

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

To the President of the
House of Representatives
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Onze Referentie
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Appendix

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Concerns International Security Strategy

Dear President,

Peace and security cannot be taken for granted. They require continuous effort to make a secure world possible, and thus ensure the security of the Netherlands. We have to work hard to achieve this in the rapidly changing world around us, in collaboration with other countries, international and civil society organisations and the private sector. 'Building bridges' is our motto abroad as well as at home. Active efforts aimed at global stability and international solidarity are clearly also in our interests, for our security does not begin and end at our national borders, or at the external borders of the European Union.

The world around us is changing rapidly, in both economic and geopolitical terms. Eight of the world's ten largest ports – including the top three – are in China. The two largest banks in the world are also in China. Africa has the largest potential reserves of raw materials. The balance of power is shifting, and new powers are gaining influence.

In this changing world, Europe's influence is declining in relative terms. While the European economy is stagnating, Asia, Latin America and Africa have produced impressive growth figures. Defence spending in Europe is falling, but it is rising in other parts of the world. Rapid change and economic development have a downside, in the form of instability. Growing unrest in the regions surrounding Europe impact both directly and indirectly on our own security.

The world has become more complex and less predictable. This brings new opportunities, but it also entails new threats. The fast pace of growth in countries like China and India means export opportunities, but it also has implications for the global supply of food, raw materials and energy. Technological advances also raise new issues. Take, for example, the debates on shale gas fracking and drones. The internet and social media have brought the world closer together, which is a great good in itself, but at the same time cyber-attacks pose one of the greatest security threats of our times.

The threats we face today have little regard for national borders or physical barriers. Internal and external security are increasingly interwoven. Events in the world around us have a direct impact on our own security and prosperity. With its

open economy and international outlook, the Netherlands is highly dependent on other countries. Terrorism and piracy constitute both a security problem and an economic problem. Dutch involvement in missions in conflict regions serves not only to curb terrorism, but also to secure our trading routes and access to raw materials that are vital to our industry, both now and in the future.

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In the light of these changes and the need – particularly at a time of austerity measures – to keep our interests and priorities firmly in our sights, the government has set out an international security strategy, based on three strategic interests in foreign security policy:

- The defence of our own and our allies' territory
- An effective international legal order
- Economic security

To secure these interests, we have opted to introduce the following focuses in our foreign and security policy:

- **More responsibility for Europe:** the fact that individual European countries are losing influence means that we must deepen our collaboration with our European partners, in order, among other things, to remain relevant for the US and the rest of the world. A strong EU that adds responsibility for security and defence to its remit is important for a stable international system and a strong NATO. This means there will need to be more defence cooperation with other European countries to enhance our capacity for military action and retain sufficient strike capability.
- **Greater focus on unstable regions close to Europe:** events on the outer borders of the European Union have a direct impact on our own security and economic interests. Though the number of conflicts has fallen worldwide over the past two decades, the number of unstable regions surrounding Europe has in fact increased. The situations in Syria and Mali – and, more broadly, growing instability and radicalisation in the Middle East and North Africa – give cause for concern. In the short term, these conflict zones are attracting certain groups of young people from Europe (including the Netherlands). In the longer term, it is by no means certain what these developments on Europe's borders will mean for the stability of the continent itself. Europe will have to take more responsibility and invest more in the stability of its own neighbourhood. However, this does not of course mean that the rest of the world no longer matters. Given its global interests, the Netherlands will remain active throughout the world, through multilateral and other channels.
- **Prevention:** prevention is better than cure, and often considerably cheaper, and security is no exception. This is obvious when it comes to matters like terrorism and arms control, but it is also essential in crisis management and conflict prevention. Climate change, fluctuating food prices and the exhaustion of natural resources, including water, are increasingly giving rise to disputes and armed conflicts. These sources of conflict must be dealt with at the earliest possible stage. OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoep was one of the first people to highlight the importance of early warning and conflict prevention. A focus on human security and respect for human rights as essential prerequisites for peace and stability is vital for the Netherlands.

- **Disarmament and arms control:** the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology is a growing cause for concern. The Netherlands will therefore have to become even more active in its efforts to strengthen the international legal framework for non-proliferation and disarmament. The ultimate aim is to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Mutual disarmament remains the basic principle on which these efforts are based.
- **Integrated approach:** crises often have several causes. Long-term security cannot therefore be achieved at the touch of a button. The best chance of lasting success lies in the integrated deployment of the instruments at our disposal – diplomacy, development cooperation, defence, the police, the justice system and trade – on the basis of close consultation between the Ministers responsible. This idea is gaining ground in other countries and organisations, too, thanks partly to the Netherlands' efforts.
- **Cooperation with the private sector:** economic security is an integral part of our security policy. The Dutch private sector has eyes and ears – and also interests – throughout the world. Arrangements we make with the private sector can enhance our national security and the security of vital sectors. Companies' knowledge and technology are needed in order to bring a secure digital world one step closer. Cyber security is a matter for both the government and the private sector. The same applies to the security of our energy supply and the protection of merchant shipping.

As well as these focus areas, our policy also includes certain constants. Transatlantic cooperation and NATO remain vital for the broader security of the Netherlands. As a relatively small country, we are dependent on alliances for our security. A successful security policy can be achieved only if we work together. We will therefore continue to work for multilateral collaboration in various contexts and organisations. Given our geographical location, the position of the Netherlands as a seafaring trading nation has traditionally been inextricably linked with other countries, and we have always worked for an effective international legal order and international stability. We do so in the knowledge that this is in both the Netherlands' interests and those of others.

The International Security Strategy, which I hereby present to you together with the Minister of Defence, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Minister of Security and Justice, the Minister of Economic Affairs and the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs, sets out how the government intends to flesh out its foreign security policy, and what the focuses of that policy will be.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Frans Timmermans