

Policy agenda 2012

Key policy changes for 2012

In its foreign policy the government aims to reinforce the three pillars of security, global prosperity and freedom. In pursuing this aim, the government is putting Dutch interests first, more so than in the past. Over the next several years the security and prosperity of the Netherlands and the Dutch people, international stability and security, a reorientation of development cooperation, energy and raw material security, the international legal order (including human rights) and the commercial and economic interests of the Netherlands and Dutch business will be at the heart of Dutch foreign policy.

Diplomacy is an instrument for achieving Dutch objectives in or with other countries. The government is making tough choices when it comes to international efforts, leading to a selective commitment of Dutch capacity. This applies to development cooperation, our integrated police training mission in Kunduz and our contribution to anti-piracy operations. The transatlantic partnership NATO will remain the cornerstone of Dutch security policy. Cooperation, especially via the European Union, is needed more than ever to respond to transnational challenges. A well-functioning EU is in the best interests of the Netherlands: a Europe where our companies can export their products and our citizens can live in freedom and security. In the present circumstances this will require, above all, a return to financial stability, lastingly ensured by creating an effective European Union that can enforce budgetary discipline. The government will also invest in our relationship with Israel. The first Dutch-Israeli cooperation council will be held in early 2012, with a focus on innovation and trade, partly in aid of a lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The Dutch government will invest in economic diplomacy. The network of foreign missions will be better equipped to promote the country's economic interests, including the need to safeguard long-term supplies of energy, raw materials and semi-manufactured goods. The Raw Materials Memorandum heralded the start of a comprehensive Dutch raw materials policy.¹ In 2012 there will be a greater focus on bilateral relations with Brazil, the US, Russia and China. Foreign trips by members of government will be planned more strategically.

¹ Raw Materials Memorandum, House of Representatives 32 582, no. 1.

The focus of development cooperation will shift from social sectors to productive sectors,² given that the economic growth produced by a strong private sector is a major engine for poverty reduction. The government has set four 'spearheads' for itself: security and the legal order, food security, water, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), which dovetail with the Millennium Development Goals and the agenda for Global Public Goods. In translating these priorities into policy, the government will promote a good business climate and invest in cooperation with the business community.

The government has sharpened the focus of its human rights policy,³ in part through a more selective use of the Human Rights Fund for specific themes and regions. Key areas will be freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression (including internet freedom), corporate social responsibility, human rights defenders and discrimination based on sexual orientation. The government supports the full participation of women in political and administrative decision-making in their societies. Investment in women has a multiplier effect on economic development and stability.

The government is strongly committed to reforming the multilateral organisations so they are better equipped to deal with the challenges of the 21st century. This means assuming a strong position within these organisations. Here too, the Netherlands is always looking to form partnerships with other countries to achieve its goals. For example, in 2012 the Netherlands will continue to work with Belgium on forming a joint constituency in the IMF.

Consular services will focus chiefly on Dutch nationals in dire emergencies, with a more robust crisis response system and a differentiated approach to prisoner assistance. Other non-emergency consular services will be downsized and streamlined. These policy changes will be based on the principle that people are responsible for looking after themselves when abroad (for example, by taking out travel insurance). If requested, the government will help by providing information about the security situation in the country of destination.

Across-the-board cutbacks within central government will also have repercussions for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the network of Dutch foreign missions.⁴ In the years ahead, these will be made more efficient, less expensive, more flexible and better equipped to

² Letter to the House of Representatives outlining development cooperation policy and the letter to the House of Representatives presenting the spearheads of development cooperation policy, House of Representatives 32 500 V, no. 15 and 32 605, no. 2.

³ Policy memorandum 'Responsible for Freedom', House of Representatives 32 735, no. 1.

⁴ Letter to the House of Representatives, 'Modernising Dutch diplomacy', House of Representatives 32 734, no. 1.

handle the demands of the present age. The number of foreign missions will be reduced. These changes to the missions will account for a proportion of the cutbacks in personnel and material. The remaining amount will be made up by means of the centralisation of operational management, measures to boost organisational dynamism, and various retrenchments at the Ministry in The Hague.

These cuts will also affect the ODA budget, which will be reduced from 0.8% of GNP in 2010 to an average budget of 0.7% of GNP as of 2012. The four spearheads and private sector development will receive more funds. Cuts to some other areas will be substantial. The budgetary remit for programmes outside the sphere of development cooperation entails a reduction of 10% in programmes in the government's priority sectors (security, human rights, and the economy) and a reduction of up to 20% in other programmes.

Cutbacks (in millions of euros)	2012	2013	2014	2015
Network of missions	2.5	16	38.75	55
The Hague	4.5	9	16.25	19
Development cooperation	900	720	750	750
Voluntary contributions	8	24	32	40

Introduction

In this government's foreign policy, Dutch interests come first. The government sees its mission as being to promote the security and well-being of the Netherlands and the Dutch people, and to that end it will focus on international stability and security, energy and raw material security, the international legal order (including human rights) and the commercial and economic interests of the Netherlands and Dutch businesses. All this was set down in the coalition agreement, and will remain unchanged in 2012. A greater emphasis will be placed on economic diplomacy. In addition, development cooperation, the international legal order and active involvement in European and transatlantic partnerships will remain cornerstones of Dutch foreign policy. These principles have been translated into an integrated policy with three pillars: security, prosperity and freedom. The priorities for 2012 are described below.

