



Dames en Heren, Musiek liefhebbers and Jazzvrienden, en Fans en Ondersteuners van de Benelux !

Luxembourg, the present EU presidency will be handing this European task over to the Netherlands in a month from now, and at the same time Luxembourg will follow Belgium in the seat of the year-long Benelux presidency starting 2016.

Allow me to mention tonight **but one** major Benelux and European achievement that is close to our hart.

Never should we get tired to warn of the risks to the vital Peace Project of the European Union in the context of the present ongoing debate on migration and refugee policies. Short-sighted national interests threaten to short-circuit common collective European solutions and decision processes. It would be fatal to try to hide before this crisis and the terrorist threats in retiring behind national borders and returning to stale traditional and old-fashioned patterns of behaviour.

Benelux is well alive and active, and is at its best when it is relying on pragmatic, goal-oriented cooperation between our three countries. A recipe which we have successfully applied often in the past, since 1944 in fact, first as a fore-runner to the larger European project, then as a laboratory for improving, simplifying or making safer cross-borders activities of our citizens. Not the least one being the Schengen initiative, today an area of free-movement cooperation that is a priority of the Luxembourg EU presidency.

The same as Benelux is more than the simple sum of its components, the same holds true for the group of musicians of our three countries that tonight are playing together in Jazz band formation.

My colleagues here, our own small quartett, - the Secretary general of the Benelux Secretariat, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium and the Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and myself are proud to introduce to you the Anna Figarova Sextett.

Enjoy with us in a moment Jazz with a distinct Benelux sound, and please join us later at the after-concert reception.

Thank you.