Women's Foreign Policy Group
Embassy Series Event
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Her Excellency Renee Jones-Bos
Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United States

A Conversation on Dutch Foreign Policy

Patricia Ellis: Good evening everyone and welcome. If everyone could please take their seats, thank you so much. Thank you all so much for joining us tonight. We are so excited to here for this wonderful Embassy Series event with the Dutch Ambassador, Ambassador Renee Jones-Bos, who will talk to us tonight about Dutch foreign policy. We will have a conversation, she will speak, and afterwards we will have a Q&A. I am Patricia Ellis for those of you who don't know me, I am President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We promote global engagement, women's voices and women's leadership in international affairs and on pressing international issues of the day. On behalf of our Board members here with us tonight, Dawn Calabia, Donna Constantinople, Isabel Jasinowski, Gail Leftwich Kitch, and Theresa Loar, we all want to thank the Ambassador so much her very warm hospitality, and for opening her beautiful home to us this evening, especially on the occasion of Sinterklaas. I also want to welcome her guest this evening, who is an MP from the Netherlands, who is the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, so we are very lucky to have him here this evening.

There is an amazing turnout, which is a real tribute to the Ambassador and to the great interest in the Netherlands and the great role they play globally. This event tonight is part of our very popular Embassy Series, and this year we've been at the Indian Embassy, we've been at the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago, we had an event honoring women diplomats at the Croatian Embassy. We are so pleased to be here tonight, in this very beautiful space. I just went to mention that our next event will be at the Embassy of Singapore in January, and we hope that you will join us for that. If you are not a member of the Women's Foreign Policy Group please become one. We have a number of diplomats here tonight, including some other women ambassadors and women diplomats, and I just wanted to recognize them all and thank them for coming. So please raise your hand if you are a woman diplomat, thank you very much for coming. We are so happy to have you here with us tonight. [*Applause*.] We also have a State Department official here with us tonight, we are very pleased that you could join us. This is also a special time for us because we are celebrating our fifteenth anniversary, a real landmark and it's exciting so I have to mention it at every event.

So now it is my real privilege and pleasure to introduce the Ambassador who has graciously invited us here. It is a special privilege for me as I was a student in the Netherlands many years

ago, and I received the same warm hospitality that we are receiving tonight. It's just a very special occasion.

The Ambassador has been the representative of the Netherlands to the United States since September 2008, and since then she has been extremely active. She is all over town and engaged in so many activities. We are so proud that she has been engaged with our organization. Most recently she participated in one of our events on Afghanistan. Ambassador Jones-Bos has had an impressive career in the Dutch Foreign Service. Prior to coming to Washington, she served as Director-General for regional policy and consular affairs and as Ambassador-at-Large for Human Rights. I think you were the first in that position which is very important. I will just mention a few of the other highlights: she was head of the Security Council task force of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Chief of Mission in Prague, Head of Recruitment and Training, and has served in Bangladesh, Surinam, and Moscow. She began her career, I think this is important to mention, as a translator/interpreter, and speaks many languages in addition to her perfect English and of course Dutch. She speaks French, German, Italian and Russia. It's really admirable. She also has served on several boards and institutions. Once the Ambassador speaks we will open it up to Q&A, and we look forward to all of your questions. Please join me in welcoming Ambassador Jones-Bos.

Ambassador Renee Jones-Bos: Thank you very much, Patricia, for your very kind words. And a very warm welcome to all of you, on behalf of Pat, in my own house [*Laughter.*] It's wonderful to have you here, and before we start, not only was it yesterday that was the birthday of Sinterklaas, which is in the Netherlands the most important children's event, but yesterday I think was also the birthday of Pat. So her and Sinterklaas together! So shall we sing a quick little happy birthday? [*Laughter. Singing.*] And Pat doesn't know it yet, but here is a book about the history of the Netherlands here in the United States, so she has some more studying to do! So, now I am messing up my speech… there we are. Very warm welcome, as I've said, it's a special privilege and honor to have one of the previous ambassadors to the Netherlands here, Cynthia Schneider. She was a very active ambassador in the Netherlands. Thank you for coming Cynthia, and you've left a wonderful reputation in the Netherlands. To be here together with a member from our foreign affairs committee, it couldn't be a more I think a more prodigious moment for you to be here, to address all the technical questions about foreign policy [*Laughter.*]. So, I am very glad you are here to support me. And thank you to my colleagues and the members of the [WFPG] Board for being here.

So, today's topic, Dutch Foreign Policy, I thought we would start by saying a little bit about what drives our foreign policy, the underlying factors, the long standing traditions. And then turning a little bit more to recent dynamics that have impacted our policy, and then to the new Dutch government, that started about six weeks ago. And then I will briefly outline how this engagement could translate into various policy fields. But I think before I start, I would really like to say how important the relationship with the US is for us, for many Dutch governments this has been the case, and also the government that recently started has said the transatlantic relationship is really a corner stone of our foreign policy, so that is why it is so wonderful to be here and to be able to do this work. And of course as Madeleine Albright said, the "indispensible nation," and nobody can do without you. So that will be a nice subject of discussion maybe later on as well.

Dutch foreign policy; first of all, a few words about geography, because as they say geography is destiny and I think that definitely goes for the Netherlands. Our country, located in Western Europe, for those of you who are not aware of the fact, right on the North Sea, most everybody is. [*Laughter*].

Even though Dutch is our language, it's very confusing, but I think our location on the North Sea is very important, Germany on the right, our neighbor to the east, if you hop across the North Sea you are in the UK, the United Kingdom. Belgium and Luxembourg to the south. And our country is really the delta of a couple major rivers that really go all the way down into Europe. So very much on the rivers, on the sea, and our country is about two thirds at or below sea level. About the size of New Jersey, very densely inhabited, about 17 million inhabitants.