International cooperation, selectiveness, spending cuts

International cooperation is the starting point of our policy; its parameters in 2012 will be determined in part by selectiveness and spending cuts. Cooperation is needed more than ever as a response to transnational challenges. The changes in the Arab world underscore the necessity of an integrated foreign policy. The Netherlands is part of the world, and the boundary between domestic and foreign issues is blurring. Dutch objectives can be achieved in or with other countries through diplomacy. This includes our contributions to international efforts such as development cooperation, the integrated police training mission in Kunduz and anti-piracy operations. The government is looking to make tough choices and use Dutch capacity selectively, with the transatlantic partnership NATO as the enduring foundation of Dutch security policy. Foreign trips by members of government will be planned more strategically. More specifically, this means that the government seeks to schedule these trips well in advance, coordinating visits by different members of government and prioritising visits to countries that are most important to the Netherlands.

Much of the Netherlands' international cooperation is handled through the EU. Dutch interests are served by a Europe that promotes our security, prosperity and freedom. Moreover, a strong internal market is the engine of economic growth and employment, especially for a trade-oriented country like the Netherlands. A stable monetary union is crucial for exporting firms and individuals with savings and pension accounts. In order to ensure this, agreements about sound budgetary policy must be respected and, if necessary, enforced.

The government is working towards a system of strong and effective multilateral organisations. The present system must be tailored to the challenges of the 21st century so it is more representative, coherent, efficient and effective. The Netherlands has long had a strong position in multilateral organisations like the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. The government wishes to retain that position and use it to achieve further reforms. It closely monitors the effectiveness and efficiency of these organisations' policy implementation. In 2012 the government will continue to work with Belgium on forming a joint IMF constituency.

In the face of spending cuts, the selective use of resources is even more important. Effectiveness and sustainability are the principles underlying all activities, including our choice of partnerships: within the EU, NATO, the UN and other international organisations, in ad hoc coalitions or with the business community, research organisations or civil society.

The deep, multi-year spending cuts to the Homogeneous Budget for International Cooperation (HGIS) announced in the coalition agreement have been incorporated into this budget. The choices and reforms planned for the Dutch network of missions, development cooperation and the other policy areas of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are discussed below. The financial aspects are dealt with in greater detail in the policy articles.

The structural cuts imposed by the coalition agreement on the Ministry's budget for both personnel and operational costs will grow to €78 million, starting in 2013. This is in addition to the last €7 million in cuts decided by the fourth Balkenende government, which take effect in 2012. For the present budget, this means structural spending cuts that mount up from €7 million in 2012, €25 million in 2013, €55 million in 2014 and €74 million in 2015 to €85 million. Fifty-five million euros of this will come from reducing the number of missions and implementing efficiency measures in those that remain, as explained in the letter to the House on the modernisation of the diplomatic network.⁵ This letter describes how a review of Dutch diplomacy will result in a leaner and stronger network of missions over the next several years. The planned reforms will lead not only to a more efficient and inexpensive network of missions, but also to greater flexibility, better suited to the demands of the present age. This is the very task that the government pledged to undertake in the coalition agreement. The remaining €19 million in cuts by 2015 will come from measures to make the Ministry in The Hague more dynamic, centralised and cost-effective.

⁵ Ibid.

In a structural reduction, the ODA budget will go down from 0.8% of GNP, via an intermediate step of 0.75% of GNP, to an average budget of 0.7% of GNP starting in 2012. The 2012 budget will be cut by €900 million; the corresponding figures for 2013 and 2014 will be €720 million and €750 million, respectively. This will require changes to development themes. The two letters to parliament on the subject (see footnote 2) elaborate on these changes to the ODA budget. More funds will be set aside for the four spearheads – security and the legal order, water, food security and SRHR – and private sector development. Other themes (e.g. education, budget support and health care) will face cutbacks, in some cases steep ones. This budget lays out these cutbacks in greater detail.

The HGIS budget for voluntary contributions to non-ODA programmes will be cut by €50 million, €40 million of which will come from the foreign ministry budget and €10 million from those of other ministries. At the foreign ministry, this amount will increase gradually over the next three years: from €8 million in 2012, €24 million in 2013 and €32 million in 2014 to €40 million in 2015. These cuts amount to a 10% reduction in programmes in this government's priority sectors – security, human rights and economic programmes – and up to 20% in other programmes. Payments relating to treaty obligations and other permanent commitments will remain at the present level.

The government strives for a coherent development policy, aiming to ensure that Dutch, European and international policy in non-aid areas accords with development objectives to the greatest possible extent. In that spirit the government is implementing the motion put forward by MPs Kathleen Ferrier and Sjoera Dijkers, which asks the government to formulate a coherent sustainable development policy, 'rooted in a vision of globalisation'. In complying with this request, the government has opted for a practical policy agenda, which centres on global challenges that are vital to development objectives (global public goods). The five priority areas for global public goods are trade and financing, climate change, food security, migration, and peace and security. This brings the government's policy agenda in line with the five EU priorities for policy coherence.

First pillar: security

A more secure world makes the Netherlands a more secure country. The world is facing security and stability risks. Often state actors are the source, and the conflicts are struggles between two or more states, or between states and groups seeking to become states. Developments in the Arab region prove that security risks also exist in the direct vicinity of the member states of the European Union. They demand international cooperation, and transatlantic cooperation in particular. In the Middle East the government would like to

further deepen its relationship with Israel. To this end, the first Dutch-Israeli cooperation council will be held in early 2012, with a focus on innovation and trade, partly in aid of a lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Energy and raw materials security is a key aspect of our overall security, a fact this government is fully aware of.

