, Ambassador to the Netherlands, and H.E. Mr. Vusi Philemon Madonsela, Ambassador of South Africa.

All four speakers underscored that dialogue is the only viable tool to bridge the immense confidence gap that has widened across the globe. As ambassador Shen mentioned "Civilizations may differ fundamentally, but no single culture holds a monopoly on wisdom. Just as football fans admire the vastly different styles of Messi, Ronaldo, and Mbappé, the global community must learn to appreciate cultural diversity as an asset rather than a threat."

Ambassador Madonsela expressed "Meaningful dialogue among civilizations is the most effective antidote to prejudice, discrimination, and misunderstanding."

To illustrate this fusion of civilizations, the embassy welcomed Dutch singer Cindy van Minnen, award winner of the "Water Cube Cup" Chinese Song Contest who performed "Left Hand Points to the Moon" a beautifully soothing Chinese melody.

Additionally, Mr. Jin Yinfei, Director of the Zhejiang Art Museum, presented a fascinating artwork; an object resembling a classical French marble bust, crafted by a



H.E. Mr. Vusi Philemon Madonsela, Ambassador of South Africa.



Mr. Jin Yinfei, Director of the Zhejiang Art Museum

Chinese paper-art master into an amazingly morphable sculpture.

Whether the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations will have a substantive effect on global tensions remains to be seen. However, every effort to encourage nations to speak to one another—and to truly understand one another rather than fight—is inherently worthwhile.

AZERBAIJANI AMBASSADOR HOSTS LIVELY QARABAĞ-AJAX CHAMPIONS LEAGUE VIEWING

H.E. Mr. Mammad Ahmadzada, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Netherlands, hosted an informal viewing of the UEFA Champions League match between Qarabağ FK and AFC Ajax early December 2025. The gathering, held at the Leonardo Royal Hotel in The Hague, brought together ambassadors, diplomats, members of the Azerbaijani community, Dutch business representatives, and Ajax supporters.



Guests began arriving from 6 p.m., coming directly from their offices and diplomatic engagements. The hall quickly filled with an animated mix of fans from both sides. Ambassador Ahmadzada welcomed everyone and encouraged guests to cheer freely for their preferred team.

The match delivered excitement from start to finish. Qarabağ opened the scoring early and briefly regained the lead after halftime.

Match highlights included:

- Camilo Durán's opening goal for Qarabağ (10')
- Kasper Dolberg's equaliser (39')
- Matheus Silva restoring Qarabağ's lead (47')
- Ajax's decisive late goals by Oscar Gloukh (79', 90') and Anton Gaaei (82')

Ajax's 4–2 win marked their first Champions League victory of the 2025–26 season.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Ahmadzada highlighted the symbolic significance of Qarabağ for Azerbaijan. "Thank you very much for coming and for sharing our joy and excitement. Qarabağ holds a special place in the hearts of all Azerbaijanis. Founded in 1951, the club has become one of the most successful

sports teams of our country, and a symbol of resilience, unity, and national pride. Despite the challenges faced over the past 30 years, Qarabağ has continued to represent Azerbaijan on the international stage with dignity and determination."

The evening concluded in a relaxed and cheerful mood, with guests exchanging impressions about the match and enjoying the Embassy's hospitality.



LA FRANCE RENFORCE SON SOUTIEN AUX VICTIMES À LA CPI

La République française, État partie à la Cour pénale internationale (CPI) depuis 2000, a effectué une contribution volontaire de 150 000 EUR au Fonds au profit des victimes à la CPI. Cette contribution volontaire de la France est non affectée et sera utilisée pour réparer les préjudices subis par les victimes, par le biais des réparations ordonnées par la CPI et d'autres programmes mis en œuvre à leur bénéfice.

S.E. Kevin Kelly, membre du Conseil de direction du Fonds au profit des victimes à la CPI, a déclaré :

« Cette nouvelle contribution de la France envoie un message fort sur l'importance de la justice réparatrice pour les victimes dans le cadre du système du Statut de Rome et de



S.E. François Alabrune, Ambassadeur de la République française auprès du Royaume des Pays-Bas, et Dr Deborah Ruiz Verdusco, Directrice exécutive du Fonds au profit des victimes à la CPI, au nom du Conseil de direction, au siège de la CPI à La Haye, aux Pays-Bas, en décembre 2025.

la CPI. La France continue de démontrer qu'elle est une ardente défenseuse du droit international, de la responsabilité et du soutien aux victimes de crimes les plus graves ».

S.E. François Alabrune, Ambassadeur de la République française auprès du Royaume des Pays-Bas, a déclaré : « La Cour punit, mais elle répare aussi. La France demeure engagée auprès des victimes, au cœur du système du Statut de Rome. Elle réaffirme l'importance du Fonds au profit des victimes, pilier indispensable pour assurer

la réparation et renforcer l'état de droit à la suite de la commission des crimes les plus graves ».

La République française soutient de manière constante les programmes mis en œuvre par le Fonds au profit des victimes à la CPI. Elle est le 10^e plus grand contributeur du Fonds, ayant versé plus de 1 740 000 EUR de contributions volontaires depuis 2005. Le total des contributions reçues de la République française représente environ 3 % du budget programmatique global du Fonds au profit des victimes à la CPI depuis 2004.

THE CASE OF MR. DANIËL WOLF

By John Dunkelgrün

In observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Month, the Canadian Embassy hosted an expert lecture focusing on "Looted Art and Restitution: The Case of Daniël Wolf."



Ambassador H.E. Mr. Hugh Adsett welcomed attendees at his remarkable residence in Wassenaar, offering insight into both the house's historical significance and the story of Mr. Wolf. Known as Groot Haesebroek, the estate was originally built for the renowned Kröller-Müller family from Rotterdam and later became the home of Mr. and Mrs. Daniël Wolf. Mr. Wolf was a successful businessman and a prominent art collector whose extensive

collection of art and valuable furniture was confiscated and auctioned in Germany. During the war, the house was occupied by the Commander of the Wehrmacht, General Friedrich Christiansen, and after the conflict, it transitioned to serve as the residence of the Canadian Ambassador.

The lecture featured presentations by Ms. Eelke Muller and Mr. Daniël Hendrikse,

researchers at the Expert Centre of Restitution at NIOD. They explored national and international efforts to restore looted art, emphasizing the enduring importance of these issues more than eighty years after the events in question. The relevance of this dialogue can be summarized in three key aspects: the individuals involved, the remembrance of historical atrocities, and the pursuit of justice, or People, Memory and Justice

VIKSIT BHARAT RUN HELD IN THE HAGUE

The Embassy of India in the Netherlands organised the Viksit Bharat Run 2025 on Sunday, 28 September, at Westbroekpark in The Hague, highlighting the core objectives of service, sustainability, and swachhta (cleanliness).



The run attracted a large and enthusiastic turnout, with participants from both the Indian and Dutch communities, including many youth and children, reflecting the inclusive and community-oriented spirit of the initiative. The event was flagged off by H.E. Mr. Kumar Tuhin, Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, who addressed the participants and explained the significance of the Run's central themes: Service, Sustainability, and Swachhta.

In addition to The Hague, the Embassy, in collaboration with the Indian Students'

Associations of Maastricht and Groningen, successfully organised Viksit Bharat Run 2025 events in Maastricht and Groningen, further extending the initiative's outreach across the Netherlands.

The Viksit Bharat Run 2025 forms part of Seva Pakhwada, observed from 17 September to 2 October 2025. Seva Pakhwada is a celebration of service, responsibility, and collective effort, particularly Seva Bhav, or the spirit of selfless service. During this period, communities in India and abroad come together to engage in activities that serve society, strengthen

community bonds, and promote shared responsibility.

Other initiatives organised during Seva Pakhwada included the planting of fruit trees at Amity International School Amsterdam under the Ék Ped Maa Ke Naam initiative; a cleanliness drive at the Embassy premises under the Ék Din Ek Ghanta Ek Saath initiative; the donation of books on Indian culture to Shri Saraswatieschool in Rotterdam; and the organisation of the Bhartiya First Conclave 2025, in association with Stichting Sankriti Aur Sanskar.

BANGLADESH HOSTS DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGE ON ROHINGYA JUSTICE

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in The Hague hosted last January, a diplomatic exchange titled "Interaction with the Legal Team of The Gambia and the Rohingya Victim Delegation," coinciding with the merits hearing at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the genocide case *The Gambia v. Myanmar*, supported by eleven intervening states.

Chaired by H.E. Mr. Md Hasan Abdullah Towhid, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, the event provided a platform for dialogue on accountability, justice, reparations, and durable solutions for the Rohingya people. The fully attended gathering brought together ambassadors, diplomats, legal experts, and representatives of the Rohingya community.

The programme included a screening of the documentary "From Atrocities to



Survival: Justice Journey of Rohingya Victims," followed by discussions with Rohingya representatives and international legal experts. Ms. Antonia Mulvey, Founder and Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide, emphasized victims' expectations of the ICJ and the importance of international justice mechanisms.

Members of The Gambia's legal team briefed participants on the merits phase of the case, with Mr. M. Arsalan Suleman (Foley Hoag LLP) outlining the case structure and Mr. Paul S. Reichler (11 King's Bench Walk Chambers) addressing

the legal arguments under the Genocide Convention.