So what does that geography lead to? It leads to a seafaring nation, we started that hundreds of years ago, that's also when we came to this country. Open-minded, entrepreneurial spirit—we have to be because that little bit of land was so small and so swampy, so we had to go out to trade and find our business in other parts of the world. But all this trade was left to a couple big companies, the Dutch East India Company, the West Indies Company. They invested in trade all over the world. The Dutch 17th century, which we call the golden age, an area which Cynthia will be able to tell you all about, the age of Rembrandt and Vermeer. And of course you have the beautiful National Gallery of Art here in Washington, DC, and we've only been here for two years but we've already had four wonderful exhibitions of Dutch 17th century art. I think the curator here knows more about Dutch art in the Netherlands than anyone in the Netherlands does.

But that is the period I think that we earned a lot of wealth, also art to the Netherlands, but also the period that we were a safe haven for refugees: Huguenots from France, Sephardic Jews from Portugal. People who were persecuted in other parts of the world came and published their thoughts and opinions there. And we had the first stock exchange in the world.

So those days are behind us, even sometimes we like to think we are, and I think certainly the Dutch parliament sees ourselves as a world power. The foreign minister will deal with those difficult questions. But we are still a substantial country, with 17 million inhabitants we are the sixteenth economy in the world. We are the seventh financial sense in the world, and we are the second exporter worldwide of agricultural products, after the United States. And I remember when I first met Deputy Secretary [of State] Nicholas Burns when I first came here, I told him, and he said no, I don't believe you. [*Laughter.*] So I had to send them the statistics, and I had them believe me. Our economy is strong because we trade and invest all over the world. About 60% of our GDP does come from international trade, and that also is reflected in our relationship with the United States. We were just talking about it over drinks before hand, we are the third investor in the United States, and we are the seventh trading partner of the United States. So it's a pretty substantial economic relationship. And to give you perspective, these are of course the speaking points that we try to impress upon people here, and not just in Washington, DC but also in New York and all over the country. And for an embassy, the highlight of the effectiveness of your speaking points is when the President of the United States starts repeating them. [*Laughter*.] And when President Obama was in India a couple of weeks ago, I don't know if you caught that,

but he said that certainly it can't be true that the United States has more trade with the Netherlands than with all of India! And we consider this a compliment! [*Laughter*.] I don't know if he meant it that way, but anyway, that was our speaking point and he got that very well.

So, trade is excellent, a long history. But there is more to the Netherlands than commerce. We are also a nation founded on the rejection of authoritarian government. You had your war of independence, but we had our war of independence too, it was called the 80 Years War, so you were a little quicker than we were, we needed a little bit longer. Our war was against the King of Spain, and it was a war about the freedom of religion and our desire for independence. I think it developed a very strong tradition of justice, and a sense of being able to sort out your own destiny and come up with the kind of society you want to have. And it was through the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, now called New York, which was settled in 1609, and we like to think, something discussed last year with Mayor Bloomberg, that some of these values of entrepreneurial spirit, of open mind, of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, came with the Dutch settlers to New Amsterdam. And an example of that is the story of the Flushing Remonstrance. Peter Stuyvesant, who was the governor of New York, as you all know, was not an easy guy [*Laughter*.], he was quite a tough guy, but he survived the Caribbean—where are my Caribbean colleagues?—so he had to be a tough guy probably. So he tried to prohibit the Quakers from practicing their religion. But they appealed to the overlords of Peter Stuyvesant in the Netherlands, who rebuffed him and said that, they pointed out the many benefits the public would have from being tolerant to practitioners of all religions, and the Quakers were allowed to practice as they wanted to.

So today, these two main elements, an outward looking economy and a tradition of tolerance still shapes Dutch foreign policy to a large extent. And you know, we do think that our desire to trade and to promote free trade does go hand-in-hand with the principle position on human rights and international justice. We don't consider them as mutually exclusive; they are mutually reinforcing. Trade and investment, as well as human rights, strive in a context of rule of law and economic opportunity. And war, poverty and instability are harmful to trade, to open trade, as well. So we don't think one excludes the other; we think that one can actually strengthen the other. And I also think, out of this tradition, out of our geography, out of our history, out of our tradition, comes the belief in multilateral solutions and not doing things by yourself. You know, we've never been a big military power so we've always believed in multilateral solutions. We're one of the founding fathers of the EU—of the original six members—we started with 6 and are now 27. We are a founding father of NATO, and also of the United Nations. Our Foreign Minister Kleffens was here in San Francisco when the United Nations was established. And only until last year we had the last surviving Dutchman who was at the Bretton Woods talks, Mr. Polack, Jacque Polack. And he was very instrumental in 1943 and 1944, and he worked at the IMF until his retirement, and he celebrated his 95th birthday last year. So, I think that is an important element as well.

So these are the long-term, the deep-rooted drivers of our foreign policy. We have a well-known Dutch politician, J.J.C. Voorhoeve, who wrote his PhD on the roots, on the drawings, of Dutch foreign Policy. And he called it, "Peace, Profit and Principles"—and so the three "P's". I think the "profit" is the commercial side and the "principle" is the international law and the tradition of human rights, are certainly two important elements here. But of course recently and in the short

term there are also other elements. You have the long term that determines the foreign policy but short term effect and influence in foreign policy. And as in any country, internal developments have external consequences.