Effective international cooperation is necessary for Dutch security, both domestic and external. NATO is a major player on the world stage, and it has proved its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. NATO is a solid community of values, a fact that enables the allies time and time again to resolve differences on difficult issues. An example of this is the alliance's concerted action in Libya to protect the civilian population, to which the Netherlands has made a significant, proportional contribution. A further Dutch contribution will be considered in the light of the political and military situation. The transatlantic partnership within NATO will remain the cornerstone of Dutch policy. NATO's Strategic Concept of November 2010 reaffirms the principle of collective defence of allies by allies against both new threats and old.

Multilateral organisations bolster an international legal order that contributes to our security and well-being. The UN offers a global platform for international discussion of the most important international challenges. For that reason the Netherlands intends to maintain a strong presence in the UN and other global forums.

Since the Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force, the number of states with nuclear weapons has grown. The spread of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons and related technology, is a major threat. Iran's nuclear programme (especially its missile programme) poses a threat to international peace and security. In 2012 the government will continue to work to prevent nuclear proliferation.

There are also threats to domestic security posed by non-state actors, as recognised in NATO's new Strategic Concept. Terrorism and other forms of transnational crime threaten Dutch interests and the stability of our society. These can take the form of drug and human trafficking, the illegal arms trade, piracy, cyber attacks and attempts by terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Combating these threats requires national and international cooperation in order to devise an innovative approach. Such threats have been labelled asymmetrical in that, rather than involving state actors alone, they confront states with an ever-shifting configuration of hostile groups. We are looking for the most effective ways of dealing with this menace.

A related question that also impacts our security is the international movement of persons and Dutch immigration policy. This is a multifaceted problem that is addressed primarily in a European framework. It includes first and foremost the need to combat illegal migration, but also the issues of asylum policy and the surveillance of the Union's external borders. At the same time, visas are issued in order to allow entry to people, such as foreign businesspeople and knowledge workers, who are planning a short stay in the Netherlands. In collaboration with the Ministries of Security and Justice and of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, we will work to meet the objectives set down in the coalition agreement.

The European Union also makes a substantial contribution to our security, to begin with in Europe itself. With the help of the European Neighbourhood Policy for its eastern and southern neighbours, the EU contributes to stability and security (including energy security) on its borders. An Eastern Partnership summit will be held at the end of September 2011. The EU is also currently conducting 12 civil and military missions under the aegis of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), most of which involve a mix of hard and soft power. The combination of civil and military elements is a unique product and an example of the EU's added value, given that many threats cannot be neutralised through military means alone. This approach necessitates a broader range of instruments, including support for the rule of law, reconstruction and reconciliation. In 2012 the government would like to use the Union's instruments even more effectively and coherently, for example in Afghanistan (via EUPOL). It would like to see better cooperation in the year ahead, both within the EU and between the EU and third parties.

The Dutch approach is a country-specific combination of defence, diplomacy and development, and it is our experience with this '3D approach' that gives the Netherlands added value. The government will continue promoting security in weak states by tackling the underlying causes of instability, conflict and exclusion. This can be done on a large scale (as in Uruzgan), but also on a smaller scale, in places like Sudan or Burundi. In early 2011 the government decided to set up an integrated police training mission in Afghanistan, with contributions to the EU and NATO. This mission, in Kunduz and Kabul, builds on earlier efforts in Afghanistan. Over the next few years the Netherlands will help the Afghans build a democratic state based on the rule of law, so they can maintain public order on their own. Dutch police officers, experts from the Public Prosecution Service and the prison system, officers of the Royal Military and Border Police, development experts, human rights experts, military trainers and support staff, diplomats and legal experts are working together closely to strengthen the civilian Afghan police force and criminal justice institutions. This is

essential for gaining the people's trust in the government and boosting the autonomy of Afghanistan.

The active contribution of men and women to peacebuilding is a foundation for lasting political and economic stability. Women must have the right and opportunities to take part in peace and reconstruction processes as equal partners. The government believes that women's rights should be a focus of both civil and military missions. For that reason we are actively implementing Security Council Resolution 1325.

We also have an integrated approach to anti-piracy operations and counterterrorism. The Netherlands is taking part in an anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean and will continue to do so. This is the military side of policy. At the same time the government is interested in contributing to capacity building, so that in time, countries in the region are capable of dealing with piracy themselves. Besides combating piracy directly, its causes should also be addressed.

Prevention is a major aspect of counterterrorism. The government seeks to combat radicalisation and cross-border crime in third countries, and will use political, financial and other resources to achieve that end. Even after the death of Osama bin Laden, fighting terrorism and violent extremism is a top priority. Cyber terrorism is a major new threat that deserves a place in our foreign policy. Together with the public, the business community and NGOs, the government will address this problem in the Netherlands and abroad.

The government intends the Netherlands to continue to play the role of a non-proliferation and disarmament broker. As a medium-sized, dependable country the Netherlands can build bridges in difficult multilateral negotiations. We are one of the forces behind the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), a group of 10 countries including Australia, Germany, Japan and Mexico that are pressing for the implementation of the Action Plan of the last NPT Review Conference. The Netherlands also plays an active role in export control regimes and in opposing the spread of missile technology and goods and technologies for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. A conference may be held in 2012 on a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East, in which the Netherlands wishes to play a major role.

Second pillar: prosperity and economic diplomacy

The ongoing opening up of the world economy and the greater interconnectedness of countries offer major opportunities for our entrepreneurs and business community.

Possibilities for travel, trade and communication are growing all the time. The Dutch can seize these opportunities. The government has long been a fervent advocate of free trade and a level playing field for all countries, and is therefore striving to bring as many countries as possible into the world trade system. The Netherlands will profit from this and so will others. Involvement in world trade creates opportunities for growth and employment for everyone. Within the EU, the government will continue to try to jump-start the Doha round of the World Trade Organization. All countries will benefit from this, particularly developing countries. Fighting protectionism and corruption, eliminating trade barriers, and establishing a level playing field and a reliable legal and banking infrastructure are essential to Dutch security, growth and prosperity.