Mr. Md. Kamruzzaman, Director General (Myanmar Wing) at Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to supporting over 1.2 million Rohingya refugees and called for safe and voluntary repatriation, alongside accountability for international crimes. The event concluded with remarks by H.E. Mr. Dawda Jallow, Attorney General and Minister of Justice of The Gambia, stressing continued international solidarity in pursuing justice for the Rohingya.

For smooth access to the European market and reliable distribution

A large site on the outskirts of Amsterdam, harbouring some 15 acres of storage units, is home to the Dutch transport and storehouse company CJ Hendriks. A family firm founded in 1840, it now has two members of sixth generation Hendriks at the helm: Johan Hendriks, general director, and Christoffel Hendriks, financial director. 'We are a practically-minded company,' says Johan. 'In fact we simply collect goods and deliver them in the right place at the right time.'

This may sound straightforward but the world of international transport logistics in which CJ Hendriks operates offers complex issues. Johan: 'Sending goods to the European market involves a large number of factors and we understand exactly how it works. Customs requirements are getting ever more complex, and apart from these we have to deal with excise duties, local transport, storage and timely distribution – all of which we handle for our customers so they can focus on their business.' CJ Hendriks holds all necessary certificates and licences for this task.

CJ Hendriks specializes in transport and storage of excise goods such as wines, and in dealing with dangerous substances, whilst also handling various other commodities for customers in The Netherlands and abroad. Everything is done in consultation with the customer, in the way the customer prefers. That requires mutual understanding and close cooperation,



Christoffel Hendriks, financial director, Johan Hendriks, general director

familiarity with the product in question and a detailed knowledge of the relevant rules and regulations. Departing from the customer and taking existing regulations and mandatory permits into account, a specialist team is permanently looking to utilize innovative IT-solutions during the entire logistical process, enabling smooth progress from the moment the goods arrive to their onward transport.

'Complex issues do not faze us'

In the niche market in which CJ Hendriks operates, detailed specialist expertise is essential and this family firm has made a clear choice not to follow the trend towards increasing standardization. The reason for this is simple: a lot of products are not suited to this. CJ Hendriks opts for awareness of its customers' wishes and working together with the customer to tackle any challenges and solve any problems that may arise.

A specific characteristic of a family firm is that it is not overly focused on maximizing short term profit. Johan:

'We determine how we can position the company in such a way that the next generation can also reap the benefits.' Sustainability is a major factor in this. In 2020 the storehouses were fitted with solar panels. A modest energy provider, CJ Hendriks now supplies the electricity for 700 households in the vicinity. Electric vehicles, heat pumps, technological innovation for its fleet: these are all features of the business operation implemented by CJ Hendriks in order to secure maximum sustainability and efficiency.

CJ Hendriks provides a crucial link in the logistics of the distribution chain. When the logistics are in order, everything else can function on a higher level. In dialogue with the customer this allows CJ Hendriks to enhance a company's potential. The fact that this may prove to be a complex puzzle merely increases the challenge. Johan: 'In the end our aim is to remove worries for the customer and offer as much service as possible'.



CJ Hendriks
Expeditie- en Veembedrijf
 cjhendriks.com
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A SPECIAL WAITANGI EVENING

By John Dunkelgrün



It is a little-known fact that within the venerable rowing club Njord in Leiden, there is a unique circle called the Waka Crew (het Waka Gezelschap). To understand its origin, one must travel back in time. On February 6th, 1840, the British Crown signed an agreement with over 500 Māori chiefs at Waitangi on New Zealand's North Island. The Treaty of Waitangi, unique in colonial history, is seen as the founding document of New Zealand.



Since Dutch explorer Abel Tasman discovered the islands in 1642 - who famously declined to set foot on land following a less-than-amicable reception - the Māori population has grown from about 50,000 before first contact to nearly one million today. Today, they make up almost 20% of the nation. While challenges in government relations remain, the Māori population is still growing, and their economy is doing well. Their culture and language (te reo Māori) are both protected and celebrated. Ambassador Frater even started her speech in Leiden with an introduction in te reo Māori.

A Legacy of Reciprocity

Throughout the colonial era, European institutions amassed large amounts of cultural artifacts, often obtained under dubious circumstances. This prompted the well-known Dutch author W.F. Hermans to call the British Museum "the world's largest pirate chest." In the late 20th century, a global shift in perspectives caused former colonies to start requesting the return of their treasures.

The Wereldmuseum (formerly the Museum voor Volkenkunde) maintains a deep interest in the cultures of Oceania. This relationship reached a turning point in 2005 when the museum returned a Toi Moko - a mummified tattooed head - to the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum in Wellington. In a gesture of profound gratitude and partnership, New Zealand granted a 100-year loan of a specially commissioned, elaborately carved Waka taua (war canoe). Named Te Hono ki Aotearoa, the vessel was crafted by the legendary Sir Hekenukumai Busby. To facilitate paddling practice, a smaller canoe was also gifted.

The Waka Crew at Njord

To master the art of paddling and maintaining the craft, a group of Njord members formed the Waka Crew. Each year, members travel to New Zealand to participate in the Waitangi Day celebrations on February 6th. There, they immerse themselves in te reo Māori, learn traditional Haka dances, and study the sacred customs surrounding the Waka.

To welcome the new Ambassador, H.E. Ms. Charlotte Frater, the Waka crew invited her and her family to the Njord boathouse on the Oude Rijn in Leiden. Welcomed by President Cees Huige, the party received an in-depth guided tour. Ms. Chris Buijvoets, a veteran Waka Crew member and acting captain (Tāhimana), shared her experiences living and working with Māori.

More Than a Tool

In honor of the visit, the Ambassador, adorned by a traditional feathered cloak of importance (a kakalu huru huru), presented Njord with a ceremonial paddle (hoe). This beautifully carved piece was created specifically for the Netherlands by master carver Mr. Billy Harrison.

"Paddles are much more than just tools to move across the ocean or a canal," the Ambassador explained. "They are a symbol of leadership, partnership, and forward momentum. A hoe represents the idea that progress is only possible when people paddle in unison."

The strong bonds between New Zealand, the Waka crew, and Njord could not be better represented than by this magnificent hoe, which unites two maritime nations whose histories and identities are deeply tied to the sea.

NEW CARNEGIE FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER: PROF. CARLA SIEBURGH

The Carnegie Foundation, owner and manager of the Peace Palace, has appointed Professor Carla Sieburgh to its Board by royal decree, effective 1 February 2026. She began her duties at the Board meeting on 16 February and will oversee the Foundation's legal portfolio in the coming years.

Prof. Sieburgh is a distinguished legal scholar with extensive experience in the judiciary and academia. From 2017 to 2024, she served as a justice of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands and, in that capacity, as an extraordinary State Councillor in the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State. She also contributed to the

Commission on Legal Uniformity, promoting coherence between civil and administrative law at the highest judicial level.

Since 2003, she has been Professor of Civil Law at Radboud University Nijmegen, and since 2010 Research Professor there. In 2010, she was elected to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her work focuses on European and private law in an international context. She co-initiated the *Ius Commune Casebook on European Law and Private Law*, fostering comparative legal scholarship.

Internationally, Prof. Sieburgh represents the Netherlands on the Governing Council of UNIDROIT and chairs the Asser Advisory Council.



Reflecting on her new role, she emphasized the importance of the institutions housed in the Peace Palace — including the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration — and expressed her commitment to supporting their mission, good governance, and the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage.

GREECE DOUBLES CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT VICTIM-CENTRED JUSTICE AT THE ICC

The Hellenic Republic, a State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) since 2002, has doubled its voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund for Victims (TFV) to EUR 30,000, reaffirming its strong commitment to international justice and to the rights of victims of crimes under the Rome Statute.

Greece's unrestricted contribution will support efforts to redress the harm suffered by victims of Rome Statute crimes through the implementation of reparations awards ordered by the ICC, as well as through other programmes aimed at their rehabilitation and well-being.

Welcoming the increased contribution, H.E. Kevin Kelly, Member of the Board of Directors of the TFV, stated: "The Hellenic Republic's enhanced contribution to the Trust Fund for Victims is particularly significant, as it comes at an important moment for the Court and demonstrates that reparative justice for victims remains central to international accountability efforts. I strongly encourage other States to support the victim-centred mandate of the



Trust Fund for Victims through voluntary contributions."

H.E. Caterina Ghini, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, added: "Greece reaffirms its unwavering support for the International Criminal Court and its mandate to deliver justice to victims of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. Through its voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund for Victims, Greece expresses its solidarity with survivors and affected

communities, underscoring the importance of reparative measures, rehabilitation, and sustainable assistance. Greece remains committed to strengthening accountability, promoting the rule of law, and ensuring that victims remain at the heart of international justice efforts."

The Hellenic Republic has been providing regular voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for Victims since 2024, reflecting its growing engagement in support of victim-centred justice at the ICC.

H. E. Caterina Ghini, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Dr. Deborah Ruiz Verduzco, Executive Director of the Trust Fund for Victims at the ICC on behalf of the Board of Directors at the ICC Headquarters in The Hague, The Netherlands, in February 2026.

“ELEGY OF ETERNAL ECHOES”: A CULTURAL EVENING AT THE GROTE KERK IN THE HAGUE

H.E. Mr. Mammad Ahmadzada, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, hosted a distinguished classical music concert entitled “Elegy of Eternal Echoes” at the historic Grote Kerk in The Hague.

