

Script of the pre-recording speech

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It's a pleasure and an honor to join you virtually today to extend His Majesty King Willem Alexander's heartfelt congratulations on the 75th anniversary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

As one of only two EU members of UN ESCAP I am grateful for the opportunity to set out the vision of my country on crucial developments here in the Indo-Pacific region and back home in Europe. For the Netherlands it's evident that the Indo-Pacific region is a key region in the world in terms of people, GDP, and economic growth and in terms of overcoming global challenges together in particular in the realm of stability and security, climate, health, and social and human development. Europe and the Netherlands are very much committed to contribute to sustainable economic growth, economic and social equality, and security in the Indo-Pacific.

These are also the main pillars of our national Indo-Pacific strategy. With Germany and France, The Netherlands have been in the forefront of countries that stressed for the importance of an EU Indo-Pacific strategy and closer engagement of the EU with the Indo-Pacific region on a broad agenda. We very much realize that in our interconnected world we have to join hands with the Indo-Pacific region to ensure stability, security, inclusive sustainable development and to protect the rules based international order, open supply chains and our economies.

As a result of geo-political developments and the many global challenges we are facing this holds true now more than ever. We believe it's high time for Europe to step up and contribute more to the rules based international order, de-escalation of the tensions and a stable open and free Indo-Pacific region. This is in all our interests.

The Netherlands is fully committed to do it's part of the EU's efforts in this regard. This is a two-way street, developments in the Indo-Pacific are of direct relevance to Europe and vice versa. We should continue our dialogue we started at the Indo-Pacific forum in Paris in February this year and aim for a broad agenda for cooperation.

Allow me to touch upon a challenge that is at the top of our minds in Europe at the moment. The situation in Ukraine. Russia's unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine is a gross violation of basic international principles that we all hold dear – sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the rules-based world order. The war in Ukraine not only affects Europe but has an impact on the world as a whole and the way we the international community responds to this gross violation of international principles will not only affect the stability and security of Europe but will determine the future of the rules based international order.

Countries in the Indo-Pacific can play an important role and help protect and promote the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and our rules-based world order. Of course there is also the broader impact of the war on the global economy with higher food and energy prices and severe economic and food security risks for many.

The butterfly effect of this war should not detract from cooperation in tackling the central threat multiplier of our time – Climate change. An existential threat for some island states and for large mega cities along the coast. Heat and humidity may ultimately render large parts of the Indo-Pacific region unlivable. It's an illusion to expect that everything will remain the same if we do nothing. Quite opposite, the cost of inaction will keep rising both in economic terms and in human lives.

Major transitions lie ahead both in the digital and energy sphere, which brings me to the EU connectivity strategy – the global gateway. EU aims to mobilize EUR 300 billion in connectivity investments worldwide in the priority areas of digitalization, energy, transport, health, and education in the period until 2027. This includes the Indo-Pacific region, these investments are based on a values driven proposition and should work as a key driver of economic growth, economic and social equality. Issues that lie at the heart of the UN ESCAP agenda.

The Netherlands therefore sees great potential for cooperation to bridge connectivity gaps and support the twin transition required to meet today's global challenges and will do its part in the implementation of the global gateway.

In conclusion we see significant changes occurring simultaneously across multiple areas and we have to manage all the differences in a rapidly changing and sometimes disruptive world. Cooperation is key and in that regard The Netherlands looks very much forward to continue to strengthen our cooperation with the Indo-Pacific on a bilateral, EU and of course the UN ESCAP level for the coming 75 years.

Once again, warm congratulations to ESCAP and happy birthday.