Over the past few years global power relations have changed significantly. The robust growth of Asia and other emerging economies like Brazil and Turkey is having a palpable effect. The world population is growing, and the standard of living in these emerging economies is on the rise. This will have repercussions for the Netherlands. New markets with burgeoning purchasing power offer opportunities for Dutch businesses, and new investors play a valuable role in the Dutch economy. At the same time we have no assurance that the global market will continue to function under the current rules. This means that the government will endeavour to conclude agreements with other countries on free trade and better oversight of the financial sector, which will be good for the world economic climate and thus for Dutch businesses (including SMEs).

The financial and economic crisis and debts of a number of Western economies also have consequences for international relations. There is persistent unease about the international financial and monetary system. In the short term, uncertainty about the dollar and the euro has contributed to volatility on the stock markets. Moreover, there are imbalances that will affect global economic stability over the long term. For a small, open economy like the Netherlands, healthy global economic development is vital. For that reason the government will continue to contribute actively to efforts to safeguard economic stability.

High priority will be given to economic diplomacy, whereby the Dutch government negotiates with a foreign party (public or private) with an economic objective: for the purpose of promoting cooperation on trade or R&D and attracting investments. Our foreign missions will help businesses with obtaining market access, finding suitable partners and troubleshooting: when companies run into obstacles, the embassy can intervene with foreign governments. Our diplomats can interpret the local context and rules, and where necessary act as mediators and deploy their network.

The government seeks to protect Dutch economic interests over the long term. Supplies of energy and raw materials (including rare earth metals) must be safeguarded. Growing competition for these resources can be a source of conflict. This ties in with our security interests. The 2011 Energy Report presents a thorough analysis of energy supply security and identifies the countries that are vital to the Netherlands in this regard: neighbouring countries and major strategic players, such as Brazil, the US, Russia and China. In 2012 bilateral relations with these countries will be organised in greater detail. Raw material security policy will be implemented on the basis of the Raw Materials Memorandum,⁶ whose key concepts are sustainability and a whole chain approach.

Trade missions, trade fairs, public diplomacy, cultural events and exchanges, and educational and research cooperation all help to put the Netherlands on the map. These instruments are already well known. The government would like to employ them more intelligently and strategically, making optimal use of limited resources. One way of doing so is by planning foreign trips by members of government more tactically. This means assessing what is needed in each market, sector or even region. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working closely in this area with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, which coordinates international business. To optimise opportunities for Dutch companies, special attention will be paid to rapidly growing mass markets like China, India and Brazil. Growth markets and strategic hubs like Vietnam and Panama also justify additional efforts. In these countries in particular, good relations with the government are paramount. In practising economic diplomacy, the government will focus on nine leading sectors, in which the Netherlands has a strong international position: agri-food, horticulture, high-tech, energy, logistics, creative industry, the life sciences, chemicals and water. Our aim is to maximise the opportunities for Dutch businesses and knowledge institutions in these areas. The Kingdom's Caribbean countries will also be supported with a better use of the islands' economically strategic location and their cultural ties to Latin America.

Economic diplomacy will also be used to promote our broader international economic interests. These include enhancing the European Union's internal market. That internal market has already been a boon for the Netherlands in terms of prosperity and employment, but it remains incomplete, and the government would like to see it extended to services, energy and intellectual property. This would generate considerable growth for the Dutch economy, of which 80% consists of services. Another facet of economic diplomacy is

⁶ Raw Materials Memorandum, 32 582, no.1.

international corporate social responsibility. Dutch companies will be assisted in this area by the missions and informed about how to deal with possible violations of OECD norms in their chain of production.

Third pillar: freedom

The government prioritises themes like freedom of religion and belief and freedom of expression (including internet freedom). It is looking to play a pioneering role in this area, fostering media diversity in countries where this is lacking, supporting bloggers and cyber dissidents, pressing for codes of conduct for businesses and comprehensive European legislation. Together with Canada, Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom, the Netherlands is in the vanguard of internet freedom. More than ever before, the government is working to fight the persecution of religious minorities. A special effort will also be made to protect the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders. The government supports equal rights and opportunities for women and thus their full participation in political and administrative decision-making in their societies. This increases the efficiency and effectiveness of policy and is a prerequisite for economic development, democratisation, good governance, peace, security and stability. Women's participation has a multiplier effect on economic development and stability.

Human rights defenders and their organisations are central to this policy. They must know they can count on us. The Human Rights Fund supports projects, in large part via the embassies, that help human rights defenders establish themselves in their own countries. Priority will be given to the Arab world because of the troubling human rights situation in that region. A sustainable transition will only be possible where democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights prevail.

A strong international legal order requires well-functioning international institutions with broad public support. The Dutch tradition of expertise in international law manifests itself in The Hague's position as legal capital of the world. The Netherlands will continue to work hard to obtain recognition for the jurisdiction of the international courts and tribunals, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Human rights have intrinsic value. In the case of serious violations of fundamental rights, such as torture, the death penalty, extrajudicial disappearances and rape, victims will have the Dutch government on their side. We will also strive to prevent genocide and war crimes and punish the perpetrators.