The concert featured the acclaimed Chamber Ensemble I Bricconcello, which presented a rich repertoire of masterpieces by renowned Azerbaijani and international composers.

With an extensive international career, I Bricconcello has performed in numerous tours, festivals, and concerts across Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, the Netherlands, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Azerbaijan. The ensemble has enjoyed over fifteen years of artistic collaboration with Azerbaijan, strengthened during Ambassador Ahmadzada’s tenure in Italy, where he initiated and supported several cultural projects and concerts in both countries.

The evening’s repertoire included iconic pieces such as themes from La Forza del Destino and Schindler’s List, alongside

celebrated Azerbaijani compositions, including selections from Seven Beauties by Gara Garayev, works by Sevdal Ibrahimova, and Shusha by Farhad Badalbeyli.

In his remarks, Ambassador Ahmadzada expressed his appreciation to the distinguished guests attending the concert and reflected on the significance of cultural diplomacy. Held during the holy month of Ramadan, the evening symbolized the unifying power of music beyond borders.

Ambassadors from numerous countries, members of the diplomatic community, and Dutch friends of Azerbaijan attended the event. The concert was followed by light refreshments, allowing guests to continue the exchange in a warm and convivial atmosphere.



H.E. Mr. Mammad Ahmadzada, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of the Netherlands during his speech at the Grote Kerk in The Hague



RWANDA MARKS KWIBUKA32 IN THE NETHERLANDS

On 7 April 2026, the Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda marked the 32nd commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi with a Walk to Remember and official ceremony in Amsterdam.



On 7 April 2026, the Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda marked the 32nd commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi with a Walk to Remember and official ceremony in Amsterdam.

Led by H.E. Ambassador Lambert Dushimimana, participants walked from the

RAI Exhibition and Convention Centre to the Genocide Memorial in Beatrixpark. The event gathered over 150 attendees, including members of the diplomatic community, the Rwandan diaspora, and friends of Rwanda. Remarks were delivered by Mr Jeff Rutazihana (IBUKA Netherlands), followed by a spoken word performance by Lisette Ntakabumwe. Ambassador Dushimimana highlighted Rwanda’s progress in unity and reconciliation, while warning against genocide denial and hate speech.

The ceremony concluded with a keynote address by Mr Hans Docter and a wreath-laying tribute.



H.E. Ms. Sahar Ghanem, Ambassador of Yemen and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps at the memorial site, Beatrixpark.



H.E. Mr. Lambert Dushimimana, Ambassador of Rwanda.

WATER SCIENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



At the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, a high-level forum titled “Water Science: Applications for Development and Business in Latin America and the Caribbean” brought together scientists, diplomats, policymakers, and private sector representatives to explore how water-driven innovation can support sustainable development across the region.

Hosted by the Embassy of Panama on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the event highlighted the importance of international cooperation and interdisciplinary approaches. In her opening remarks, H.E. Sally Loo Hui emphasized the central role of science in addressing complex regional challenges:

“Water... reminds us of the fundamental role that natural resources play in shaping sustainable and resilient societies.”

The forum also underscored the value of partnerships between academia, governments, and the private sector, with contributions from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and leading experts.

An inaugural lecture by Silvia L. Saravia Matus of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean linked water governance to economic transformation, calling for integrated strategies that combine sustainability, resilience, and inclusive growth. Two roundtables addressed the role of science in public policy and the contribution of business in scaling innovation. Moderated by Héctor García, discussions emphasized translating research into practical solutions and strengthening regional capacity.

The presence of Meike van Ginneken highlighted the Netherlands’ commitment to global water cooperation. Closing the forum, Prof. Eddy Moors reaffirmed the importance of sustained collaboration.

Bringing together diverse expertise, the event demonstrated that water science is not only technical, but a powerful tool for diplomacy, innovation, and sustainable development.



H.E. Ms. Sally Loo Hui, Ambassador of Panama and GRULAC Coordinator.



Moderator, Dr. Héctor García, professor of Environmental and Sanitary Engineering, IHE Delft and the Universidad Tecnológica del Uruguay (UTEC).

CYPRUS PRESENTS PALIMPSEST WORLDS IN THE HAGUE

In the framework of the 2026 Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus of the Council of the European Union, the Embassy of Cyprus inaugurated the multidisciplinary exhibition Palimpsest Worlds on 26 March at Pulchri Studio.

The exhibition explores the concept of the palimpsest—where traces of the past remain visible beneath the present—offering a strong reflection on identity, memory, and continuity in both Cyprus and Europe. Through visual art, textiles, and sound, the works highlight layered histories and evolving cultural narratives.

The well-attended vernissage welcomed ambassadors, EU dignitaries, Dutch officials, and members of the local cultural community, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere reminiscent of Cyprus. A musical performance by Eva Stavrou, featured her composition Breaths.

In his remarks, the Mayor of The Hague, Jan van Zanen, emphasized that “Europe is not a blank page,” highlighting the importance of

recognising the layered nature of history in shaping responsible and humane decisions. “The present never stands apart from the past. Events do not occur in isolation. Feelings and intentions have deep roots. Recognising what is in both is essential if we are to make wise, responsible, and humane decisions.”

The exhibition features works by Toula Liasi, Elena Parouti and Irene Stavrou.

H.E. Mr. Spyros Attas, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus expressed: “In a time marked by geopolitical uncertainty and global challenges, culture acquires even greater significance. It serves as a bridge between peoples, fostering dialogue, understanding, and connection.”



H.E. Mr. Spyros Attas, Ambassador of Cyprus and The Hague City Mayor, Mr. Jan van Zane



Ambassador Attas also noted the symbolic importance of hosting the exhibition in The Hague, emphasizing the shared commitment of Cyprus and the Netherlands to European cooperation, multilateralism, and cultural exchange. He further acknowledged the vital role of the Cypriot community in the Netherlands as a living bridge between the two nations.

MONTENEGRO MINISTER OF JUSTICE BOJAN BOŽOVIĆ VISITS THE HAGUE

Montenegro's Minister of Justice, H.E. Bojan Božović, paid an assertive visit to The Hague from 21 to 23 April 2026, reaffirming Montenegro's clear and steady trajectory toward EU membership. Discussions centred on judicial reform, highlighting concrete results already achieved and continued progress in the rule of law chapters, which remain key pillars in the accession process.

During his visit, Minister Božović held a bilateral meeting with David van Weel, Minister of Justice of the Netherlands, reaffirming the strong and constructive partnership between the two countries. He also met with Judge Tomoko Akane, President of the International Criminal Court, underscoring Montenegro's firm and principled commitment to international justice and accountability.

Further high level engagements included meetings with Michael Schmid, President of Eurojust; Nazhat Khan, Deputy Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court;

Kevin Hughes, Deputy Prosecutor of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, Philippe Gautier, Registrar of the International Court of Justice and Osvaldo Zavala Giler, Registrar of the International Criminal Court. Deborah Ruiz Verduzco, Executive Director of the Trust Fund for Victims at the International Criminal Court.

The visit highlighted tangible reform progress and Montenegro's strong readiness to continue deepening cooperation with international partners, as it advances confidently through the final phase of its EU accession process.



Minister Božović with David van Weel, Minister of Justice of the Netherlands



H.E. Mr. Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut,
Ambassador of Germany.

MOZART AT THE GERMAN RESIDENCE

On the evening of 3 March, the residence of the German Ambassador in The Hague became the setting for an elegant gathering where music and diplomacy met in harmony. The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, and Mrs. Brigitte Meyer-Landrut, together with ClubRO, hosted a memorable chamber concert featuring members of the renowned Residentie Orkest.

Guests began arriving at the prestigious German residence from 17:30, welcomed in a warm and refined atmosphere that reflected the elegance of the venue. The event brought together ambassadors, Dutch friends of Germany, and representatives from several academic organizations.

Before the performance, Annelie Bulsing, Deputy Director of Audiences & Development at the Residentie Orkest and Amare, offered a brief introduction to the orchestra and the

evening's programme. Ambassador Meyer-Landrut personally welcomed the guests, highlighting the enduring ties between Germany and the Netherlands.

The musical highlight of the evening was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A major, KV 581 "Stadler" (1789), a masterpiece of chamber music celebrated for its lyrical beauty and delicate interplay between the clarinet and the string quartet. Performed by distinguished musicians from

the Residentie Orkest, the work captivated the audience with its expressive depth.

Following the concert, guests gathered for a reception, continuing conversations in an atmosphere of cordiality and appreciation for the arts. The evening demonstrated once again how cultural initiatives hosted by diplomatic missions enrich the international community in The Hague, the city known worldwide as a centre of diplomacy, peace, and international cooperation.



Annelie Bulsing, Deputy Director of Audiences & Development at the Residentie Orkest.

THREADS OF HERITAGE: WEAVING SOUTHEAST ASIA'S LIVING TRADITION

By Roy Lie Atjam

Amsterdam, 12 May 2026 – The Embassies of the ASEAN Community in The Hague presented the opening of THREADS OF HERITAGE: Weaving Southeast Asia's Living Tradition, a remarkable exhibition celebrating the rich textile traditions of Southeast Asia. The event took place at Indonesia House Amsterdam (IHA), the newly renovated Indonesian Promotion Centre and one of the largest of its kind in Europe.



