

**Madam President, Madam Secretary General, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the government and the people of South Africa for hosting this important conference.

(Introduction)

When I was young I learned in high school about the Dutch Empire, its colonies like the Dutch Indies, Surinam, Netherlands Antillies, Aruba. I also learned about Rembrandt, Van Gogh and other famous Dutchmen. But no more than five lines were written down in my history book about the Dutch slave trade. I never heard of Fort Elmina or the Castle of Good Hope. Little did we hear about the exploitation of black people on the plantations. Until 1863 Dutchmen were slave traders and owners of slaves.

Now I know better.

We have to fight racism with all legal means. Everyday. We owe that to our society, to the young generation. It is a **democratic duty** to stand for **respect, justice, dignity and equality for all**. Therefore I reject some expressions of racism and intolerance around this conference.

(Actions)

Antidiscrimination centers: The Dutch approach is to tackle racism on many fronts, with broad-based coalitions. Our primary focus is the local level because that is the level where society is most directly confronted with racism and racial discrimination. We are in a process of professionalising local and regional antidiscrimination centers.

Action plans: While preparing for the World Conference, the Netherlands consulted with NGOs and independent national institutions. The conclusion of these consultations was that the World Conference, through its Declaration and Program of Action, should guide the creation and development of regional and national action plans. We need to create the infrastructure for combating racism and racial discrimination at all levels of society. Next year an national action plan will be formulated in cooperation with organizations involved in the fight against racism and discrimination.

- **Internet:** The Netherlands has had good experiences fighting racism on the Internet through private-public partnerships. As the Internet has immense influence in our modern world, we must take international measures against its use for the dissemination of hate speech and racist material.

Racial discrimination victimizes groups and individuals even more when these persons are subjected to multiple grounds of discrimination. In particular it concerns race and gender, race and sexual orientation, race and mental or physical disability and several other grounds of entrenched discrimination. Such as the trafficking of women and girls and discrimination based on work and descent existing in many parts of the world. It is my firm wish that this conference addresses these issues. In the struggle against racism, our guiding light should be the universality of human rights.

(Remorse)

This World Conference in Durban is in our view a necessary moment to state to all people that racism and discrimination must be eradicated. But we can only be credible if we recognize the great injustices of the past. We express deep remorse about the enslavement and slave trade that took place. But an expression of remorse as such is not enough and cannot be used as an excuse for not taking any action in the present. It is important to take structural measures that have effects for the descendents of former slaves and next generations.

In the Netherlands we have an active approach in fighting, discrimination and social exclusion. At this moment Dutch society is multicultural, a salad bowl of people who live together in relative peace and harmony.

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Political parties: The fight against racism is also an obligation for political parties. We do have legal possibilities to fight political parties based on racist ideas.

Penalties: The government is doubling the penalties for structural forms of discrimination.

(The Netherlands slavery monument)

Next year the Netherlands will unveil its national slavery monument, a symbol of national remembrance in Amsterdam, our capital city. This monument is created in close co-operation with the descendants of former slaves. The monument as a whole will represent the past, present and future

(Conclusion)

Madam, Excellencies,

Besides the unveiling of a monument we will also create a center of expertise on slave history, as a dynamic slavery monument. Together with better education these centers form a path for the youth to more understanding and tolerance.

I urge other countries to do the same so that we can realize an international network of knowledge and expertise. This can only be done in involving all relevant groups.

In this way history will be looked at and described from all relevant perspectives. My hope is that then and only then we can address the young generations with better, honestly rewritten history books. Better books that I had as a youngster.

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uitgesproken door Minister Van Boxtel

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