The government will try to thwart notorious violators of human rights, for example by means of European sanctions. It will argue for restricting or even entirely eliminating EU aid to countries that do not meet basic standards of democracy and human rights. Besides moral considerations, promoting respect for human rights is in the Netherlands' own interest. The Netherlands benefits from a stable international environment where the rule of law and human rights are respected. This is good for trade and investments. Here our values and interests converge. Dutch embassies promote corporate social responsibility and human rights in their contacts with Dutch and foreign companies.

The memorandum 'Responsible for Freedom: Human Rights in Foreign Policy' of April 2011 conceives human rights policy as a coherent and compact programme that produces concrete results. Limited resources compel us to make choices in order to be effective. That means upholding our principles where necessary, but also trying to engage in dialogue. In cases where like-minded countries demonstrate their expertise and dedication, the government will back existing initiatives. This will be done multilaterally where possible and bilaterally where necessary. The effect is obviously greater if all 27 EU member states join forces. The Treaty of Lisbon, which provides for the EU's accession to the ECHR (among other things), has given fresh momentum to the Union's common foreign policy. The government would like to make optimal use of this potential for concerted action, both in formulating a European human rights policy and in coordinating its implementation by EU institutions and member states.

Together with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the foreign ministry is making preparations to reorganise Radio Netherlands Worldwide as of 1 January 2013 so as to orient it towards promoting free speech around the world. This fulfils the commitments made in the coalition agreement.

In focus: integrated policy for the Arab region

The changes in the Arab world highlight the need for an integrated foreign policy that recognises the connection between security, prosperity and freedom. In places where human rights are being trampled underfoot, where the rule of law is ignored, and where young people have few if any prospects, stability is short-lived and there can be no enduring increase in prosperity. The difference between stability and pseudo-stability has been clearly demonstrated in the Arab region. The people there deserve a transition that brings social and economic reforms, inclusive democracy and respect for civil liberties and human rights.

The government would like to contribute to that transition. It should be sustainable and lead to economic growth, thanks in part to the construction of economic infrastructure and the growth of employment. Our contribution, however, should be modest: primary responsibility lies with the region itself. Without local initiative, the transition will not work. The Netherlands and the EU can assist and support these transitions by following a number of basic guidelines: taking multilateral action where possible and bilateral action where necessary, making aid both demand-driven and conditional.

The further development of countries directly south of Europe is also important for the Netherlands and the European Union. These are potentially large markets and sources of energy. The wrong sort of development can lead to international crime, terrorism and illegal immigration. Opening the European market is essential to economic development and employment in these countries. This is why the government advocates improved market access for products from the Arab region, in particular agricultural products.

The EU has set aside additional resources in its present budget to support this part of the world. These include contributions to the European Neighbourhood Policy and European Investment Bank (EIB) loans, 5% of which come from the Netherlands. The government will see to it that these funds are spent properly, effectively and efficiently. The Netherlands can also influence the support for the transition process through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the EIB, the IMF and the World Bank and other institutions. In addition to the Dutch portion of the multilateral contributions to the Arab region,⁷ the government will earmark €7.5 million for support. This will increase to €15 million by 2015. These funds will be used to support civil society, political parties, the training of diplomats, reliable criminal justice institutions and the business community, especially SMEs. The initial focus of these additional resources will be Egypt and Tunisia, and in a second phase Morocco and Jordan.

Development cooperation

Development cooperation is an integral part of Dutch foreign policy, as described in the letters to the House outlining development cooperation policy and presenting its spearheads. Security, prosperity and freedom are closely related to this policy area. If people cannot enjoy their fundamental freedoms and rights and are forced to live in insecurity, the result will be instability and human suffering. Not only that, but insecurity and instability impede economic growth and prosperity. This is why the list of partner countries contains a number

⁷ For more information, see the letter to parliament on the current situation in North Africa and the Middle East, 32 623, no. 40.

of fragile states, where the government is attempting to foster security and stability. The government can and will help improve sexual and reproductive health and increase respect for sexual and reproductive rights. Water and food security are other important issues for the development and prosperity of developing countries. The Netherlands has both something to offer and something to gain with respect to these priorities, which also happen to be two of the Netherlands' leading economic sectors. The selection of countries also takes account of the opportunities available to Dutch companies with a presence abroad. Humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and conflicts, as in the Horn of Africa, remains crucial, as does care for refugees in the region. A concerted effort will be made in these two policy areas to maximise effectiveness, boost self-reliance and enhance accountability for the resources spent.

A comprehensive approach to development is also needed internationally. The government advocates this approach through various channels, especially the EU. European and national government policy must do as little possible harm to the interests of developing countries. In interministerial consultations, the government does its utmost to continuously monitor policy coherence for development. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' expertise on policy coherence for development will be bolstered.

As for Dutch efforts in multilateral channels, the government will concentrate on the selected bilateral policy themes, as part of broader support for the multilateral system. To the greatest possible extent, we will adhere to the principle that the combination of relevance and effectiveness will determine the level of Dutch contributions. This type of decision-making demands a tailored approach. Additional factors, such as the organisation's prospects for improvement, will be taken into account on a case-by-case basis.

Good intentions are an inadequate foundation for effective development cooperation. The government is choosing regions that serve the Netherlands' interest and where the Netherlands can make a difference with its knowledge and expertise. Serving Dutch interests also has a positive influence on public support. The government would like Dutch development cooperation to have a recognisable face in the world, but at the same time, cuts must be made. This has led to a fundamental change of course, with fewer themes and fewer countries.