Originally serving as the Indonesian Consulate General from 1967 to 1976, the building remained vacant for decades before being officially reopened in 2024 by Indonesia's Foreign Minister, H.E. Retno L.P. Marsudi, together with Indonesia's Ambassador to the Netherlands, H.E. Mayerfas.

The exhibition invited guests on a journey through the traditional textiles of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Guided by renowned textile anthropologist Dr. Sandra Niessen, visitors discovered the artistry, symbolism and cultural significance woven into each fabric. Drawing on more than forty years of research, Dr. Niessen highlighted how these textiles preserve ancestral traditions and reflect the identity of Southeast Asian communities.

Opening remarks were delivered by the Ambassador of Indonesia to the Netherlands, H.E. Amrih Jinangkung, who emphasized ASEAN's cultural diversity as one of the region's greatest strengths. He congratulated the Philippines on the successful hosting of the 48th ASEAN Summit in Cebu and underlined ASEAN's shared commitment to unity and cultural preservation.

The Ambassador described the featured textiles, including the Philippines' T'nalak woven from Abaka fibres, Vietnam's colourful H'mong costumes, Thailand's elegant Phaa

Poom silk traditions, Malaysia's prestigious Songket woven with gold and silver threads, and Indonesia's Tenun Ikat from East Sumba.

Particular attention was given to the symbolic motifs of the Hinggi Kaliuda textile from Sumba, where horses represent strength and status, hens and roosters symbolize family harmony, prawns signify death and reincarnation, and flowers express beauty and continuity of life. Traditionally, such cloths are worn during important ceremonies and serve as symbols of honour and ancestral connection.

Ambassador Jinangkung also highlighted the growing international recognition of Southeast Asian textile heritage, noting UNESCO recognition for Indonesian Batik, Malaysian Songket and Timor-Leste's Tais traditions, while expressing support for Thailand's efforts to secure recognition for Chut Thai.

Following the ceremony, guests toured the exhibition, engaged with curators and admired the intricate craftsmanship of the displayed textiles, celebrating the enduring cultural heritage of ASEAN nations.



ALISHER NAVOI: CULTURAL DIPLOMACY THROUGH LITERATURE

SHAPING UZBEKISTAN'S SUBLIME LITERARY ACHIEVEMENTS

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Brussels hosted a distinguished literary soirée on 4 February 2026 to commemorate the 585th anniversary of Alisher Navoi, one of the most celebrated figures in Uzbek classical literature and a symbol of cultural enlightenment.



Born on 9 February 1441 in Herat, Alisher Navoi remains a towering literary and philosophical figure whose works profoundly shaped the cultural identity of the Uzbek people and contributed significantly to the intellectual heritage of human civilisation.

The event, moderated by historian Derya Soysal, gathered guests from Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. H.E. Mr. Gayrat Fozilov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Belgium, welcomed attendees and highlighted Uzbekistan's commitment to preserving and promoting Navoi's extraordinary legacy.

In his remarks, Ambassador Fozilov emphasised the importance of the Alisher

Navoi National Library in Tashkent, which houses an extensive collection of the poet's manuscripts, works, and scholarly research. He noted that the Uzbek government continues to support the translation of Navoi's writings into numerous languages, including English, Turkish, and Arabic, ensuring wider international appreciation of his literary and philosophical contributions.

The Ambassador also underlined Uzbekistan's growing efforts in cultural diplomacy through the establishment of literary awards, the unveiling of monuments abroad, and active cooperation within Turkic cultural frameworks to promote Navoi's humanistic ideals and message of unity.

Significant investments have also been directed toward cultural and educational infrastructure, including research centres and Uzbek language and culture institutes overseas. According to Ambassador Fozilov, these initiatives reflect Uzbekistan's determination to ensure that Navoi's intellectual and cultural heritage continues to inspire scholarship and intercultural dialogue worldwide.

As part of the celebrations marking the poet's 585th anniversary, Uzbekistan is hosting the international symposium "Alisher Navoi and the Eastern Renaissance" in Tashkent, bringing together scholars and participants from more than 30 countries.

The Ambassador further announced plans to establish the Alisher Navoi Foundation in the Benelux countries. The foundation aims to advance Navoi's global legacy, promote Uzbek culture, preserve his literary and scientific heritage, and support Uzbek communities abroad in maintaining their cultural identity and national values.

The evening concluded with a traditional Uzbek dinner buffet, where guests enjoyed the rich flavours of Uzbekistan, highlighted by the exquisite national dish "plov," bringing a memorable close to a captivating celebration of Uzbek literature and culture.

KOSOVO BUSINESS DAY 2026 SHINING IN THE HAGUE

KOSOVO IS SOARING AHEAD!

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Hague, 14 April 2026. The Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in the Netherlands, in collaboration with Business Match Kosovo, successfully hosted Kosovo Business Day 2026, positioning Kosovo as a dynamic near-shoring destination supported by one of Europe's youngest, highly educated, and tech-savvy populations.

The forum gathered more than 100 entrepreneurs, investors, institutional representatives, members of the diplomatic corps, and SMEs from both Kosovo and the Netherlands to explore concrete trade, investment, and partnership opportunities. Kosovo highlighted its strategic proximity to the rest of Europe, facilitating easy movement of employees and the efficient import and export of goods. The country also emphasized its competitive advantages, including a low cost of living, affordable labor force, and strong digital talent.

The event opened with remarks by Ms. Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship, Trade, and Innovation of Kosovo, followed by a discussion moderated by Mr. Shpend Lila of Innovation Centre Kosovo with H.E. Dr. Dren Doli, Ambassador of Kosovo to the Netherlands, and H.E. Dr. Karin Boven, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Kosovo. Their interventions underlined the growing economic cooperation and long-term partnership potential between both countries.

A keynote presentation by Mr. Kreshnik Thaqi from the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency provided an overview of Kosovo's investment climate, highlighting opportunities in infrastructure, renewable energy, public procurement, and railway modernization.

The business forum continued with three strategic panel discussions addressing sectors of mutual interest.

Panel I focused on Agriculture, Retail, and Recycling, featuring contributions from

representatives of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the Global Alliance of Horticulture Regions, Mitrofresh B.V., and KIVO Plastic Verpakkingen. Discussions emphasized horticulture, sustainable agriculture, and circular economy initiatives. Panel II addressed ICT, Digital Talent, Outsourcing, and Cybersecurity. Experts from Buckaroo, Starlabs & Digital School, Innovation Centre Kosovo, Sentry Cyber Security, and Multiply/Datafuse explored Kosovo's rapidly growing technology sector and its strong outsourcing potential for European businesses.

A major milestone of the day was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Kosovo-Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, creating a new framework for bilateral business cooperation and investment promotion.

The final panel concentrated on the Prefabricated and Construction Industry, highlighting innovation, sustainability, and opportunities for international collaboration in urban development and modern construction.



Throughout the day, the forum facilitated productive B2B meetings and networking opportunities, reinforcing existing partnerships while opening the door to new collaborations. Kosovo Business Day 2026 clearly demonstrated that economic cooperation between Kosovo and the Netherlands is no longer only promising—it is already becoming a tangible and dynamic reality.

With strategic vision, international engagement, and a forward-looking business environment, Kosovo continues to position itself as a competitive and progressive market in Europe.

Kosovo is truly soaring ahead.



FAREWELL TO PROF. DR. EDDY MOORS AT IHE DELFT

At the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, Prof. Dr. Eddy J. Moors was honoured during a farewell ceremony marking the conclusion of his tenure as Rector (2017–2025). A respected leader in water and climate science, Moors leaves behind a strengthened institution and a lasting global legacy.

During his time as Rector, IHE Delft consolidated its position as a leading international centre for water education, research, and capacity development—particularly in support of vulnerable regions. Reflecting on his tenure, Moors emphasized the need for renewal: “To continue being a global leader, I believe new leadership will bring fresh energy and ideas to meet the challenges ahead.”

In tribute, Meike van Ginneken praised his “extraordinary service,” noting that under his leadership the Institute gained worldwide recognition as a centre of excellence.

A highlight of the ceremony was the address by H.E. Álvaro González Otero, Ambassador of Uruguay, who reflected on decades of

cooperation with IHE Delft. Recalling the arrival of the first Uruguayan water professionals in 1961, he emphasized how this partnership evolved under Moors into a true global exchange. The co-creation of a Master’s programme in Sanitation with Uruguay’s Universidad Tecnológica (UTEC) stands as a key achievement, positioning the country as a regional hub for Latin America.

In his farewell remarks, Moors returned to the theme of “wicked problems,” highlighting that while progress has been made in areas such as climate policy and groundwater management, it remains insufficient. He called for stronger collaboration and individual responsibility: “Even if multilateral cooperation slows, countries, institutions and individuals can make a difference.”



Moors also underscored the urgent need to invest in the next generation of water professionals, stressing education, inclusion, and capacity development as essential to addressing global water challenges.

As he continues his work as Special Advisor, Prof. Moors leaves behind a legacy defined by international cooperation, interdisciplinary thinking, and a deep commitment to water as a driver of sustainable development.



