

**Meeting with the President of the Parliament of  
Slovakia, H.E. Mr Paska,  
on Wednesday 13 May 2009**

**Welcome**

- Let me begin by welcoming you, dear colleague, and the members of your delegation, to the House of Representatives of the Dutch Parliament. As President of the House of Representatives it is a great pleasure meeting you.
  
- May I introduce to you:
  - Mrs. Timmerman-Buck, President of the Senate
  - Mr Hamilton, Secretary General of the Senate
  - Mr. Daan Huisinga, clerk of the standing committee on European Affairs of the House of Representatives
  - Mr. Frank Mittendorff, deputy clerk of the standing committee on European Affairs of the House of Representatives.

- The Parliament of the Netherlands, the States-General, consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House has 150 Members, the Senate 75. This bicameral system was introduced in 1815. The history of our Parliament goes back much further however, to the period of the Republic of the United Provinces in the sixteenth century.
  
- Dear colleague, your visit emphasises the close relationship between Slovakia and The Netherlands. First on a national level; I refer to the various bilateral visits in the recent past of different members of government, including the state visit of Queen Beatrix in 2007. Last April Vice Prime Minister Caplovic visited the committee on European Affairs of this House.
  
- I myself took part in the EU-Presidents' meeting in Bratislava in 2007. Internationally our countries meet each other regularly in the context of Visegrad and, of course, as partners in the European Union.

- There are also regular bilateral contacts in the field of culture; may I refer to the Dutch contributions to the many film- and music festivals that are held in Slovakia. As a matter of fact, next week Bratislava will be hosting a Dutch week; numerous Dutch economic and cultural aspects will come under the spotlights. I would also like to mention the intensive co-operation on a local and regional level between our two countries. But let me refer in particular to the extensive co-operation of our military forces in Uruzgan. I had the opportunity of visiting our troops there in January and I was impressed by the co-operation between the Slovakian and Dutch troops. Indeed, these examples show that we can speak of an intensive and constructive relationship between our two countries. I am confident it will stay that way.
- Mr Paska, allow me to briefly say something about the current situation and challenges we face in the light of the current financial and economic crisis. Slovakia was already known for its effective macro-economic policy and it gives me pleasure to see that Slovakia stands firm in the crisis. The Netherlands,

together with other countries, is closely monitoring the way Slovakia is handling the crisis. The fact that, for example, Slovakia will in all probability be able to stay within the margins of the Stability and Growth Pact, shows a first class performance. This achievement was underlined by Vice Prime Minister Caplovic during his meeting with the committee on European Affairs. We can learn a lot from this, and it will also be one of the topics you will be able to discuss in your meeting with various committees of both Houses.

- Mr Paska, I will be most interested to hear the results of this meeting. I hope you will have a fruitful and constructive exchange of ideas and I'm looking forward to meeting you later today and to continue our conversation during dinner.