Ultimately, the goal is self-reliance for the poor. Our focus is shifting from social sectors to productive sectors. Economic growth generated by a strong private sector is, after all, a driving force of poverty reduction. The government has selected four spearheads, which

accord with the Millennium Development Goals and the agenda for global public goods. These priorities bring Dutch knowledge to bear on global problems. They are: (1) security and the legal order, (2) food security, (3) water and (4) sexual and reproductive health and rights. In crafting policy around these four priorities the government will promote a healthy business climate and invest in partnerships with the business community.⁸

Security and the legal order

Besides helping to reduce human suffering, conflict prevention is simply efficient policy. The government seeks to improve security in weak states by tackling the underlying causes of instability, conflict and exclusion. The Dutch approach is a country-specific combination of defence, diplomacy and development. Our priorities are enhancing human security and fostering the development of democratic states based on the separation of powers and the rule of law, supporting the development of legitimate governments with adequate capacity, improving social services, creating employment, strengthening the role of women in peace processes and boosting the effectiveness of multilateral operations in post-conflict situations.

Water

Water is becoming a problem in more and more countries, a fact that also has repercussions for the stability of developing countries. The government seeks to contribute to effective and integrated water management, in fields where the Netherlands has a knowledge advantage and where cooperation between the public sector, Dutch businesses, civil society organisations and knowledge institutions has added value. Our priorities are efficient use of water for sustainable food production, safe deltas, safe management of river basins (including adaptation to climate change) and improved access to safe drinking water and sanitation. To this end, the government is working with parties across the Dutch water sector. It is enlarging the public-private partnerships and other cooperative ventures in this field with, for example, drinking water companies, knowledge institutions and NGOs. It is also stepping up cooperation in the Global Water (*Water Mondiaal*) programme.

Food security

Worldwide, one billion people are chronically undernourished and two billion suffer from a deficiency of essential nutrients. The Netherlands is seeking to increase food security by stimulating sustainable production, efficient markets, greater income security and better access to healthy food. Our priority is to encourage innovation, sustainable value-chain

⁸ Included in the motion by Jean Eigeman, Senate, 32 500 V, K.

development, better access to good nutrition for poorer segments of the population through higher employment, and the elimination of obstacles for producers.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights⁹

In developing countries conception, pregnancy and childbirth often lead to disease and other health complications. The government is a forward-looking, staunch advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our priorities are policy advocacy and influence, effective services through improved coordination between the government and private sector, enhanced capacity in reproductive health care, education, and targeted research to improve access to facilities. Reproductive health, general health and the HIV/AIDS problem are interdependent, and the government will therefore focus on the interface of these three issues. This means that the Netherlands will concentrate on preventing exclusion and combating discrimination in the health sector, increasing access to information for young people about sexuality and health, defending the rights of marginalised groups, widening access to contraception, preventing HIV infection, increasing the availability of vaccines and other medical resources and improving sexual and reproductive care (including safe abortions). It is in these areas that the Netherlands can make a difference in comparison to other donors.

Cross-cutting themes

The environment, good governance, and equal rights and opportunities for women are cross-cutting themes. They inform the programming and implementation of policy on the above spearheads.

Partner countries

The number of partner countries has been reduced from 33 to 15. The selection of partner countries was based on the likelihood of achieving results, income and poverty level, the scope for fleshing out the spearheads, the interests of the other ministries, the financial scope of the existing aid programme, the degree of good governance, and the contribution that the termination or reorganisation of the aid programme would make to the planned cutbacks in the network of missions. The list of countries has been divided into three categories:

- low-income countries: Benin, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda;
- fragile states: Afghanistan, Burundi, Palestinian Territories, Sudan and Yemen;

⁹ In line with a pledge made during a committee meeting with members of parliament on the subject of SRHR and HIV/AIDS.

- countries with healthy economic growth: Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia and Kenya.

The government will also be investing development funds in a number of other countries. Colombia, South Africa and Vietnam are eligible for a transition facility. Money will continue to be distributed through multilateral funds, the civil society channel and central programmes. The phasing-out and transformation stage in the countries dropped from the list will be handled with great care. The government is endeavouring to devise a joint approach with other donor countries. In the coming months the embassies will devise an exit or transformation strategy tailored to each country.

The Netherlands in Europe

Europe is crucial for the three pillars of foreign policy: security, prosperity and freedom. The values on which the Union is based (human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights) and its objectives (the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice, the realisation of an internal market, balanced economic growth and price stability, the furtherance of peace and security) are closely aligned with the government's foreign policy objectives. At the same time, the government fully realises that the EU is not the only supranational/international organisation that matters for achieving these objectives. NATO and the UN and, in Europe, the OSCE and the Council of Europe play an important role as well.

The greatest challenge for Europe at present is restoring financial stability. A stable European currency is in the interest of the Netherlands, both for exporting companies and for individuals with savings. This demands an effective EU in which promises are kept and future crises averted. The government is actively working on an approach to rein in the financial and economic crisis, consisting of a wide range of measures.

Primary responsibility rests with the member states themselves. They must put their budgets in order and implement economic reforms, guaranteeing that agreements on budgetary discipline will be honoured so as to ensure long-term financial stability. This requires effective European oversight and decisive intervention when member states break the rules of the Monetary Union. In the last year we have moved in this direction by tightening the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, improving the verification of national statistics and budgetary frameworks, and monitoring macroeconomic imbalances. Economic policy coordination will also be strengthened through the European Semester and the Euro Plus Pact. To achieve more stringent oversight of the integrated European financial sector, three new European supervisory bodies have been set up. The new regulatory mechanism for the

financial sector will be fleshed out in the year ahead. The final element of this approach is a crisis management mechanism for assistance under strict conditions in the direst cases. In 2013, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) will enter into force, as a successor to the European Financial Stability Facility. The agreement on the ESM must be ratified in 2012. However, the adoption of more stringent rules should not be ruled out.

