

**Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uri Rosenthal, at the University of Ottawa, 18 May
2012: 'Free to worship, to trade and to be secure: why Canada and the Netherlands must
promote our shared values'**

Monsieur Rock, Mesdames et messieurs,

Je suis très heureux d'être ici aujourd'hui, au Canada, à la veille du sommet de l'OTAN. Dans ce pays si étroitement lié aux Pays-Bas, dans la magnifique ville d'Ottawa, et dans votre prestigieux institut.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During my first meeting with Minister Baird he mentioned his maternal grandfather, Ken Collins, who fought in the Netherlands during the Second World War. I was greatly impressed by this personal link.

On my flight over I thought about the many Canadian soldiers like him who once made the same journey in the other direction. From Canada to the Netherlands, to fight the Germans. Boys (and a few girls) no older than the students in this room; some of them even younger. They must have felt tense and frightened as they made that six-thousand kilometre journey. Not knowing what the war in Europe had in store for them.

Later generations heard the veterans' stories from their grandparents, or came across them in films or schoolbooks. Almost 70 years on, it is still remarkable that young people were prepared to risk their lives to liberate the Netherlands. Ken Collins returned to Canada, but no fewer than 7,600 Canadians paid the ultimate price. This is something we will never forget.

In fact, not only did Canada send its soldiers to fight for freedom in Europe, it also offered a safe haven to the Dutch crown princess and her children, far from the destruction of the war.

After peace had been restored in Europe, Canadian soldiers and the Dutch people together celebrated the return of freedom. The Dutch joyfully welcomed their liberators, and the soldiers' stay in the Netherlands was a happy one. So happy that many girls married Canadians and many liberation babies were born. After the war these women left for Canada with their husbands to start a new life. And in the years since many Dutch people have followed their example. Today, there are one million Canadians of Dutch origin. There can be no better proof of the close ties between our two countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every year in May, in both Canada and the Netherlands, we commemorate the victims of the Second World War. This year is the sixty-seventh time. In all those years our world has changed significantly. In recent times, especially, the pace of geopolitical change has accelerated.

The older students among you – those born before the fall of the Berlin Wall – have known no fewer than three world orders. It was a bipolar order during the Cold War, and a unipolar order after 1989. And now we are making the transition to an international order that is dynamic and complex, with a high degree of uncertainty.

The West is no longer the only arena of international politics. The BRICS countries are increasingly taking the initiative. And the balance of power is continually shifting. In this century, East Asia and the Indian Ocean region will become one of the main geopolitical arenas.

Economic growth does not just lift countries out of poverty, it also gives them a greater say in world politics. The emergence of new players is changing world politics, because they use their power differently. Dominique Moïsi, professor of international relations at Harvard, thinks that North America and Europe take a normative approach to world politics, based on a belief in universal values, like individual human rights. For other powers, like China, this is much less the case.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me leave the changing world and return briefly to Canada and the Netherlands.

I do not believe that Canada and the Netherlands are so very different. We both have a medium-sized population, an economy geared to exports and a deep-rooted democracy. Moreover, as Princess Juliana said at the end of her stay during the Second World War, the Canadians share the same ideals as the Dutch. This made her optimistic about the prospect of the two nations working together on post-war reconstruction.

Some twenty years ago Edouard Balladur wrote extensively about Euro-Atlantic cooperation. His analysis boiled down to the fact that shared democratic values, the rule of law and respect for human rights as well as the principles of market economy and free trade are the very bedrock of such cooperation. This is still very much the case today.

I firmly believe, however, that we should also look beyond the Northern Atlantic region and further strengthen our cooperation with other partners who share the same values. As NATO members we are already extremely lucky to find countries from 'down under', Australia and New Zealand, at our side, but we should also consider South Korea and Japan to be important partners. And why not try to intensify our cooperation with Brazil and South Africa as well? We should embrace the Arab Awakening, starting in Tunisia. A country that has set a new course for its political and economic development.

Whether we call them 'global partners' in the framework of NATO, whether we talk about a democracy caucus in the UN or the Community of Democracies, the underlying principle is the same.