So before saying a few words about the new government let me briefly describe a little bit of the dynamics of the last decade—which is something, Pat, you and I talked about that was before you were in the Netherlands, in a different era. But I think particularly the last decade—and maybe the last two decades—have also brought some change and some development. I think important to mention is, first of all, in 2002 and 2004, not long after 9/11—and 9/11 has definitely had a tremendous impact of the Netherlands as well as it has all over the world—we had two political murders. And that had not happened since William of Orange, since our war of independence basically. The country was really shocked by that. It was the murder of Pim Fortuyn, a Dutch politician, and the murder of Theo Van Gogh, a filmmaker. The brutal way in which he was killed I think really changed something in the perception after the 1970s, 80s, 90s have been pretty prosperous times, and easy times—not easy times, times are never easy—but positive development in the 90s after the fall of the Berlin Wall I think that everybody felt that the sky was the limit. You had the agenda for peace, Boutros-Ghali, the UN, peacekeeping. We were going to do things everywhere and the world would really sort itself out; and then we had those two political murders. I think it very much confronted us with terrorism. Not just coming from abroad, external threats, but also coming from your own country—home grown radicalization.

I think the second shock was when in 2005 the Dutch electorate voted overwhelmingly "No" against the new EU constitution. And as I said, we were one of the founding members of the European Union. If you look still now at statistics, I think the Dutch are pretty much pro-Europe. But they were not pro the constitution, because they had the feeling that this was all going too fast. And you know, we had a constitution—and we had the Dutch constitution. And I am sure that Henk Jan can say a lot more about the situation, but that certainly was a shock to the system because Dutch politicians, and I think also the people involved in foreign policy, always thought that the EU would be positive and we would always carry on being a productive, active member of the EU.

Third, tough questions regarding immigration and integration that really dominated the last decade. I think similar to other European countries, there is a huge influx of immigrants. Now, as I started off, we've always had immigration; we've always had a very liberal policy of political asylum. But we never had the massive amount of new immigrants that we had in a relatively short time, and they were people who came from Morocco and Turkey—we called them "guest workers" in the 70s, because we thought they would come just to work and go back to their own countries again. And I think in retrospect that was probably a very naïve way of thinking about it, and something that we had to come to terms with. What does it mean for your society? What does it mean for the fabric of the society? And how will we deal with that?

The new government defines the challenge in this area, and I am quoting now from Government Agreement. The Dutch, because we have so many parties, we always have coalition governments, and coalition governments always make a Government Agreement so that everybody knows what the basis of this coalition is. And in the coalition agreement it says, "In

the light of current social problems, immigration is to be urgently restructured, controlled and reduced. And this will enable us to tackle the problem of integration more effectively. Part of this is due to death of participation in society of those who are in it." So I think what the Government Agreement is saying here is we have very open immigration policy, we have a huge influx of immigration, but what we didn't pay enough attention to is how do we integrate all of those new people in our country. And of course in the United States it's very different because you're an immigration society. If you come here you have to pull up your sleeves and start to work; in the Netherlands we have a whole system of social security, that is you don't work you get social benefits. So it's a very different context.

Then I think an important development over the last decade is that the electoral landscape of the Netherlands has changed dramatically. Traditionally, the Dutch electorate was defined by very recognizable pillars; we called them the pillars, you had the Christian Democrat pillar, and Liberals, and Conservatives, and the Social Democrats, and the Humanists—everything was quite well ordered and arranged. But now we see that people don't vote according to their pillar anymore. And the electorate is very volatile and people vote for all kinds of different and new parties that have sprung up on all sides of the spectrum, on the left side and on the right side. Another thing that is worth mentioning I think is that in the last decade the outcome of elections has become more unpredictable; the political landscape has now fragmented—we now have nine parties in our parliament. So that means that the biggest party has less than 25% of the votes—so it means that you have a lot of different voices, which means it's harder to have one big bloc. I mean here, in the United States, when you have elections it's either one party or the other that has won. With the presidential elections, either one candidate or the other, so you know the moment that all the polls have been counted, which sometimes takes a little bit longer than other times, but they get counted. With us, the electoral results are the beginning of the process of making a coalition.

And finally, I think it's also important to know that the global financial economic crisis affected us very much as well, because we are such an open economy, because we trade and invest all over the world. We have so many Dutch banks, for example, that have invested in the United States, so they were affected by the financial crisis here. And our government had to bail out banks and help companies that had difficulty surviving. So I think that with the financial and economic instability, and also the sense of the world changing at a very fast pace, the globalization that I think brings a lot of good to a lot of people also brings a lot of uncertainty to a lot of people as well. And the worry of what is happening to my country? What happened to our way of life—is it going to stay as it is or is it really going to change? There are always people who see the opportunities, but always also people who see, I think, the challenges and the worries there.

So, here we are, the long-term traditions: the long-term tradition of trade, of human rights, of international cooperation, of electoral cooperation, founding member of a lot of those institutions. Then the recent events of the last decade, and that brings us to the new government that we have now. The new government is a minority government, and Henk Jan your party is part of the government so you're in a much better position as a politician to say something about it than I am, so please do ask questions if you want to know some more about it. It's unusual for us to have a minority government—it was a very long time ago that was the case, we usually go

for a majority government. The minority government is supported in parliament by the Freedom Party of Geert Wilders, and he supports the government on a number of issues and some of those are security, immigration, healthcare, and the budget.

The new government has clearly stated a continued commitment to international engagement. The coalition agreement says about this, "The government sees it as its chance to promote the security and welfare of the Netherlands and its citizens, and to safeguard Dutch interests. Our foreign policy, which entails the Netherlands playing a strong and self-confident role on the international stage, contributes to this. Current international challenges and conflicts, and the Netherlands' financial economic situation, call for tougher choices and integrated foreign policy. The international aspect of other parts of the government's policy will be better coordinated." So yes we will have a very active foreign policy, but we will have to make some choices. Certainly as a smaller country, you can't do everything everywhere anymore. So I think it combines continuity in our traditions for international engagement, with the realization of the need to focus.

