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Address to the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly

**His Majesty King Willem-Alexander
of the Netherlands**

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Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to address this General Assembly on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. A kingdom made up of four autonomous countries – the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten – and rooted in both Europe and the Caribbean.

In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was signed by representatives of 51 countries.

Today, seventy years later, there are three times as many people on earth and four times as many UN member states. With all the complexities that entails.

And yet, as an international organisation the United Nations stands proud.

In those seventy years the world has seen great upheavals and shifts in the balance of power. Technological advances have changed our daily lives faster and more dramatically than ever before.

And yet, the United Nations endures.

We have seen clashes of interests, bitter conflicts and human tragedies. Indeed, these persist today. As we speak, the lives of millions are still dominated by fear, oppression and want.

And yet, the United Nations lives on. As a legitimate platform for international dialogue. Where countries can always come together, no matter how great their differences.

The UN is *more* than simply a platform. It is an organisation whose activities help to shape and improve our world. Thanks in part to the United Nations, extreme poverty has been halved. Child mortality has been halved. 2.3 billion people have

gained access to drinking water. Diseases like malaria and tuberculosis have been beaten back. And peace operations in many areas have brought violent conflicts under control.

This is all down to the work of millions of courageous people in the UN member states. And to the untiring efforts of the staff of the UN and its organs, both here in New York and all over the world.

So I would like to say to the United Nations: congratulations! Thank you for seventy years of battling against cynicism and fatalism.

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Nations is, and will remain, the primary global organisation for peace, justice and development. That is why the Kingdom is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2017 to 2018 term.

Of course, the world is far from perfect. It is still filled with terrible injustice and human suffering. But we have also made great progress. What would today's world look like without the United Nations? There can be no doubt we would be worse off.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands feels a close bond with the fundamentals of the United Nations, as laid down in the UN Charter. We understand the value of diversity and dialogue. This goes hand in hand with the conviction that multilateral cooperation can help us move forward and make the world stronger.

We owe our freedom to other countries. Seventy years ago our allies made enormous sacrifices in liberating the Netherlands. They enabled us to rise again and become a prosperous Kingdom. We will never forget the importance of international solidarity. The world will always be able to count on the Netherlands as a partner for peace, justice and development.

Yet, just as we remain deeply committed, we also believe in being critical when necessary.

It is good, on this seventieth anniversary, for the UN to look openly and honestly at the results of its efforts. To look at the goals that have not been achieved. And at the long and winding path that lies ahead.

Our Kingdom is gravely concerned about the lawlessness, terror and contempt for basic human rights that are gaining ground in some areas. Millions of desperate people have been displaced, forced to flee the violence. They are the innocent victims of intolerance. Of despicable conduct on the part of tyrants they cannot constrain. Many refugees have been in a desperate situation for too long. The positive effects of years of work on sustainable development are at risk. This affects us all. We cannot look the other way.

We are all deeply touched by the tragic images of families who have had to leave everything behind in their search for a safe haven. All the world's nations must show solidarity in the face of the refugee crisis. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has again increased its contribution to humanitarian assistance, making us one of the largest donors in the world. We call on other nations to follow suit and give additional support to the UN so it can provide food and shelter to all those who have been forced to flee, and give them a chance to rebuild their lives.

It is crucial that we make our joint efforts on peace and security more efficient and effective. The review by the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations is a helpful tool in this regard.

Since the UN was founded, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has participated in 63 UN or UN-mandated missions, in more than thirty countries. Those missions have involved more than 125,000 Dutch military and civilian personnel. Earlier this year I visited the Dutch men and women who are part of the UN mission MINUSMA in

Mali. The situation there clearly illustrates how complex the problems in conflict areas often are. You can't build lasting peace by military means alone. A political solution has to be found. It's equally important to strengthen the institutions that safeguard respect for the rule of law. And to remove the underlying causes of conflict.