The Netherlands favours a modern, yet austere European budget. A modern budget must include funds for innovation, asylum and migration, and security. European resources must contribute to current priorities: a competitive Europe in a multipolar world. Yet the EU budget should also be austere. As the Dutch government must reduce spending by €18 billion over the next four years, and other member states are also making cuts, we seek substantial reductions in our transfers to Brussels. On 29 June 2011 the Commission presented its proposals for the Financial Framework 2014-2020. This marked the start of intensive negotiations that are expected to continue until the end of 2012. The proposals are a good basis for negotiations, but a number of major changes must be made in order to achieve the Dutch objective of a modern, austere budget.

The government takes the clear position that countries with membership prospects can join the Union when they meet the conditions. New member states lead to stability and prosperity in Europe. Yet they must meet the relevant criteria, especially the Copenhagen criteria, and not exceed the EU's absorption capacity. In 2012, as in previous years, the government's accession policy will adhere to the principle of 'strict but fair'. We will devote particular attention to promoting the rule of law in candidate countries and potential candidate countries. This includes monitoring the reforms to the Croatian legal system, a matter covered by the accession treaty the Council will sign in late December 2011. A strict adherence to the rules is necessary for ensuring public support for enlargement. In the past decade the EU has admitted countries that were not yet ready. That is undesirable: the accession of new member states should strengthen the EU, not weaken it.

Completion of the internal market is a priority for this government. The internal market is the engine of growth and jobs. To ensure that it functions well in the future and that the EU remains one of the leading and most highly developed economies in the world, we should invest in innovation, the digital agenda, the improvement of the Union's competitive position and a well-functioning market for services. That is good for both Europe and the Netherlands. Thanks to the internal market, per capita annual income is €1,500 to €2,200 higher in this country, according to Statistics Netherlands. This internal market bonus can

more than double over the next few years. Lifting the barriers to a digital internal market in Europe could boost economic growth by another four percentage points by 2020.

The government wishes to move toward a migration system that offers opportunities for those who can contribute and is restrictive to those who are unwilling to do so. For this reason the EU must pursue a tougher asylum and immigration policy. This will necessitate the amendment of certain directives, such as those on family and labour migration. The government is in favour of strengthening Frontex. Border security is a policy area where European cooperation brings added value. One of the great successes of the European partnership is the free movement of persons within the Schengen Area. At the same time the government believes that the political governance of and cooperation in the Schengen Area can be improved. Trust between the member states must be enhanced. One way of bringing this about is regular reports assessing each other's records on issues like an independent judiciary, corruption and organised crime.

The revolutions in the Arab world make it all the more clear that Europe benefits from an assertive and coherent EU. No one member state is capable of meaningfully influencing world events. Europe must respond to global challenges as one. The EU is the ideal vehicle for defending certain Dutch interests in the world and disseminating our values. As the coalition agreement states, the government will strive for a more effective and coherent external policy on the part of the Union. To enhance the role of the EU, the government supports the development of the European External Action Service (EEAS). In accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon, this agency will support the High Representative in formulating and implementing European external policy.

The EEAS has been operational for only six months. The organisation is in place and senior positions have been filled, but there are also teething troubles. As yet, there is no unified organisational culture, since staff are drawn from three different groups: the Commission services, experts from the Council Secretariat and diplomats from member states. The government is actively contributing to discussions, in the Benelux in particular, on further improvements to the EEAS. The Benelux has lobbied for more joint reports, logistical support in crises, support in drafting travel advice and country reports, joint communication and joint training courses. In addition the government is monitoring expenses and seeking to promote the hiring of Dutch nationals by the EEAS. At present 64 Dutch nationals are employed by the EEAS (4% of the total). Of the 136 EU delegations, eight are led by Dutch nationals (over 6% of the total).

Over the next few years the Netherlands will spend 0.7% of its GNP on development aid, making it one of the few member states to honour this international obligation. If the support of the Dutch public is to be maintained, the other EU member states must raise their aid percentage to the international standard in 2012. The government will urge them to do so. It seeks better coordination between member states and the European Commission on development cooperation.

The government's contribution to European efforts on behalf of international climate negotiations centres on the organisation of the new Green Climate Fund, the effective international disbursement of short-term climate funding for 2010 to 2012, the generation of private funding, the development of new market mechanisms and the use of existing ones, and the integration of climate into the priorities of water and food security.

The Netherlands favours an external EU energy policy aimed at ensuring energy supply security and sustainable energy management. European measures for energy conservation are only appropriate if they bring added value. A reasonable balance must be struck between national and global interests. Coordinated EU action is key. The government wants to maintain EU market rules in energy policy. Regional cooperation is needed to equitably apportion the costs of transnational energy infrastructure. After the Netherlands has reached its goal of 14% renewable energy by 2020, the government would like to see a harmonised policy for the generation of sustainable energy where it is most efficient.

Consular diplomacy

Recent events, such as those in North Africa and the Middle East as well as the tsunami in Japan, show the importance of emergency aid to Dutch nationals abroad. Instability, uncertainty and insecurity are often unexpected and difficult to predict. They demonstrate the importance of visible efforts on the part of embassies and consulates. Consular services, including migration affairs, are a major part of the duties of the Ministry and the missions.

Consular diplomacy has practical applications, such as providing services to Dutch nationals abroad, but it is also a branch of foreign policy. A consular dialogue can sometimes pave the way for political cooperation. Cooperation with non-EU states facilitates the return and reintegration of migrants who have not been admitted to the Netherlands, and the reception and protection of refugees in the region.

