

## **Fête Nationale 2017 : discours du 22 juin 2017**

Excellencies, Ladies, Gentlemen....

It feels good to see so many friends of Luxembourg here in our garden....

*Samen met al mijn medewerkers is het mij een genoegen u hier in de tuin van het Luxemburgse huis in Den Haag te verwelkomen, ter gelegenheid van onze Nationale Feestdag,*

the day of Luxembourg and all Luxembourgers, on which we celebrate the official birthday of our Head of State, Grand Duke Henri....,and together with us will celebrate some 2250 accepted asylum seekers, whereof some 557 have relocated from Greece and Italy, and some 345 newly accepted so far for this year 2017 alone.

Luxembourg is doing well. And this evening when Luxembourg is celebrating in the streets, and tomorrow when the official celebrations are taking place, there will of course be gratitude that things are going fine,... inside Luxembourg's borders. But we know for many generations that we can only prosper when our neighbours and all members of the European Union are doing so, as well as our international partners.

Last evening the Luxembourg Prime Minister, together with some of his European colleagues were the guests of Prime Minister Rutte, presently presiding over the Benelux, to reflect on the present challenges to Europe, ahead of the European Council in Brussels today and tomorrow. Over the last few years Benelux cooperation has considerably intensified, and personally I am happy and proud to have been part of that development to strengthen together our European resolve.

*2017 is een speciaal jaar voor ons. Zo werd vorige maand de 150ste verjaardag van het Verdrag van Londen van 1867 gevierd, welke er niet alleen in slaagde een nieuwe Europese oorlog te voorkomen – dit keer over het kleine grondgebied van Luxemburg – maar op dat moment door een brede Europese steun voor een neutrale status van Luxemburg te verzekeren, legde het Verdrag ook de basis voor de ontwikkeling van Luxemburg in een moderne samenleving, ondersteund door een open, handels- en investeringsvriendelijke economische ruimte, verwoven met zijn onmiddellijke burens en in staat om zijn bevoorrechte banden met Nederland te behouden voor nog een kwart eeuw.*

2017 is a special year for us, as last month we celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1867 Treaty of London, which not only succeeded in avoiding another European war, this time about the small territory of Luxembourg, and by ensuring a large European support for Luxembourg's status of neutrality at that time, has also laid the foundation for Luxembourg's development into a modern society, supported by an open, trade- and investment friendly economic space, intertwined with its immediate neighbours, while at the same time keeping its privileged links to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for another quarter century.

So we know from past and present experience that our destiny is the Europe of the Union, our second fatherland, and on this day of national celebration we also renew our commitment to its promise: peace, stability and prosperity for future generations on our continent.

Exactly one year ago we were saddened by the verdict of the Brexit referendum of 23<sup>rd</sup> of June.

We continue to deplore ongoing centrifugal tendencies, and on this very day the Luxembourgers have one major wish: to stay united on our continent. And we feel comforted that since, majorities of citizens in many member countries have expressed their support for our common European project.

Allow me now to say a few more personal words, of gratitude and recognition to our host country, the Netherlands for having been such a welcoming and pleasant adoptive home country for my wife, our daughter Klara and myself. A stay that has been longer than the 'diplomatic average', but nevertheless went by too fast.

*Sta me toe nu nog een paar persoonlijke woorden van dankbaarheid en erkenning te zeggen aan ons gastland Nederland, dat zo'n vriendelijk en aangenaam adoptief thuisland was voor mijn vrouw, onze dochter Klara en mijzelf. Een verblijf dat langer was dan het 'diplomatieke gemiddelde', maar dat desalniettemin te snel voorbij is gegaan*

We enjoyed living and working in a cooperative European and international environment, and we will miss all the officials, colleagues and friends, as well as the always friendly and supportive Dutch citizens we had the privilege to meet when travelling around the cities and the countryside in the provinces. We will take along many warm and wonderful memories to our next destination, and we want to thank you all for that.

And I want to most warmly thank all my collaborators for their often outstanding support, their intelligent forgiveness, and remarkable dedication during those five intensive years.

Luxembourg and The Netherlands are not only close, we are cousins and therefore family: and in proof of this close relation I am very honoured this evening that the Woodwind Quintet of the Royal Dutch Military Orchestra 'Johan Willem Friso' will play for us in a moment. First they will perform the Luxembourg and Dutch National Anthems, and later the Luxembourg version of the Wilhelmus, a related anthem of both our monarchies, as well as the European Hymn.

Later on in the evening, the Luxembourg group 'Joint Venture Percussion' by young musicians living and studying here in the Netherlands will play for us.

Before that, however, I would like to recognize M Edmond Simon, Director of the BOIP, the Benelux Office of Intellectual Property here in The Hague, and thank him for his remarkable contribution to the development of this very successful Benelux institution. In recognition thereof HRH the Grand Duke of Luxembourg together with the Luxembourg government decided to honour M Simon and nominate him Commander in the Order of the Oak Crown! With my personal warmest congratulations !

And now, finally, (thank you for your patience), I wish you all a good time in the Luxembourg garden in The Hague. Thank you all for your friendship.

*Laten we nu naar Luxemburgse traditie proosten / And now let me pronounce the traditional toast on our national day: Vive Lëtzebuerg, Vive de Grand-Duc! and following the century-old Luxembourg-Dutch friendship: Vive Koning Willem Alexander!*

Thank you.