The lack of decent prospects or equal opportunities drives many young people into the arms of ruthless terrorist organisations. Discrimination and exclusion are the root of much evil in the world. That is why we need a '3D approach': a combination of *defence, development and diplomacy*, of which the Netherlands has many years' experience. For example, we have made it a top priority to stimulate job creation in Africa and to assist young African entrepreneurs. And we are increasing our support for programmes to promote stability in fragile states.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is proud to be home to the International Court of Justice, the only principal organ of the UN located outside New York. The Hague is the place where global peace, justice and security are defended by a range of international organisations, including the International Criminal Court and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

A key feature of a legal order is the absence of impunity. Violence must never be allowed to prevail. Lawlessness must never become the norm. Anyone who strives for justice will find our Kingdom on their side.

Injustice hurts like an open wound. Hundreds of families from ten countries, including Malaysia, Australia and the Netherlands, still grieve every day for the loved ones they lost in the MH17 air disaster. They await the results of Security Council resolution 2166. That resolution is clear: it 'demands that those responsible for this incident be held to account and that all States cooperate fully with efforts to establish accountability'.

The Dutch government will work tirelessly – together with all the countries and organisations concerned – until justice is done with regard to this tragedy.

Peace, justice and development are closely linked. They are a trinity – as tied to each other as the blades on a wind turbine. To achieve lasting progress, all three are essential. So our Kingdom welcomes the Sustainable Development Goals, which will focus the efforts of the international community over the next fifteen years. And we will put our hearts and souls into helping ensure their success.

There is still not enough focus on the positive role that women can play. Even in the harshest and most hopeless circumstances, women often have the strength to go on. To find practical ways to improve the lives of their families and communities. Promoting equal rights and opportunities for women is actually sustainable development in action.

Any organisation that wants to remain relevant must adapt to new times and circumstances. It is especially important for institutions that stand for shared values and continuity to critically examine their own performance. To ask themselves: 'Are our working methods still appropriate?' Without such self-reflection they risk the gradual erosion of their relevance and effectiveness.

For the United Nations and the Security Council this has, after seventy years, become an urgent issue. The Security Council needs to be able to act more boldly in the face of large-scale atrocities. Greater restraint in the use of vetoes would help. We warmly welcome France's initiative in that regard.

The Council's legitimacy is also under pressure. If part of the global population feels insufficiently represented by it, the Security Council cannot properly fulfil its primary role as a global body for safeguarding peace and security, and for resolving conflicts.

Africa, in particular, is underrepresented. But the voices of other regions and countries are not being heard enough either. This needs to change.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands believes in the power of empathy and dialogue. It is not always the loudest voices that speak the deepest truths. In fact, it is often the small member states that show us the way forward.

One example is the longtime plea by small island states for a far more active global approach to climate change and marine pollution. They feel the urgency like no other. And fortunately – finally – more and more large countries are developing concrete action plans.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands knows how crucial this is. Three of our countries – Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten – are small island states, and three other Caribbean islands are special municipalities of the Netherlands. With its centuries of water management experience, the Netherlands is one of the best-protected deltas in the world, investing billions to help mitigate the effects of climate change. That is why we intend to make sure our voice is heard at the COP21 Climate Conference in Paris later this year. And we will continue pressing for cleaner oceans.

Our guiding principle is simple: consider the interests of all countries, large and small. Forget 'might is right'. We believe right is might.

This also forms the basis for our candidacy for a seat on the UN Security Council for the 2017 to 2018 term.

We are passionate about serving the entire international community at UN level. As your partner for peace, justice and development.

For my wife and me this has a very personal significance. For seven years I had the honour to chair the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. My wife remains his Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development.

Two years ago Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke at the centennial celebrations of the Peace Palace in The Hague. He said, 'Here in The Hague, you help sustain and expand the rule of law. You bring the rule of law to life.'

We take those warm words not merely as a great compliment, but also as an inspirational challenge. A solemn task which we aim to continue fulfilling – together with all of you – in The Hague, in New York and all over the world.

Thank you.