LOS CUENTOS DE SALARRUÉ

La Embajada de El Salvador y la Asociación Hispánica de La Haya organizaron en mayo un conversatorio sobre la obra del escritor salvadoreño Salvador Salazar Arrué, conocido artísticamente como “Salarrué”. La actividad estuvo a cargo de la abogada y notaria Mirella Pocasangre de Vázquez, quien cautivó al público con una emotiva narrativa sobre la vida y obra de este prestigioso autor.

Entre los asistentes se encontraban miembros de la Asociación Hispánica de La Haya, escritores latinoamericanos, integrantes del cuerpo diplomático, representantes de la prensa y amigos de El Salvador, quienes participaron activamente con preguntas sobre el autor y el particular léxico utilizado en sus cuentos.

Edith Bergansius, presidenta de la Asociación Hispánica de La Haya, dio la bienvenida a los invitados.

Por su parte, el Embajador de El Salvador, S.E. Agustín Vázquez Gómez, conversó con el público sobre las iniciativas de los embajadores latinoamericanos para promover el uso del español en los organismos internacionales con sede en La Haya. El diplomático subrayó además la riqueza cultural y humana de El Salvador, resaltando la calidez y hospitalidad de su pueblo.

El embajador invitó a los asistentes a descubrir, a través de la voz de su esposa, un poco más sobre uno de los escritores más representativos de la literatura salvadoreña. Mirella Pocasangre ofreció entonces una vívida presentación sobre “Salarrué”, destacando cómo sus cuentos reflejan la identidad y la idiosincrasia del pueblo salvadoreño. Explicó que el autor logró capturar, con sencillez y sensibilidad, la esencia de la vida cotidiana en El Salvador.



Durante el conversatorio se abordaron aspectos de la vida del escritor, nacido en 1899 en Sonsonate, ciudad costera conocida por su fuerte tradición indígena y quien desde muy joven estuvo rodeado de libros y de un ambiente artístico gracias a la influencia de su madre, quien también era escritora. Posteriormente obtuvo una beca para estudiar pintura en Estados Unidos, disciplina que consideraba su verdadera profesión.

En 1923 contrajo matrimonio con la artista plástica Zélie Lardé Arthés, con quien tuvo tres hijas. A lo largo de su carrera literaria escribió obras emblemáticas como Cuentos de Cipotes, inspirados en el imaginario infantil, y Cuentos de Barro, relatos costumbristas que retratan la vida popular salvadoreña. Asimismo, recibió importantes reconocimientos nacionales, entre ellos la Orden José Matías Delgado.

Tras la lectura de dos de sus más bellos cuentos, los asistentes disfrutaron de una degustación de gastronomía tradicional salvadoreña.





INDIAN DANCE EXTRAVAGANZA BRINGS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TO THE STAGE IN THE HAGUE

The Embassy of India in the Netherlands presented an evening of culture and artistic excellence with the “Indian Dance Extravaganza – Bhumi and Sufiana”, a contemporary dance production performed at Theatre Diligentia. The event gathered members of the diplomatic community, representatives of international organizations, cultural professionals, and admirers of Indian performing arts for a memorable exploration of India’s rich artistic traditions.

The performance, choreographed by acclaimed dancer and director Maitreyee Pahari, presented a dynamic fusion of two distinct Indian dance traditions: Kathak and Chhau. By blending the refined rhythmic storytelling of Kathak with the powerful and expressive movements of Chhau, the production offered a contemporary interpretation of classical forms while remaining deeply rooted in tradition.

The evening featured two main pieces—Bhumi and Sufiana—each exploring different dimensions of Indian cultural and spiritual expression. Bhumi, meaning “earth” or “motherland,” showed the diversity of India’s cultural heritage through carefully choreographed ensemble with exigent dance/gymnastic movements, and beautiful costumes.

Sufiana, inspired by the mystical traditions of Sufi philosophy, explored themes of devotion, transcendence, and spiritual love.

The performance formed part of a European cultural tour by the Lok Chhanda Cultural Unit, supported by the Ministry of External

Affairs of India as part of its broader cultural diplomacy initiatives.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. Kumar Tuhin, Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, highlighted the significance of cultural diplomacy in strengthening international friendships. The Ambassador, who is himself a passionate musician in his private life, expressed particular enthusiasm in presenting the performance, noting that India’s classical dance traditions carry centuries of artistic evolution, storytelling, and philosophical depth.

The evening drew an exceptional response from the public, with Theatre Diligentia filled to capacity. The audience responded with great enthusiasm to the dancers’ energy, precision, and expressive storytelling, rewarding the performers with sustained applause.

Following the performance, the Embassy of India hosted a reception where guests had the opportunity to meet the artists and exchange impressions of the evening.

Photography by M. Arash Nikkhah, Studio Arash



PORTUGAL EXPO: 52ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE APRIL REVOLUTION FRUTOS DA LIBERDADE

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Hague, 16 April 2026 – The Ambassador of Portugal in the Netherlands, H.E. Clara Nunes dos Santos, in partnership with the Fondation Arpad Zsenes Vieira da Silva, represented by its President, Dr. António Gomes de Pinho, proudly hosted an exhibition at the Chancellery of Portugal to mark the 52nd anniversary of the April Revolution, the carnation revolution. This exhibition showcased an impressive selection of graphic works by one of Portugal's foremost painters of the 20th century, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, titled "Fruits of Freedom." In her powerful opening remarks, Ambassador Clara Nunes dos Santos declared, "For my generation, there is no question: if we had to select an artwork that embodies this extraordinary moment in our democracy, it would unequivocally be a painting by Vieira da Silva.



Dr. António Gomes de Pinho and the Ambassador of Ireland, H.E. Ann Derwin. Portuguese Embassy, Anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, exhibition of graphic works Vieira da Silva.

The Ambassador further emphasized, "When considering a literary piece that encapsulates the essence of the Revolution, we would undoubtedly turn to the words of another great Portuguese poet, Sophia de Mello Breyner, whose poem captures the Revolution with clarity: 'This is the dawn that I awaited, the initial, whole, and clean day, where we emerge from the night and from the silence, And free we inhabit the substance of time.' "Just yesterday, while preparing for the exhibition, I discovered that it was Sophia, a member of Parliament, who asked Vieira da Silva to create a work celebrating the first anniversary of the democratic revolution. This coincidence struck me profoundly, and it

is essential that we take a moment, especially in these challenging times, to reflect on the critical importance of liberty and democracy."

The ambassador introduced Dr. António Gomes de Pinho, the President of the Arpad Szenes Vieira da Silva Foundation, who shared more about the foundation. Following his insight, Mrs. Sandra Brás Santos, the museum curator and a recognized expert, provided further details about the remarkable artworks featured in the exhibition.

Guests enjoyed the drinks and savory Portuguese snacks, including the exceptional bolinhos de bacalhau.



The Ambassador of Portugal, H.E. Ms. Clara Nunes dos Santos, standing next to the most famous work of da Silva



A NEW STAGE OF MODERNISATION: PRESIDENT TOKAYEV SETS KAZAKHSTAN'S REFORM AGENDA

By John Dunkelgrün

Kazakhstan has been independent for almost 35 years, having been a one of the Soviet republics within the USSR for nearly twice that duration. The transition to a market economy and democratic governance has proven challenging. Initiated by Kazakhstan's first President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, economic development has advanced more rapidly than political and administrative reforms. This growth has been supported by the country's vast reserves of oil, gas, and mineral resources. While individuals and businesses often respond faster to new opportunities than state institutions in the process of nation-building, steady progress continues.

In an interview by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, entitled "Kazakhstan Has Entered a New Stage of Modernisation", published in the *Turkistan* newspaper on 5 January 2026, he reaffirmed his commitment to transforming Kazakhstan into a state grounded in justice, the rule of law, and order. He confirmed that political reforms would continue and indicated that major constitutional changes would be submitted to a national referendum.

These themes were further constructively developed during the National Kurultai (Congress) on 20 January 2026, where President Tokayev outlined key directions for further developing of Kazakhstan's political system, through a constitutional reform, including transition to a unicameral parliament, strengthening the role of parliamentarians, as well as enhancing the role of the youth in state development.



As Tim Marshall observed in his 2015 book, nations are shaped by their geography. Kazakhstan borders two of the world's largest and most influential countries and is home to a significant Russian-speaking population. In its ambition to become a modern state with a fully integrated economy, Kazakhstan must carefully navigate a complex geopolitical environment. Rather than publicly aligning itself in international disputes, President Tokayev favors a balanced and discreet diplomatic approach.

Yet, as a famous Dutch footballer and folk philosopher once remarked, "Every problem is an opportunity." Kazakhstan's unique

geographic location makes it a key land-based corridor between East and West, as well as between Russia and the South. Recognizing this potential, the government is investing heavily in road and rail infrastructure and is an active participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative. President Tokayev views transit and logistics as central drivers of economic growth and diversification, reducing dependence on oil and gas.

He expects 2026 to be a crucial year, marked by significant constitutional reforms and major upgrades to the transit routes crossing this vast and strategically positioned

THE RISE OF CARIBBEAN CRUISE PORT INVESTMENT

By Silas Cooper, Honorary Consul of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the Kingdom of The Netherlands

Cruise tourism has become a major driver of infrastructure investment in the Caribbean, the world's leading cruise destination, accounting for nearly 40 percent of global itineraries. As cruise lines deploy larger vessels carrying over 6,000 passengers, Caribbean ports are under pressure to modernize with deeper harbors, expanded berths, and improved passenger facilities.