So how does this translate into specific policy? Well I think it is a little bit early to say. We have a new minister of foreign affairs, Dr. Uri Rosenthal, we have a new junior minister of development with EU, Dr. Knapen, and we have a high level of intellect in our foreign ministry with people with PhDs, and they are now in the process of working out new policies. I think that the first contours are becoming clear though. The first priority of the government is economic recovery of the Netherlands. And the Dutch government wants to do that in two ways. First of all, bring back the budget deficit. The Dutch are savers and we don't like to spend before we earn, we'd rather earn something before we spend it. I think very few Dutch people would just buy something with a credit card if there wasn't any money in the bank to cover that. It's the same with our government budget. So the proposal of the government is to cut the budget by 18 billion Euros in the next four years, and the goal is to be back by 2015 at the balanced budget. And we are now at about 5% of budget deficit. I remember very clearly when I came in 2008, we then had Prime Minister Balkenende and he gave a speech for the foreign policy council and he said the country is in reasonable shape, we have a small surplus on the budget, we have 3% on the unemployment, and we have about 2.5-3% growth, and he got big applause. And he said I wish I would get such big applause in my parliament as well. [*Laughter*] Usually they only grumble that it isn't even better. So you see in this very brief period we went from a budget surplus, because of the financial economic situation, the bail out, to a deficit of about 5%. It's manageable and I think it's already improving too, at about 4.5%, but the government wants to continue to get that under control.

In our foreign policy, the new government continues to stress the importance of foreign trade. We are very strong in trade, in the WTO. It has been a long time coming and we really think now is the moment to really get it done. We were really pleased to see President Obama conclude the free trade agreement with Korea, and hopefully some more will come. And we also still think it's still possible to do more in terms of trade between the United Sates and the European continent, because they are each other's biggest interest in trade and so the more we can do in terms of promoting trade, the better we think it is. We mutually benefit from that. Our economic section has worked out what trade and investment that we do mean for the American economy. We have split out our investment per state, so you can see which Dutch companies are in which states:

Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, etc. And we have worked out that it's about—I like to say almost a million American jobs—the economic section says 850,00 but I think almost a million sounds better—American jobs are created by Dutch investment and trade, and you trading with us. It is important, we think that trade is really important to get out of this economic crisis.

We also seek to improve our economic diplomacy and to align foreign policy with economics. In the very old days, a very long time ago, Dutch diplomats would say "*je ne parle pas fromage*,"—I don't speak about cheese. [*Laugher.*] But that was a very long time ago, that was our great-great-grandfathers. We are already very much involved in what we call economic diplomacy; helping the Dutch business community, health, working with partners here in the United States but also in other countries to help open up opportunities to the Dutch business community in the different countries where we are. We also look out for a leveled playing field to make sure that things are the same for everyone doing business.

We will continue to contribute to international efforts. The Dutch were there for the first meetings of the G20 in Washington and in Pittsburgh, and President Sarkozy has invited us to be there for the preparation of the next G20 in France. Because we have, you know, everyone feels so strongly, because we are so engaged financially and have such an international interest, for example in the United States, we wanted to be involved to finding a solution to the financial crisis. And so we were very happy with the invitations, the first one from President Bush and the second from President Obama. We are also very actively working with the IMF and the World Bank. We were there at the birth of both institutions, we contribute a lot to the World Bank for developing countries and we still have a seat on the board of the IMF. We will still remain very much committed to the European project as well. I think in a slightly less automatic way maybe than we were in the past; in the past I think a lot of things were just part of it. I think parliament looks a lot more critically now at what comes. I think Europe is crucial for our wealth, our security, our peace—I think Europe is one of the most successful projects in the world. If you think of how it is countries that used to war with each other, you know, France and Germany, of course very recently, but you know we fought three wars with the British. We fought with absolutely everybody—with the Swedes. And the fact that we now have stability and peace on the continent, that is a strong trading area, for an economy like ours is fantastic. So the EU has been very good for us but we have come to a point where we see it has enlarged very quickly, from the 6 founding members to now 27. We really want to make sure that the countries that join are ready to join and that meets the criteria for joining. And we also want to make sure that Europe does what it does best but also that the nations do what they do best, so to look at the system. But Europe will remain very important.

A few words about development cooperation; since the beginning of development cooperation, it is something we have played a very active role in. Last year, in 2009, with almost 6.5 billion US dollars we were the 7th largest donor in the world, so that is in real terms. Because we are cutting all the budgets, also the development budget will be cut, but the government has committed itself to remain giving 0.7% of our GNP to development aid, so that's a commitment that stands. But also to transform our development program, to make it a little bit more ready for the time. Development has changed tremendously as well and we want to work with the prime developing countries and very much look at the effectiveness of development aid, what works and what doesn't and focus on those areas where we have a value. Water is such an area, even in the

United States we have done a lot with water. After Katrina we came to pump out the water and that developed into a partnership, working together with Louisiana authorities on water issues—and also in San Francisco, California and in Florida. So water is something that we know about, being two-thirds at or below sea level. Our country was built up in the fight to keep water out, so that is something we will also do more of in our development program. Food; we have a very high tech agricultural research university, and because we are such a big food exporter that is something we know about. So those are the areas where we will work more in development aid. And, also fragile states and women's rights and women's issues—I think reproductive health and rights will remain very important to our development program.