Consular services must be completely reliable. The emphasis will shift to Dutch nationals in dire emergencies. In practice this means a more robust crisis response and differentiated prisoner assistance.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers special assistance to prisoners who run a real risk of the death penalty. This assistance is based on the principle that every Dutch prisoner is entitled to a fair trial and the various rights derived from it, such as the right to a lawyer.

Effective assistance to Dutch nationals caught up in emergencies and calamities abroad requires us to boost our capacity in order to deal with multiple crises at once. As the incidents in the first half of 2011 showed, crises can take many forms and demand specific responses. They may necessitate the use of military transports or charter flights, or the deployment of Rapid Deployment Consular Support Teams (SCOT) as temporary reinforcements for the embassies. The right travel advice at the right moment and an adequate crisis organisation are critical. The Netherlands is examining ways of stepping up international cooperation with other EU member states and the EEAS. This year's crises have led to intensive interministerial cooperation, especially with the Ministry of Defence.

Parallel to this concentration on emergency consular services, other services will be downsized and streamlined. A smaller network of missions will inevitably mean that some Dutch nationals will have to travel a greater distance. Because current fees for passports issued abroad are not even close to covering costs, they will have to be increased so that they do. In areas besides crisis management as well, the Netherlands is reviewing the options for transferring consular tasks to the EEAS.

With regard to visas, which are important for regulating the movement of persons worldwide, the government plans to work more with its Schengen partners. Dozens of bilateral agreements between the Netherlands and its partners have already been concluded in which the two countries undertake to represent each other in the visa process. The government will continue this policy. It is also taking steps to digitise more elements of the consular and visa processes in order to serve Dutch nationals abroad more quickly and effectively and thereby reduce red tape.

International cultural policy

Dutch international cultural policy strengthens the Netherlands' position abroad. Accordingly, the government employs cultural diplomacy strategically, in countries that are culturally, politically and economically significant. The focus is on boosting the international visibility of

the sector's top echelon. A fresh look has been taken at the geographic focus of international cultural policy.

Dutch art has an excellent reputation internationally, which is good for the image of the Netherlands as a whole. When it sees opportunities for the Dutch economy, the government highlights the links between culture, trade and the economy. One of the priorities of international cultural policy is promoting Dutch creative industry. With its programme Dutch Design, Fashion and Architecture, the government is looking to bolster the international position of the design, fashion and architecture sectors in the 2009-2012 period. In the coming grant period the geographical focus will be on Belgium (Flanders), Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, efforts will be made to stimulate cultural cooperation with the Arab region and Central and Eastern Europe.

Dutch expertise in the restoration or change of use of common cultural heritage can give an extra impetus to bilateral relations and a new dynamism to historical relationships.

Supporting culture in developing countries contributes to debate, identity, an open society and an equal dialogue between partners. Internationalisation is important for Dutch art; our leading cultural institutions could not exist without the international market. There is demand for Dutch art abroad. The leading lights of Dutch art are trendsetting and innovative by international standards. In this way art contributes to a positive image of the Netherlands abroad. Artists, like athletes, need to be able to measure up to the international competition. For that reason, participation in international festivals, art biennials and competitions is essential.

Finally, cultural diplomacy is an important instrument of modern diplomacy. Diplomats do not receive their information through traditional diplomatic channels alone. To know what is happening in a society, it is important to listen to writers, filmmakers, artists and bloggers.

Modernising diplomacy and the network of missions

Dutch diplomacy is a tool for achieving objectives beyond our borders. The government is focusing on security, prosperity and freedom in the world and on a reliable consular service. Obviously, the government wants to do this as well as possible. This is why it is adapting diplomacy to changes in international relations, in Dutch interests and in the ways people interact. These changes will take shape in the years ahead, on the basis of the following principles:

- Dutch interests, including economic interests, are central to trade. This calls for substantially more investment in economic diplomacy and more cooperation with the business community and knowledge institutions.
- Form follows function. Only after the function is clear can the form be shaped to fit it. A diplomatic presence need not be an embassy; it can also take an entirely different form, such as roving ambassadors or flexibly deployable policy teams, based at regional support offices, or some other form tailored to the business community.
- There must be considerable flexibility in order to anticipate and respond to changing circumstances.
- The government will sharpen its diplomatic focus. It has no intention of trying to do everything; instead, it will identify areas where it can bring added value, and this will determine its activities. The Netherlands will do what it is good at and choose the most fertile environment for it.
- Diplomacy is an integrated sphere of endeavour, yet fragmentation has still not been fully overcome. Security, prosperity and freedom must be seen in relation to each other.
- Operations will be made more dynamic, with the Ministry making optimal use of the opportunities presented by ICT and other technology, with an eye for what is happening in society at large. This means expanding the range of our prospective partners, making new connections and departing from well-trodden paths in order to put the Netherlands on the map.
- Consular activities can be modernised and streamlined, with the help of electronic services. The guiding principles for consular services are that Dutch nationals should be self-reliant, fees should cover costs, services should be reliable and there should be European cooperation where possible.

Following these principles closely, the government will pare down the network of missions, while simultaneously strengthening it. This will result in not only more efficient diplomacy and a more cost-effective network, but also a more flexible outlook that is better suited to the demands of the present day. Flexibility means, among other things, hiring young people on temporary contracts. It will then be decided who has the talent to be offered a permanent position, depending on the needs of the organisation. This leads to efficiency and flexibility, the very goals the government set for itself in the coalition agreement. Over the next two years, a group of experts will serve as a sounding board for ideas on modernising the network of missions. The group will be chaired by Arthur Doctors van Leeuwen; members

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will be drawn from the business community, civil society organisations, the academic community, and the diplomatic service.