Major operators including Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean Group, and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings continue expanding their presence in the region, making cruise ports increasingly important strategic assets within Caribbean tourism economies.

A leading example is the transformation of Nassau Cruise Port through a redevelopment project exceeding \$300 million. The upgraded port can now host three Oasis-class ships simultaneously and welcomes more than six million passengers annually. Operated through a public-private partnership led by

Global Ports Holding, the project highlights growing international investment in Caribbean port infrastructure.

Across the region, governments and private operators are investing in new terminals and tourism-focused waterfront developments. Cruise companies are also expanding private destinations such as CocoCay, increasing their control over the tourism experience and passenger spending.

Modern cruise ports now function as tourism multipliers, supporting retail, transportation, excursions, and hospitality



development. As global cruise demand continues to grow, further modernization and public-private investment are expected across the Caribbean. At the same time, governments must balance economic opportunities with climate resilience, sustainable tourism, and equitable revenue distribution.

SOUTH AFRICAN OLIVE OIL MAKES HISTORY: MARDOUW RANKED #24 WORLDWIDE

SWELLENDAM, WESTERN CAPE – 25 FEBRUARY 2026

South Africa has reached a historic milestone in the world of extra virgin olive oil. Mardouw Olive Estate has been ranked #24 in the 2025 EVOO World Rankings, becoming the highest-ranked South African producer ever and placing the country at #12 globally among olive oil nations.

The achievement is particularly significant given that South Africa produces just 1.6 million litres annually—less than 1% of global production—while competing against Mediterranean giants such as Spain, Italy and Greece, which dominate the world market.

“We had this dream 25 years ago to produce world-class Extra Virgin Olive Oil and show what South Africa can do,” said founders André and Marijke Verder. CEO Gerbrand



The Ambassador of South Africa to the Netherlands, H.E. Vusi Madonsela and Gerbrand Nijman, CEO of Mardouw Olive Estate.

Nijman added that the ranking reflects Mardouw's focus on quality, sustainability and full control from tree to bottle, including same-day pressing to preserve aroma and polyphenols.

The 2025 ranking follows a record-breaking year of international awards,

including multiple gold medals in Rome and the Best International Award (Southern Hemisphere).

Mardouw's success marks a turning point for South African olive oil, confirming the country's emergence as a serious player in the premium global EVOO market.

THAILAND NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATED AT HOTEL DES INDES



H.E. Mr. Asi Mamane, Ambassador of Thailand.

H.E. Asi Mamane, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Netherlands, hosted the National Day Reception at the historic Hotel Des Indes in The Hague. The event gathered members of the Dutch business community, the Thai diaspora, and the diplomatic corps for a warm and elegant celebration.



In his address, Ambassador Mamane reflected on today's complex geopolitical landscape shaped by digital transformation, climate change, and non-traditional security challenges. He emphasized the need for global cooperation and the importance of international law in ensuring stability and sustainable development.

He highlighted the long-standing friendship between Thailand and the Netherlands—marked by 420 years of diplomatic relations—and reaffirmed Thailand's commitment to strengthening cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, water management, clean energy, and high-technology industries. He also noted the growing presence of Thai businesses in the Netherlands and the recent signing of the Convention on the Elimination of Double Taxation as a milestone for bilateral

economic ties. In his address, Ambassador Mamane reflected on global challenges and the importance of cooperation:

"Thailand seeks to broaden and deepen our partnerships across the world, supporting stability, sustainability, and people-to-people connections."

People-to-people exchanges remain central to the partnership, exemplified by the success of the Thailand Grand Festival 2025, which welcomed more than 20,000 visitors in The Hague.

The reception featured refined Thai cuisine prepared by the Embassy's chef, artistic performances, and a lively atmosphere enjoyed by diplomats, officials, and many distinguished guests. The celebration once again showcased Thailand's rich culture and its tradition of hospitality.



LAWS AND MULTILATERALISM - OUR CHOICE DEFINES THE FUTURE

Diplomat Magazine is pleased to publish the speech delivered by H.E. Mr. Olivier Belle, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Multilateral Organizations in The Hague, on the occasion of the reception celebrating the Anniversary of His Majesty the King of Belgium on Friday, 14 November 2025.



In his address, Ambassador Belle reflects on the lessons of history, the fragile state of today's world, and the vital role of multilateralism in preventing a return to global turmoil. Drawing on the voices of those who lived through the most difficult moments of the twentieth century, he highlights the responsibility of our generation to uphold diplomacy, international law, and cooperative solutions as the most effective path to peace.

We are honoured to share his thoughtful and timely remarks with our readers.

"Some time ago, I spoke with an elderly lady. She is 96 years old. She was born in September 1929, just a few weeks before the financial crisis that paved the way for global turmoil. She told me that she felt as if she were back in the 1930s. During the ceremony commemorating the First World War armistice on November 11, 2025, a veteran of the Second World War was interviewed on Belgian radio. He is 101 years old. He told the reporter that he had the impression of being back in the 1930s. This elderly lady and this veteran experienced the relentless, creeping rise of violence in all areas that ultimately led to the cataclysm of the Second World War.

After the cataclysm, a new arsenal was build. Not a military one, but an arsenal based on multilateralism. An arsenal inspired by common sense and moral values that had been ignored, discredited, or even erased. An arsenal founded on a set of multiple international treaties and conventions covering humanitarian fields, disarmament, human rights, and international criminal law. An arsenal for peace and development through diplomacy and negotiation.

Like millions of people, the elderly lady and the veteran were unable to promote appeasement and empathy against radicalism. Their calls for solutions through negotiation and diplomacy were not taken into account. The use of force and violence, reaching unimaginable levels, excluded any chance for relevant criticism to even be considered. They had neither legal nor multilateral networks to efficiently oppose the absurd dreams of narcissistic grandeur. Today, we have a very large legal body as well as a multilateral architecture to avoid a sad repetition of tragic history. But laws and multilateralism are only tools. We have a choice. We can set those tools aside as obsolete. This would surely open the gates to the only and last pertinent argument

that would remain: the use of force. Or we can adapt these tools and improve their efficiency and relevance to keep a new global catastrophe at bay, to oppose reason to force, to challenge war with diplomacy, and to make life prevail.

As far as we are concerned, we choose without any doubt the second alternative. And we are convinced that we are certainly not the only ones."

The Hague, November 14, 2025.



CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ANGOLA'S INDEPENDENCE

By Roy Lie Atjam

H.E. Mrs Lizeth Nawanga Satumbo Pena, Ambassador of Angola in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, hosted a reception with the motto "Angola: 50 Years, Preserving and Valuing Achievements, Building a Better Future." The evening began with the national anthems, followed by a moment of silence to honour Angola's heroes. Ambassador Pena delivered a compelling speech, followed by remarks from Mrs Martine van Hoogstraten of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Guests enjoyed a toast, cake-cutting, music by saxophonist Mr. Nanutu, vibrant traditional dances, and a buffet featuring the dessert bolo de Ginguba. The celebration was a tribute to Angola's rich history and a look toward a promising future.

Here is a summary of Ambassador Pena's discourse:

"It is a great honour to address you on behalf of the Angolan People, the President, His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, and our Diplomatic Mission, as we commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Angola's Independence, proclaimed on 11 November 1975 by the late Dr. António Agostinho Neto.

This day reflects the courage and sacrifice of millions of Angolans who ended nearly five centuries of colonization, making Independence and National Sovereignty sacred achievements. We also celebrate the Day of the Angolan Diplomat on 12 November, honouring those who laid the foundations of our foreign policy.

Under President João Lourenço, Angola continues to strengthen democratic institutions and the Rule of Law while fostering an inclusive market economy. The accomplishment of peace has created a stable environment for sustainable development and investment.

Guided by this year's motto, **'Preserving and Valuing Achievements, Building a Better Future,'** Angola maintains cordial international relations. As African Union President, Angola prioritizes infrastructure, energy management, and renewable investment. The upcoming AU-EU Summit in Luanda will celebrate 25 years of partnership and strengthen cooperation in peace, trade, sustainable development, digitalisation, and human mobility.



To the Angolan community in the Netherlands, we honour our heroes by fulfilling civic and patriotic duties and ensuring institutional support so all Angolans can fully exercise their rights.

Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to this event's success."

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY THE HAGUE 2026

By John Dunkelgrün

On February 2, 2026, the CHAJ Foundation, with the Embassy of Israel and the City of The Hague, held the 8th International Holocaust Remembrance Day The Hague Symposium at the Peace Palace.

Mayor Jan van Zanen by video, honored American jurist Benjamin Ferencz, chief prosecutor in the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen trials, whose life's work advanced international law and justice. The Hague is commemorating him with a pathway near the Peace Palace and by supporting initiatives such as the The Hague Holocaust Education Support Center.

Ms. Dineke de Groot, President of the Supreme Court, delivered the keynote address in honor of former President Lodewijk E. Visser. Visser left the Foreign Office due to antisemitism and dedicated his career to strengthening the law and pursuing justice. De Groot connected his perspective to principles associated with the Magna Carta: rights can only be restricted by law, and justice must not be for sale. Visser became a prominent figure in commercial and international law, helped modernize Dutch commercial law, and expanded legal responsibility to include conduct that violates public morals and proper social responsibility. Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1933, he became its President in 1939.