When the Canadians and the Dutch look at a map of the world, they do not see all that many countries sharing the same values. Countries that understand that democracy and a market economy are the best guarantee for lasting prosperity and well-being. We can't afford to work in isolation, and that is why I am happy to be here in Ottawa to discuss with your government how we can enhance this outward-looking cooperation. Within NATO, within the UN and in other frameworks where we can defend and advance our common goals. And just to be clear, I am not talking about a closed shop here. I am talking about strong ties that connect us, but also a strong invitation to others to join us.....

What form should this partnership take? We can play a pioneering role in the dialogue on issues where our norms are at stake. These norms coincide with our interests. We should make ourselves heard when

it comes to freedom, security and free trade. Let us focus on these three themes. After all, we can't do everything, so we should focus our efforts where we can make a difference. Inclusiveness – cooperating with as many partners as possible – but also effectiveness are crucial. In his speech to the UN General Assembly in New York, your foreign minister John Baird said, 'While multilateral action should be preferred, failure to achieve consensus must not prevent the willing from acting to uphold human rights and the Founding Principles of the United Nations.'

Systematic violence against religious minorities in Iran, Egypt and Pakistan is a breach of our universal values. An unacceptable violation of human rights. Restricting religious freedom, whether of groups or individuals, ultimately threatens international peace and security – that's as true for these countries as it is for us. So freedom of religion is an important theme in my human rights policy. Everyone has the right to adopt a belief or an ideology. Just as they have the right to change their belief or to lead a life that does not involve religious beliefs or practices.

The Canadian Foreign Ministry's new Office of Religious Freedom is a great initiative for drawing attention to this theme. Attention that Canada and the Netherlands can jointly call for, for instance in the UN Human Rights Council. At the next General Assembly, Canada and the Netherlands will together press for a focus on individual freedom of religion.

In the field of security, too, we can combine forces more effectively. Canada and the Netherlands work successfully together in NATO. We can expand this partnership in the area of peace and security. NATO is engaged in protecting our global commons and critical infrastructure. Take cyber security. Digital threats are one of the new dangers in our changing world. Together we can ensure that NATO is well-prepared against cyber threats, for example by teaming up with other partners, international organisations and the private sector.

The internet still poses many challenges. I'm thinking not only of protecting our interests online, but also of promoting internet freedom. We need to improve internet access, freedom and security for dissidents in countries with repressive regimes. Canada and the Netherlands are working to achieve this through the Freedom Online coalition. Together with a group of like-minded countries, we are making a difference in a new field of human rights. I hope we will continue working together on this in future.

Last but not least, there can be no freedom and security without prosperity. Canada and the Netherlands both stand to gain from free trade. Unfortunately, a new WTO agreement to further liberalise world trade seems further away than ever. So it is even more important to finalise the free

trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. I am pushing hard in Brussels to get this done before the end of the year. The agreement will yield around 8.6 billion euros for Canada and 11.6 billion for the EU. A very attractive and free stimulus package. Not bad in times of economic slowdown.

But an EU-Canada free trade agreement could be even more significant. It could be a stepping stone towards further economic integration *throughout* the North Atlantic. Despite slow economic growth in the last couple of years, the EU and North America still account for fifty per cent of global GDP. We are by far the world's biggest trading partners. And the biggest investors in each other's economies. Together we account for more than eighty per cent of the world's patents. We should rediscover the ambition to shape the global trade agenda. To show the world that the older, well-established economies are still vigorous and vibrant. And that the transatlantic bond is as strong as ever.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Canadian and Dutch interests and values coincide in many areas, giving us good reason to pursue a common agenda. We have done so in the past, and it is just as important in this new complex international environment. This involves not just short-term but also long-term interests. Because as the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill told the Canadian Parliament during the war, 'We have to win that world for our children. We have to win it by our sacrifices. We have not won it yet'. That is what must have inspired Canadian soldiers like Ken Collins when they risked their lives for the sake of freedom in Europe. We fought together, for the next generation. Let us once again join forces. So that a shared past can become a shared future.

Thank you.