In peace, security and stability; we had an exhibition the other day at our embassy from Korea to Kabul. We were involved together with the United States in peacekeeping operations since the 1950s 'til right now. In Afghanistan right now as well. We have been there since 2002, and since 2006 at the request of NATO we became the lead nation in Uruzgan, one of the southern provinces very close to the border with Pakistan, which was a heavy responsibility and heavy duty for a fairly small nation with not a very big military, to be a lead nation to fill that role. But we did it for two years and extended it for another two years, and then the parliament said well, you know, you have extended and extended, and at some point others have to share a little bit of the burden. And that actually led to the fall of the Dutch government earlier this year, February of this year, because of differences of opinion on should we carry on or not. The new cabinet has said that they do want to remain committed to Afghanistan, certainly with diplomacy and development, but also with a police training mission and that is being discussed in parliament right now.

We are active also in other parts of the world; let me mention here the anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. It is very important also in the Caribbean, I have two of my colleagues from the Caribbean here, Ann from the Netherlands Antilles and Jocelyn from Aruba of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Of course we don't just have a European part, we have an Antillean part, a Caribbean part, and we work very closely with US navy in the Caribbean in the fight against drugs. There is an integrated command in the southern command for the Dutch navy and coast guard together with our Caribbean colleagues as a part of that. And then in the Balkans and the Caucasuses for fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a very important issue. There was a nuclear security summit here in April, and if nuclear material comes into the hands of Al Qaeda-tied operations or criminal gangs would be very dangerous. We also work very strongly with you on fighting terrorism, and one of the examples was the Christmas Day Bomber—you may remember the Underwear Bomber—on a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit and that left already intense cooperation to become even more intense. How can we make sure that people do not get on the flight, and that we have a good exchange of information, good security at airports, and we had a congressional committee after the event that came to Amsterdam and had a look at our scanner, the scanners that were up for much debate over Thanksgiving weekend.

So international law and human rights, I think these remain a very important part of our foreign policy. As a small nation we believe in the importance of international law. We are dedicated to that. We like to call The Hague the international legal capital of the world, home to the International Court of Justice, the oldest international court in fact is in The Hague. It's an

interesting building bought by Mr. Carnegie, a beautiful palace-style building. We have the International Criminal Court in The Hague and we have several tribunals, the criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia, for example, and for Sierra Leone. So international law is important for us.

A few words about human rights. Well Pat, you said it already, I was the Ambassador-at-Large for Human Rights, and I think it was one of the most difficult jobs I have ever done, and also one of the most rewarding and at the same time frustrating. We had and still have a very active human rights program in the United Nations and also in the OSCE, the Council of Europe, but also on the ground working with NGOs and human rights defenders. We visited more than 50 countries when I was Ambassador-at-Large for Human Rights, countries as varied as Iran, Yemen, but also China, Russia, Colombia, Guatemala. Seeing how brave people are in trying to improve the situation on the ground in the different countries. But its not just finger pointing, we also try to help governments. What can we do to help strengthen your rule of law? What can we do to help train judges or prosecutors or set up a criminal justice system? I think that is something that for a country like Afghanistan we are seriously looking to see what we can do there to help improve the human rights situation. The United States Institute of Peace is here as well. They did a marvelous conference on [UN] Resolution 1325, on the role of women, not just as victims of international wars, but also the importance of involving women in finding solutions for peace and security. We have a National Action Plan, and Secretary Clinton announced that the US is also going to have a National Action Plan, and we are looking forward to working with the United States and sharing our experience.

So, we think that involving women, and speaking as a woman ambassador, it is an issue that is very close to my heart. Mary Robinson said involving women is key to sorting out problems of human rights. It is also key to trying to prevent future conflicts. And she also said, “Today’s human rights violations are the causes of tomorrow’s conflicts.” So that’s why we think it is so important to work on human rights issues. So, of course this month not only is it Pat’s birthday and Sinterklaas’s birthday, but also December 10th is International Human Rights Day so I hope you will all find a way to celebrate this and pay attention to it. One of my great inspirations and role models when I was Ambassador for Human Rights was Eleanor Roosevelt, and you may or may not know that the Roosevelts came from the Netherlands, from Zeeland. We still have the Roosevelt Foundation Four Freedoms, and one year the award for freedom is given in the United States and the other year in the Netherlands, in Zeeland. And our queen always goes for the giving of the Four Freedoms Award. Last year in 2009 Secretary Clinton got the Four Freedoms award, and with her work in human rights and women’s rights I think she was an awardee who very much deserved that. Eleanor Roosevelt was really a trail blazer, and I think her role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a really important one. We think there is a role for government in human rights, but in the end also for ourselves. Eleanor Roosevelt said it, as always, very well, and I quote, “Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world ... Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.” And I think that is also very important for us working on policy issues to keep in mind, as what you need to do also in your own environment.

So, I've tried to tell you a little bit about the drivers of our foreign policy, the history and geography of our country, the recent development that definitely have an active influence on our foreign policy. We will still remain very engaged internationally because I believe we simply have no other choice. Being the open nation and open economy that we are, we have to be internationally engaged. The new government will definitely continue that line. Economic recovery is very important and working with other nations is very important, and the United States is our key ally in that. And I can't tell you what an honor and a privilege it is for me to serve here as the Ambassador of the Netherlands to the United States. It is a very challenging assignment; you are a huge country with 50 states, so there is a lot of ground to cover. You are involved in absolutely everything that goes on in the world, as I think Wikileaks has shown. [*Laughter*.] It's a great honor and a privilege and very inspiring to be here, so thank you for your interest, I really appreciate it, and thank you for coming here. [*Applause*.]