During the Occupation, he spoke out against the Nuremberg Laws and publicly warned of Germany's threat. On May 10, 1940, as the German invasion began, he opened the court session by calling the invasion treacherous and unjustified, noting that citizens were being murdered as he spoke. He opposed the "Aryan Declaration" and influenced others, including Professor Cleveringa. Dismissed on March 1, 1944. He rejected an ID card stamped with "J," opposed the Joodse Raad, and broke with his old friend David Cohen for chairing it. Even after being dismissed, he tried to help Jews by appealing to senior officials and even confronting Rauter. Visser died on February 17, 1942; only three former colleagues attended his funeral.



De Groot described the Occupation as the Supreme Court darkest period and urged today's society to follow Visser's fearless commitment to human dignity and the rule of law.

By tradition, a survivor's testimony was included; now, more than 80 years later, few survivors remain. This year, Dr. Ronald Waterman (91) had to watch his granddaughter deliver his words. Waterman, nine years old when his family was confined in a camp for "elite Jews," described how a fellow prisoner, entomologist Dr. Speijer, involved children in collecting insects. His 23,000-specimen collection was smuggled out and later acquired by Naturalis in Leiden. The family was later sent via Westerbork to Theresienstadt, survived, and returned to Delft.

Waterman believed that survival carried responsibility. He became a chemical and environmental engineer, earned a doctorate in civil engineering and geosciences, and pioneered nature-based water management and land reclamation. He is credited with shaping the Dutch coast from Den Helder to Hoek van Holland, advised internationally, served for 33 years on the South Holland Provincial Council, and received numerous honors.

Rabbi Smuel Katzman concluded the seminar with a metaphor: international law is like a tree, impressive above ground but dependent on moral roots such as dignity, identity, and conviction. He warned about what happens when neighbors look away and colleagues stay silent, urging everyone to care for the person beside them and acknowledge the burdens they carry.



Ms. Dineke de Groot, President of Supreme Court of Justice.



Ambassador Zvi Aviner-Vapni

MALTA REPUBLIC DAY RECEPTION 2025

By Roy Lie Atjam

On the mild winter afternoon of December 12, 2025, a distinguished group of ambassadors, diplomats, and international representatives assembled at the Embassy of Malta to acknowledge and celebrate the Republic Day invitation from Ambassador H.E. Jeffrey Curmi.

The reception started with a captivating performance by the talented duo Kurt Falzon (violin) and Claudia Vicente Cano (cello), who beautifully rendered the national anthems of the Republic of Malta and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, setting the tone for the occasion.

The celebratory reception also marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Malta and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Ambassador Jeffrey Curmi emphasized the great importance that Malta places on the shared values and principles that have historically formed the foundation of the relationship between the two nations. Looking to the future, the Ambassador expressed Malta's commitment to continue deepening collaboration and partnership with the Netherlands in the years to come.

He also expressed sincere gratitude for the collegiality and support provided by fellow ambassadors and high-level officials from international organizations in The Hague to his Embassy and Permanent Representation.



H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Curmi, Ambassador of Malta

Ambassador Curmi affirmed Malta's commitment as a proud member of the EU and the international community, standing as a bridge between cultures and a voice in favor of dialogue and cooperation.

Malta's engagement in global affairs, its commitment to peace and security, and its respect for international law are pillars upon which it continues to engage bilaterally and multilaterally.



The program included a raffle for a plane ticket for two to Malta, courtesy of KM Malta Airlines. The lucky winner was the Ambassador of Brazil.

The reception saw a strong turnout and was filled with a festive ambience. The Embassy of Malta extended its sincere appreciation to the representatives of the Malta Tourism Authority and KM Malta Airlines for their support in organizing this outstanding event.

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The Ambassador of Malta, H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Curmi, H.E. Fernando Simas Magalhães, ambassador of Brazil and Ms Paula Garcia Jorge, Sales Manager KM Malta Airlines.

CUBA MARKS 67TH REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY IN THE HAGUE

On the occasion of the 67th anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution, the Ambassador of Cuba, H.E. Mrs. Eva Yelina Silva Walker, hosted a well-attended reception at the embassy in The Hague. Diplomats, members of the Cuban diaspora, and friends of Cuba gathered in a spirit of solidarity and friendship.

In her address, the Ambassador recalled the significance of January 1, 1959, quoting Fidel Castro: "The joy is immense... perhaps everything will be more difficult from now on." She noted that Cuba's resilience has been shaped by decades of challenges, reaffirming the country's commitment to sovereignty and self-determination.

She also highlighted the lasting impact of external pressures, including restrictive measures, while emphasizing Cuba's dedication to social justice and human dignity, as reflected in its 2019 Constitution. At the international level, she underscored Cuba's support for multilateralism, international law, and dialogue.

Referring to bilateral relations, Ambassador Silva Walker noted that ties between Cuba and the Netherlands span more than 120 years, grounded in mutual respect, cooperation, and trade. She expressed gratitude for continued support and growing solidarity initiatives in the Netherlands.

"In the face of so much hostility towards Cuba, love and hope prevail," she concluded.

The reception ended on a vibrant note, as Cuban artists brought the rhythm and joyful essence of Cuban culture to the embassy, delighting guests and capturing the spirit of the evening.



Head of Palestinian Mission, H.E. Mr. Ammar M.B. Hijazi, H.E. Mr. Hector Constant-Rosales, Ambassador of Venezuela to the Multilateral Organizations in The Hague, H.E. Mr. Arnaldo Brenes Castro, Ambassador of Costa Rica, H.E. Mr. Bo Shen, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr. Syed Haider Shah, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Vusi Madonsela, Ambassador of South Africa, H.E. Mr. Lambert Dushimimana, Ambassador of Rwanda and H.E. Mr. Vladimir Tarabrin, Ambassador of Russia.



H.E. Mrs. Consuelo Femenia Guardiola, Ambassador of Spain, H.E. Ms. Rocio Maneiro, Ambassador of Venezuela, Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, H.E. Dr. Gracita Arrindell, H.E. Mrs. Sahar Ghanem, Ambassador of Yemen and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E. Ms. Franca Deza Ferreccio, Ambassador of Peru, H.E. Dr. Carolina Olarte Bacares, Ambassador of Colombia, H.E. Ms. Sally Loo Hui, Ambassador of Panama and H.E. Ms. Carmen Moreno Toscano, Ambassador of Mexico.



H.E. Mrs. Eva Yelina Silva Walker, Ambassador of Cuba together with H.E. Mr. Carlos Aguero Gomez, Ambassador of Nicaragua to the International Organizations and H.E. Fernando Simas Magalhães, ambassador of Brazil.

182TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DOMINICAN INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATED WITH MUSIC IN BERLIN

The Embassy of the Dominican Republic in Germany marked the 182nd Anniversary of National Independence with an exceptional solo concert by renowned Dominican pianist and composer Michel Camilo at the Konzerthaus Berlin on 6 March 2026.

The celebration gathered members of the diplomatic corps, German national and local authorities, representatives of the Dominican community, and distinguished guests from the cultural, academic, and business sectors. Among the notable attendees were Deputy Minister of Tourism Promotion and Development Tammy Reynoso, alongside senior representatives of Banco de Reservas.

Strong Tourism and Economic Ties

Relations between both countries continue to deepen, particularly through tourism and trade. Approximately **200,000 German tourists visit the Dominican Republic each year**, making Germany one of the country's leading European tourism markets.

Bilateral trade remains steady. According to recent figures:

- German exports to the Dominican Republic amount to €436 million
- Imports from the Dominican Republic total €288 million



H.E. Mrs. Joseline Pujols, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic and pianist Michael Camilo.



H.E. Ms. Serap Güler, State Secretary at the German Federal Foreign Office.

German exports are led by automobiles and auto parts, machinery, and chemical products, while the Dominican Republic exports primarily agricultural goods, including bananas, cocoa, and coffee.

The event also featured remarks by H.E. Ms. Serap Güler, State Secretary at the German Federal Foreign Office, who praised the Dominican Republic's achievements and reaffirmed the strength of bilateral relations. She noted: "I congratulate your nation on its political, economic, social, and cultural achievements. Let us celebrate the progress of the Dominican Republic, the strength of our partnership, and the many opportunities that lie ahead."

During the evening, Maestro Camilo delivered a captivating performance featuring works such as "From Within" and "St. Thomas" by Sonny Rollins, alongside his own compositions and collaborations, including pieces with Juan Luis Guerra. The program blended virtuosity with Caribbean identity. With this celebration, the Embassy reaffirmed its commitment to cultural diplomacy as a strategic instrument to strengthen the Dominican Republic's presence in Europe.



BANGLADESH CELEBRATES 55 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE HAGUE

By Roy Lie Atjam

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in The Hague marked the 55th Anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence and National Day with a reception held on 31 March 2026 at the Hague Marriott Hotel. The event brought together members of the diplomatic corps, international organisations, government officials, business leaders, academics, media, and civil society representatives.



Mr. Jan van Zanen, Mayor of The Hague, attended as Guest of Honour.

The ceremony opened with the national anthems of Bangladesh and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In his address, Mr. Md Hasan Abdullah Towhid, Chargé d'Affaires of Bangladesh, paid tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War and highlighted the country's remarkable progress since independence, including advances in economic growth, poverty reduction, women's empowerment, education, and climate resilience.



