

# Common Values, Joint Responsibility, Shared Commitment

## Address by Minister De Hoop Scheffer

Address by Mr. J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

"Common values, joint responsibility, shared commitment"

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

(Introduction)

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

The smoke on Ground Zero, only a few blocks away from here, has cleared. But the empty space where once stood the Twin Towers continues to send shivers throughout the world. The unspeakable events that occurred a year ago have become engraved in our collective memory. What occurred here was an unprecedented and direct attack on universal values. Values like mutual respect. Like tolerance. Like the rule of law. Values that form the very basis of the United Nations.

Over the past twelve months the world community has proven its determination to defy terrorism. Today, the Netherlands not only reiterate their attachment to these values, but also underline a responsibility, both individual and collective, for upholding and protecting them. And that responsibility calls for a real commitment.

(Common values)

Religions, races and traditions make our world colourful and diverse. But underneath our different feathers, we share a common skin: principles we all adhere to or should adhere to, regardless of our religious beliefs or race. Mutual respect, the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion are among the most important ones.

We cannot, however, confine ourselves to merely restating these principles. Without real commitment they would quickly evaporate and thus become empty words.

It goes without saying that the Netherlands are fully committed: a dedicated international partner, both out of choice and out of necessity. In the UN, the EU, NATO and other organisations, or in common endeavours like WSSD. The Netherlands will continue to dedicate 0.8% of its annual GDP to development co-operation and urges others to do the same.

Behind that commitment is the unshakeable belief that no country can hope to succeed on its own in whatever policy area. In this respect we take to heart the wise words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan (quote): "Even the most powerful nations know that they need to work with others, in multilateral institutions, to achieve their aims." (unquote). We therefore also welcome the US decision, announced from this rostrum by President Bush, to return to UNESCO.

The Netherlands not only feel an individual responsibility for the defence of universal values, but a shared responsibility as well. Let me elaborate on this today in relation to four key areas of concern: the development of the African continent, uncontrolled migration, the continuing threat of terrorism and the situation in the Middle East.

(Africa)

Africa continues its struggle towards development and prosperity. It cannot and must not do so all by itself. We all share a responsibility for eradicating poverty and enhancing Africa's global integration.

Too often the African continent is being associated with misery and instability only. In reality the number of conflicts in or between African countries has decreased. The creation of the African Union, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, testify to the continent's own commitment. The Netherlands very much welcome this acknowledgement by African leaders of their own responsibility for building a prosperous and peaceful continent. For us this is essential for adding our own efforts and resources to achieve that objective. It also means that African leaders, like all of us, can be held to account for their governance and policies, their performance in the field of human rights and their respect for the rule of law.

In partnership with African countries the Netherlands will continue to take its share in providing the necessary resources. For us development co-operation is not just providing money, but also a policy integrating the promotion of both good governance and of security and stability. Is the world to assist in alleviating the effects of natural disasters when in fact they are, at least in part, man-made?

Responsibility also extends to the private sector, particularly when it comes to fighting the disease that undermines all efforts at development: HIV/AIDS. However, for the fight against AIDS to be successful, it needs to be fully endorsed by African governments. That means:

- acknowledgement of the problem and its causes,
- an open discussion of possible strategies,
- and addressing its consequences for society.

(Migration)

Mr. President, Africa concerns us all. Its problems affect us all. Poverty, conflict and violations of human rights contribute to an ever increasing migration. This phenomenon is, however, by no means unique for the African continent. We need to deal with it effectively, regardless of whether we represent countries of origin, countries of transit or of destination. It is robbing countries of origin of a vitally important resource: human capital. For neighbouring countries or countries of transit it can be a source of instability. For countries of destination it is often creating problems of integration.

Here again, common values are at stake. Governments should do everything in their power to avoid people having no other choice than fleeing home. That is priority number one: addressing the underlying causes of uncontrolled migration. In the meantime, we need to support UNHCR's office which is stretched to the limits in dealing with a problem for which it was not devised. The Netherlands welcome UNHCR's efforts at devising and implementing an integrated policy, aiming at repatriation of refugees, coupled with their re-integration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Obviously, these efforts have to be dovetailed with those of other UN-agencies active in those areas.

It is precisely through such an integrated approach that we can hope to achieve results. UNHCR's mix of policy areas obviously has to be complemented by that of security. That is one

of the reasons why the Netherlands is involved in peacekeeping or similar operations in Bosnia, FYROM and Afghanistan. Security is a quintessential consideration for those who are to return to their homes. And without security, resettlement and recovery remain pious wishes. Money spent on security is money well spent.

(Terrorism)

Mr. President, in the year following September, 11th the international community has effectively taken its responsibility. Its joint efforts have focussed on bringing about more security and increased stability in Afghanistan. Much has been accomplished: a regime hostile both to the Afghan people and to our commonly shared values has been ousted. Subsequently, our collective efforts have helped to establish an elected government and to begin the reconstruction of a disrupted society.

There can be no leniency towards countries that reject universal values. Because a country that rejects tolerance, endorses intolerance. A country that does not guarantee the rule of law invites anarchy and injustice. The international community must help countries that are unable to do so themselves. It must urge those that are uncooperative. And it must be ready, if necessary, to act against those that are unwilling.

The terrorist attacks have also shown that religion, for some, unfortunately is a source of inspiration not for good, but for destructive purposes. The hijacking of planes should not result in the hijacking of an entire religion. Proper education, freedom of opinion or of speech, secular or representative government can help contain religious extremism. Here again, we have a collective as well as an individual responsibility for upholding and protecting common values. What we need is a dialogue, between countries, civilisations and religions. But we also need action to go after the sources of religious extremism.

(Middle East)

Mr. President, that same commitment leaves us no choice but to continue to work towards peace in the Middle East. The instability there, the lurking dangers of religious extremism and weapons of mass destruction require our joint dedication.

The many different actors in the Middle East share a duty to restrain violence and curtail extremism. Stability in the region is an indivisible interest, not only for the region itself but far beyond. The countries in the region have prime responsibility for ensuring that their citizens can live in freedom and an environment of tolerance and respect. But the international community has a role to play as well. Here in particular we expect the Security Council to take its responsibilities to end the Iraqi regime's systematic non-compliance with a range of earlier resolutions. The inspectors should be allowed to return, yesterday rather than tomorrow. The credibility of the UN-system is at stake.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be dealt with by solely concentrating on the fight against terrorism. Terrorism must stop, not only because of the human suffering it causes, but also because it is utterly counterproductive. The Palestinian people should ask themselves where this violence got them. On the other hand, Israel cannot defer indefinitely answering the question when and how it is to live side by side with a Palestinian neighbour. Finding a solution again requires true commitment from all parties concerned and a dialogue across regional, religious and other borders. That involves us all.

(Conclusion)

In conclusion, Mr. President, since we share values we share responsibility for upholding them.

That should determine our commitment to addressing the problems that I mentioned. Our commonly held values should guide our dealings with each other. Between individuals, as well as between countries. It is only when we acknowledge what we have in common that we can find the strength to overcome our differences.

If there is one thing that our presence here, one year after September 11, 2001, makes clear it is this: our belief in freedom and tolerance is unshakeable, and so is our commitment to uphold them.