Ms. Ellis: That was wonderful Ambassador, thank you, and she has kindly agreed to open it up to questions. I want to open it up with three topics, but I want to get to everyone, so do raise your hand.

The first one relates to the hot topic in Europe, immigration. I was just wondering if you could tell us how the situation in the Netherlands is different or similar to other European countries and how you see things changing or evolving in the policies. In Europe there is free movement from country to country, so how that might affect any new policies.

The second relates to Afghanistan. Since there is such great interest in this country, I think people would be interested in understanding why the decision was taken to withdraw from Afghanistan in terms of the mood in the country, etc.

The third question relates to what you talked about, getting your house in order and budgets. Europe is now going through a number of bailouts, and I am wondering, you talked about a new relationship with the EU even though you would continue to be supportive and how integral it is, how is this going to affect your interaction with the EU? Because there was Greece, there is Ireland, and…

Ambassador Jones-Bos: That's it! [*Laughter*.]

Ms. Ellis: Well, in any event… Please.

Ambassador Jones-Bos: As usual, very easy questions. [*Laughter*.] Henk Jan, maybe you can join me so you can say a few words as well. Maybe let's start with the immigration issue. I think very similar to a certain extent because all European countries have this issue with immigration, and all European countries are integrating large numbers of immigrants in their societies. You see problems in France, in England, in Germany, in Sweden, in Denmark. So I think there is almost no European country that is not suffering from the same problem. I think the way to tackle this may differ from country to country; we have decided to have very active integration programs. So we have decided that people who come to the Netherlands should learn to speak the Dutch language. That was not the case when people first came; we presumed that we let people alone and let people have a sort of tolerance, but you can also call it a kind of

indifference, and so now we say if you want to come to our country you have to learn the language, you have to have a basic understanding of the history, to participate in society. I think immigration policies will be stricter in order to make sure the people are in our country, out of 16.5–17 million people we have almost 1 million Muslims in the Netherlands in a relatively short period of time, which is a pretty high percentage to integrate. So I think the government has decided to work on integrating the people that are here, and be a little bit more restrictive in our immigration.

MP Henk Jan Ormel: Thank you. My name is Henk Jan Ormel, I am a member of the Dutch parliament. I would like to answer your question, but I would like to say one thing if you permit me. The Ambassador, who has been sent to the United States, is of course the best diplomat of the Netherlands, and I am very proud we have a woman who was sent to the United States. [*Applause.*] When I was invited I was little bit shy because it was a woman ambassador inviting me for a women's group, but actually there are several men here, scattered around. But I have a special feeling, always, when I am in the United States, and I know several of my fellow Dutch citizens feel the same. It comes from World War II, and I am younger than that but my father always told me stories; he saw the bombing of Rotterdam. The Netherlands was occupied by Germany, and we owe our liberation to you, to the United States. There are still American bodies lying in Dutch soil, and I can tell you that those graves are adopted by Dutch school children and they look very well after those graves and know the history behind them. So we keep our history very much alive, and we are very proud of the United States of America. And I would like to tell that to you here.

And now to the question, because we know the United States is an immigration country and I think to you it is very strange for you to hear our problems with immigration. We are a small country and from the 1960s we had a lot of laborers coming in, and they came from the Middle East. They were the lowest social classes from the Middle East and they were Muslim. We thought they would come for a few years and then go back, but they liked the Dutch welfare state and they let their wives come in. We let them come, and we didn't teach them Dutch so they stayed speaking Turkish or Moroccan, and they became more and more and more. And they are Muslims, and we have the freedom of religion of course in our constitution but our society is secularizing very much. In a secularizing society coming a group of immigrants that are active Muslims and are of the lowest social classes creates tensions. Churches are rebuilt and mosques are being built. Our culture and our identity is Christian, and we feel the tension very much. I am living in the countryside, and we don't have a problem with immigration of Muslims but still people are a little bit afraid of losing their identity, and that is the background of the fear for immigration in the Netherlands. Because it's a large group of another religion, and at the same time the Dutch are staying goodbye to their religion more and more. This is not only happening in the Netherlands, but the Netherlands is sometimes called the laboratory of Europe, so what you see there will soon be in other countries of Europe. You will look at Switzerland or at Austria or France or Germany, also becoming an issue in Germany, so it's coming up.

Ambassador Jones-Bos: Maybe on Afghanistan… do you want to start?

Mr. Ormel: Intelligent of you. [*Laughter.*] Yes, I have to take my responsibility on Afghanistan. We had the government trying to work on Afghanistan, and because, I am a member of the

Christian Democratic Party and we work together with the Socialist Party—the Labor Party is the Socialist Party—in government, and we hope to stay and the Socialists wanted to go out. And why was this? It was because we had an agreement with the government in Parliament that if we sent troops abroad, we want to know a lot from the government, as parliament. And one of the things we want to know is when is the end of the mission, and they have to say this at the beginning of the mission. And it sounds rather stupid, because the end of the mission should be if the mission in accomplished, but no we have said we want to have a date. And this date was set in two years, and then after two years we had a large discussion in parliament and said two more years and then that is the end. But it was not the end. And we, as Christian Democrats, wanted to be a reliable part of NATO, and because all of the other parts of NATO were staying we wanted to stay, but it was not popular and there were elections coming so the Labor Party said no, we have to go out. But then the government fell, there were elections, and the Christian Democrats suffered a terrible loss. Not only because of our foreign affairs policies, there were other reasons. But now we are in government again but with another group, the Liberals. And the Liberals and the Christian Democrats together want to go back to Afghanistan to take our responsibility, but, as the Ambassador told you, we now have a minority government and so we are working very hard to find some majority in parliament, and it is a totally different democratic system then in the United States. There are ten political groups, and some groups have only two seats. So we have to count and count and argue and argue, and that's what we are doing.