Mr. Md Hasan Abdullah Towhid, Chargé d'Affaires of Bangladesh

He underscored the strong and expanding partnership between Bangladesh and the Netherlands, particularly in water management, climate adaptation, agriculture, trade, and investment, as well as Bangladesh's active engagement with international institutions based in The Hague. Addressing global humanitarian challenges, he reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to multilateralism and called for continued international support for the safe and sustainable repatriation of forcibly displaced Rohingya people. He also sought support for Bangladesh's candidature for the Presidency of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In his remarks, Mayor Jan van Zanen highlighted the longstanding friendship between the two nations, recalling the Netherlands' early recognition of Bangladesh in 1972. Noting their shared identity as delta countries, he emphasized cooperation in water management, climate resilience, and sustainable development, while commending Bangladesh's socio-economic achievements.

The cultural programme featured musical performances by young members of the Bangladeshi community, warmly received by the audience. The evening concluded with a reception offering traditional Bangladeshi cuisine, providing guests an opportunity to engage and celebrate the enduring ties between Bangladesh and the Netherlands.

The event reflected a spirit of goodwill and reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation and multilateral engagement from The Hague, the International City of Peace and Justice.



INDIA CELEBRATES 77TH REPUBLIC DAY

Photography: Mr Arash Nikkhah, Studio Arash

On the occasion of the 77th Republic Day of India, the Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. Kumar Tuhin, and his spouse Mrs. Deepa Tuhin hosted a reception at the Leonardo Royal Hotel in The Hague, bringing together senior representatives of the diplomatic corps, international organisations, and the Dutch political and business communities.

The reception was honoured by the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. David van Weel, alongside high-level guests including H.E. Mr. Christian Rebergen, Secretary-General of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ambassador Fernando Arias, Director-General of the OPCW; Ambassador Marcin Czepelak, Secretary-General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration; Mr. Philippe Gautier, Registrar of the International Court of Justice; Mr. Jean-Marc Thouvenin, Secretary-General of the Hague Academy of International Law; Ms. Marisa Gerards, Ambassador of the Netherlands to India; and other distinguished officials.

In his address, Ambassador Tuhin highlighted India's rapid transformation, noting its rise from the 11th to the 4th largest economy globally, GDP growth of 8.2% in Q2 of 2025-26, leadership in digitalisation with over 20 billion digital transactions per month, major infrastructure expansion, and a dynamic innovation ecosystem with over 200,000 startups. Emphasising sustainability, he underlined that more than 50% of India's



H. E. Mr. Kumar Tuhin, Ambassador of India to The Netherlands and H. E. Ms. Marisa Gerards, The Dutch Ambassador to India.



H. E. Mr. Kumar Tuhin, Ambassador of India to The Netherlands, H. E. Mr. David van Weel, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mrs. Deepa Tuhin, Spouse of Ambassador of India to The Netherlands.

installed electricity capacity now comes from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of target.

"India is in a period of rapid transformation... committed to reform, transform and perform, and to building collaborative partnerships as a responsible global player," the Ambassador stated.

Ambassador Tuhin also highlighted the strong momentum in India-Netherlands relations, marked by frequent high-level political exchanges, including meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Dick Schoof, and recent ministerial visits.

In his remarks, Foreign Minister David van Weel underlined the growing strategic alignment between the two countries:

"Our strategic interests are more closely aligned today than ever before. Our long-standing relationship is transforming into a broad and forward-looking strategic partnership, which we aim to formalise this year."

He praised the contribution of the Indian diaspora to Dutch society and the economy. The evening concluded with a colourful cultural programme and Indian cuisine, and closed with a toast to the friendship between the Republic of India and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



India Cultural Programme.

DOMINICAN INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATED IN THE HAGUE

Photography: Kim Vermaat Photography

The Embassy of the **Dominican Republic** in The Hague marked Independence Day on February 25 with a joyful celebration at the **Leonardo Royal Hotel**. Diplomats, Dutch officials, members of the business community, the Dominican diaspora, and friends of the country gathered to commemorate nearly 182 years of sovereignty.

The evening showcased the richness of Dominican culture, with live music, traditional dance performances, and tastings of rum, cigars, and Dominican coffee, creating a festive Caribbean atmosphere in the heart of The Hague.

In his address, **H.E. Carlos de la Mota, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to the Netherlands**, reflected on the meaning of the historic date:

"This anniversary is a reaffirmation of the principles that continue to shape our nation and our people, wherever they may reside."

Recalling the proclamation of independence from Haiti on February 27, 1844, at the **Puerta del Conde**, he paid tribute to the Founding Fathers — **Juan Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Ramón Matías Mella** — whose courage and sacrifice laid the foundation of the Republic.



H.E. Mr. Carlos de la Mota, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic.

"Independence is the essence of our national identity. To defend it today means acting with integrity and justice, strengthening our institutions, and working collectively toward sustainable development," the ambassador affirmed.

Celebrating this date in the Netherlands holds special meaning, he noted, given the deep human and cultural ties between both nations.

"Thousands of Dominicans have built their lives in this special country, contributing to its diversity while upholding their roots with pride."

Looking ahead, Ambassador De la Mota announced that the Dominican Republic will host **CHEMEX-GRULAC**, a regional chemical emergency response exercise supported by Canada, Spain, and the European Union. He also introduced the first-ever **Dominican Week**, to be organized in collaboration with partners in Belgium and the Euro Chamber of Commerce to promote trade, investment, and business networking.

As he concluded, the ambassador called on the legacy of the nation's founders to inspire future generations:

"May the example of our Founding Fathers inspire us to live with humility, integrity, patriotism, and service wherever we may find ourselves."

"¡Que viva la República Dominicana!"



Ambassador De la Mota with fellow ambassadors from various countries attending the event.

THANKSGIVING MASS OPENS CAMEROON NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE HAGUE

On the occasion of Cameroon's National Day, H.E. Madeleine Liguemoh Ondoua celebrated a thanksgiving Mass at the Church of Our Saviour in The Hague, bringing together the Cameroonian community of the Netherlands and Luxembourg. More than 900 faithful attended the celebration, praying and singing together for Cameroon and its people.

Among the distinguished guests were the Ambassadors of Rwanda and Angola, as well as the Honorary Consul of Sierra Leone, who attended in support of their colleague and



to draw inspiration from the Cameroonian initiative of organizing a thanksgiving Mass as part of the national celebrations.

The Mass marked the opening of the 54th edition of Cameroon's National Day celebrations in the Netherlands. Its purpose was to give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon Cameroon and to entrust to God all the activities organized for the week-long commemorations. The African community played an active role in both the preparations and the ceremony itself, attending dressed in elegant and colourful African attire.

In a solemn procession, Ambassador Madeleine Liguemoh Ondoua entered the church accompanied by a delegation carrying the Cameroonian flag. During the service, offerings were presented in support of refugees.

The homily delivered by Father Sjaak de Boer, Parish Priest of the Church of Our Saviour, focused on the importance of seeking and



preserving peace. Three religious hymns selected by the Embassy were performed during the Mass, accompanied by traditional African drum rhythms that enriched the spiritual atmosphere of the ceremony.

At the conclusion of the Mass, parishioners and guests gathered to share sweets and refreshments, extending the spirit of fellowship beyond the religious celebration. The thanksgiving Mass forms part of a broader programme of events organized by the Embassy of Cameroon in The Hague to celebrate the country's National Day over more than one week.

KOSOVO'S INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED IN THE HAGUE

By Roy Lie Atjam | Photography: Kim Vermaat Photography

On 17 February 2026, the Embassy of Kosovo in The Hague marked the 18th anniversary of Kosovo's independence with a concert and reception at the Nieuwe Kerk, attended by diplomats, Dutch officials, KFOR veterans and members of the diaspora.

Guest of honour was Glauk Konjufca, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. In his address, he described Kosovo as "Europe's youngest country, a dynamic society well-positioned to tackle today's challenges," highlighting strong public support for EU integration. Calling The Hague "a symbol of peace and justice," he reaffirmed that relations with the Netherlands are "strong and longstanding,



rooted in democracy, the rule of law, and Euro-Atlantic integration," and thanked the Dutch government for its continued partnership.

Ambassador Dren Doli opened the evening by underlining Kosovo's strategic goals of NATO and EU membership as its "natural orientation." Reflecting on the country's journey, he noted: "We are now a democratic, sovereign Republic that has risen from the ashes of war to uphold the values of peace, multilateralism, and human rights." He emphasized that hope and resilience have guided Kosovo through its most difficult moments, adding that with GDP growth of 4.5% and multiple rounds of free and fair elections, the country continues to consolidate its democratic institutions. He also expressed deep gratitude to the Netherlands and to the Kosovar diaspora for their pivotal role in strengthening bilateral ties.

The cultural programme featured a vibrant performance by the Petrit Çarkaxhiu Band,



Mr. Glauk Konjufca, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo and H.E. Dr Dren Doli, Ambassador of Kosovo to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

offering a distinctive blend of contemporary and traditional sounds.

The evening concluded with a reception showcasing Kosovar cuisine, wines, and presentations on investment and tourism opportunities—an elegant celebration of Kosovo's coming of age and its enduring partnership with the Netherlands.





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