Ms. Ellis: What about public opinion on this issue?

Mr. Ormel: Public opinion is very negative. It's very difficult to explain to the people why we are sending troops so far away, and we have boys dying there. Why is it? Because terrorism, as the Ambassador told you, is also coming from the inside of society. It is not explicitly coming from Afghanistan. And there are some, especially left-wing politicians, and they say we are only going to Afghanistan to please the Americans. We say, no the Americans are in Afghanistan to defend our liberties, and we have to do this with me. This discussion is going on in the Netherlands, but the Dutch people don't like war, they are pacifistic. And it is rather easy because we know you are there and taking your responsiblity. So we in the parliament, we are saying we have to take our responsiblity too. As a politician I believe in representative democracy, that people can vote for you and then they can vote for me and give me the responsibility to what is best for their country. And that is not always what they like at that moment. And you can see more and more that democracy and populism is coming together and I think that is bad for democracy. And this is a change not only in the Dutch democracy, but you can see it also in the United States. The influence of mass media on politics and politics on mass media; we are getting too close to each other. And because of debt, because of the internet, because everyone can write emails everyday that are influencing me; I cannot take my own chosen role in parliament anymore. Well, I do this, but I am becoming more and more a minority, and more and more members of parliament are just doing what people like in parliament, and I think that is wrong.

Ms. Ellis: Do you want to answer the question about the bailout?

Ambassador Jones-Bos: Yes. Maybe about the euro? We are one of the stronger economies, financially, in Europe, so we were involved in the bailout first for Greece and then for Ireland, so

we were very much part of the support mechanism that has been created. We still believe that the euro is very important for our countries; we think that if the euro hadn't been there we would have been much worse off. We think there are some problems in the euro, just as there are in many parts of the world at the moment. Greece has taken big steps, they have a very fierce program to cut costs and bring their country back on track. Same as Portugal, my Portuguese colleague, oh she just sneaked out I think—and the thing with Ireland. I think there is almost like a concern of the financial world to see of these countries how long they will last and how fragile it all is, but we are determined in Europe an the eurozone to keep it all together and to do what we need to keep the euro stable. And so far we've managed that.

Ambassador Cynthia Schneider: I've heard about the foreign policy of Wilders' party, I am not very familiar with his domestic policies in the Netherlands. Is there a kind of strained coalition then between the Labor Party and his party against intervention in Afghanistan and how will that play out? And very quickly, what difference does the whole Wikileaks thing make to you and your country?

Dawn Calabia: you both raised the issue of the changing nation of the political body in the Netherlands, and also the external fears of the Muslims on changing society. I was wondering what the government was trying to do; particularly when the economy is weak, the economy looks at people to blame. And when there are assassinations, that makes people worry. So what do we do to make the institutions of democracy stronger and show people that sometimes we have to do things that have to be in a common group?

Question: I'm Joanne Young, my question is more on privacy, and the balancing of privacy with security. At least my understanding is that the Netherlands and I am referring to the woman in parliament who has been very outspoken and rallied a lot of the EU, on privacy and on not sharing information with authorities for security purposes. And I wondered if you could just comment on that balancing in the Netherlands on security and collecting data vs. privacy.

Ambassador Jones-Bos: I think for us it is about the balance between security and privacy. I think that the woman you are referring to, who was in the European parliament and is now in the Dutch parliament, and I think this is a problem in Europe. The question is what are you going to do with all that data, and how do I know the data won't be used for anything else; and do you need all the data or just…? So I think it is a debate, I think it's an important debate, and you know it came out with all the problems in the beginning of the year that were sorted out. And I think the Dutch parliament and also the European parliament had some serious questions about the massive amount of data that is collected and what is being done with it. And I think that is legitimate. And we are asked to provide all this data but we don't get it all back, and so it is a matter of give and take between the two that if one side gives a lot the other side should give a bit too. I think in Europe in general there is a more of a concern for privacy, where as here the security aspect is more important. And we do need to find a balance between the two, and we are having local delegations coming over and talking about it. I think that is the best way to do it between our parliaments, our administrations should say okay what are your questions, what guarantees can we give, what are we going to do with the data. I think it is a matter of more intense dialogue and we have started that within the last few months. And I think that leads to more understanding on both sides.

Mr. Ormel: Maybe on some other subject… Yes, Ambassador, you were asking about the Populace Party and foreign policy. The Populace Party is a very xenophobic political party, so they have in essence no foreign policy. They want to have the Netherlands out of the European Union, they don't want to send soldiers to Afghanistan, they are very anti-Islamic. So I ask many times if you want to fight the terrorists we can do in Afghanistan and do it in your backyard, but still they don't want the soldiers there, they want to go out of the euro as soon as possible. So it is a losing policy.

Ambassador Jones-Bos: He, as a politician, can say that kind of thing. [*Laughter*.]

Mr. Ormel: Yes, I am a politician so… it is rather difficult because we have a minority government of the Liberals and Christian Democrats, so we have the support of this Populace group. So, for Afghanistan, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats want to go to Afghanistan, but we don't have the support of the Socialists, we don't have the support of the Populists, so we have to look to other political parties.

The Wikileaks—it's the talk of the town in the Netherlands. [*Laughter*.] I think, in a way—well I am here in Washington for the NATO assembly, and we are talking about new strategic concepts and threats. And one of the new threats is cyber attack, and I think Wikileaks is a cyber attack. It is having enormous risks for the whole world. You can see the reactions, for example in the Middle East, such as what the Saudi King said about it, it's like a snake and we should have it handled. And I think it's also bad for the whole relations of the Middle East. What they said about the Russian government—the Russians say it doesn't matter very much, but I think they are very angry. So it will change a lot, and I think we all need to learn from this. All diplomats are sending messages to their governments, and so maybe we have to find other forms than using the internet. We all have to learn from this. It does not change anything in the bilateral relations between the Netherlands and the United States, but maybe that is because there are no leakages from the American Embassy in The Hague, but we are very confident on that.

Ambassador Jones-Bos: And I think we have a pretty robust relationship, so I think countries with a robust foreign policy or relationship can take a few bumps that you might not like so much. But I can imagine for more sensitive foreign relationships it's a real problem

Ms. Ellis: So, very quickly, we have time for a couple more questions, but they have to be brief, and only from people who have not asked questions before please. Could you please identify yourself too.

Question: My name is [Ambassador] Sally Cowal, I am from Population Services International. Thank you very much for a very interesting presentation. I wondered if either or both of you might comment on your relations with Suriname and what you see happening with Suriname.

Question: Could you comment on climate change?

Question: I would like to hear your comments on how diplomacy has changed. I think we are hearing some of this because of the Wikileaks, but also I am not so sure there is foreign policy

anymore, as everything is so interlinked with domestic policy. So I would be interested to hear your comments of that.

Question: My name is Matthew Stewart, I am a student at American University. Thank you for having me. I just wanted to ask a question based on something you said earlier that struck me; you said we need to be starting in the home, in private spheres of culture especially in regards to women's issues. I am interested to hear your thoughts on how we translate what is done domestically and internationally into the private sphere or into how private citizens make decisions on these issues at large.

Ambassador Jones-Bos: Okay, I will start with the last two. I think diplomacy has changed tremendously, even from when I started just over 25 years ago 'til now. Then you had only government to government relations, you had complicated machines to codify your messages by hand, you were the only source of information about what was happening in a country. And of course that has totally changed. You are not the only source now, it is hard to keep up with the media. Because of the massive amounts of information we have now, it is even more important to see the meaning in it. From all of what is happening, why does it matter to the Netherlands and what matters to the Netherlands? There is much more of a role of defining key issues and trying to find the developments of our foreign policy goals. So, I think that's one.

Then, you communicate with so many more people than you did in the past. Government to government relations is one thing, but we communicate with civil society organizations, with the business community, with individuals, with artists. You have so many more links with all parts of society, with cities and provinces on the state level. So it is much more than a government to government type of job, you are the facilitator and the strategist. You are the government to government link but also the facilitator between all different players that you think might be interested in certain developments for the Netherlands. And I think Katrina is an example; 20 years ago diplomats would not be dealing with water issues. But now it's a really important issue, one because of climate change. Water and the rising level of the sea is a big issue, so there is a policy level to that. But there is also the practical level of what do you do, what kind of plans do you make in your own country to cope with that rising sea level, how can you help other communities, what role does your business community play in all that, and how do you connect research and universities into that. So it is much more multilayered and much more complex, and much more related to what is happening in your own country.

And that is the other part, I think before foreign policy was often abstract. It is now so totally integrated: climate, security, defense, economics. It is all so interlinked, so I think lastly it has made a big change to the role of the minister of foreign affairs. We all have so much, I sometimes hardly see my colleagues. Canada is good example, we have so much in common in the way we approach foreign policy and also domestic issues. My sister is married to a Canadian so I have a very warm spot for Canadians anyway. [*Laughter.*] But, in the old days you would see lots of other ambassadors, but now I hardly have times to see my colleagues because you are dealing with the American community at large, have dinners for Dutch businesses, you go to help on the Hill to see if you can do something to better the Dutch interests here, or you work with the financial sector, or you help Dutch farmers who have difficulties here, or you work on consular issues. So it is very interlinked with domestic issues. I am very happy that before

coming here I was posted in the Netherlands so that I know a lot of people there, I feel very rooted there; I know a lot of people in the foreign ministry, in the bureaucracies, in the political parties, and in the NGOs. If you don't have that I don't think you can do your work as an ambassador anymore. In the old days where you could go from country to country and be involved in high-level political changes and drinking champagne… [*Laughter*.] I wish there could be a bit more of that, but it is hard work with all different kinds of activities of society than just meetings with other diplomats. We very occasionally do something with colleagues and it's very nice to have them and see something of them once in a while.

Mr. Ormel: There is one subject left, that's Suriname. Suriname is a former colony of the Netherlands, and I think that as a member of the parliament who was colonizing other countries, I have to be very backward in saying a lot of things about such a country. Almost half the population is living in the Netherlands. There are enormous ties between Suriname and the Netherlands, with many people going back and forth. The political situation in Suriname at the moment is that there was a president elected who was sentenced for jail in the Netherlands because of tax crimes. And because he is a president, he has immunity, so it is impossible for us to put him in jail. But as soon as he is not a president anymore and he is visiting the Netherlands, he will be put in jail. So that makes the situation a little tense on the diplomatic side. [*Laughter*.] I think the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Suriname is drinking a lot of champagne, because he will not see the president much. [*Laughter*.] This is a difficult situation, but on the people to people level there is a lot of contact between the Suriname people and the Dutch people. We are good friends and doing a lot together, on the non-state, NGO level there is a lot of contact, but on the state level it is bit more cool right now.

Ms. Ellis: So we have come to the end of an absolutely wonderful evening. I just want to thank the Ambassador so much, and thank her colleague from parliament. We are so glad you could join us. [*Applause*.] Thank you all for your great questions, and very happy holidays to everyone.