

# **Speech by King Willem-Alexander at the state banquet on the occasion of the state visit by President Yoon Suk Yeol of the Republic of Korea, Royal Palace, Amsterdam**

Speech | 12-12-2023

Mr President,

It is my honour to welcome you and your spouse to the Royal Palace in Amsterdam.

Or, in proper Korean:

환영합니다

The Queen and I are delighted to welcome you as our guests. Your visit underlines the excellent relationship between our countries.

For many people in the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea is no longer a far-off, unknown land. In fact, it seems like a 'Korean wave' is taking over our country. The Republic of Korea is everywhere!

There's K-pop on the radio.

K-movies in the cinema.

K-dramas on Netflix.

And K-food in the supermarket. These days we're eating kimchi instead of cauliflower!

We're driving KIAs and following K-vloggers on YouTube.

And K-beauty is the new ideal that many aspire to.

A country that inspires so much interest must be something special.

The first Dutch person to notice this was Hendrick Hamel. He washed up on your coast following a shipwreck 370 years ago, together with the crew of De Sperwer. He described his fascinating adventures in his journal. What a country! Densely populated and fertile. Well organised. Welcoming. A country in which study and science are highly respected.

We see all of these characteristics in the modern-day Republic of Korea, too.

In one respect, Hamel's experience differs greatly from the current situation. Korea in 1653 was reluctant to engage with the wider world. Afraid of being discovered by other countries.

Happily, that self-imposed isolation is a thing of the past. Nowadays, I'm delighted to say, the Republic of Korea is a self-assured nation, proud of its place on the world stage.

Your country's strong, open attitude is of great value. We welcome your commitment to the international legal order. Together, we are defending a trade system based on fair rules. And we support your efforts to enhance stability in your region and in the world.

Your personal leadership is at the heart of these achievements. Without forgetting the past, you are building bridges to the future. This is exactly what the world needs, and it's what motivates us too!

In many places around the world we're seeing the devastating consequences of aggression and abuse of power, and the human suffering it causes. For us it is important to have a reliable partner like you, who is committed to working with us to foster peace, security and development.

We stood side-by-side 70 years ago, when Dutch blood was shed for the freedom and independence of the modern Republic of Korea. Tomorrow we will be meeting some people who were there. People who are still proud to call themselves Korea veterans. The ties established then continue to connect us now.

After the war, your country underwent an astonishing transformation from one of the poorest countries in the world to one of the richest. From a recipient of development aid, to a major donor. And it did so in just three generations. Your economy is flying high, driven by technology and innovation. The engine of this success is a dynamic mix of ambition, talent and drive. South Koreans work hard.

Fortunately, there are plenty of cultural highlights that people can enjoy in their downtime. We are proud of maestro Jaap van Zweden, for example, the new Music Director of Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. And sport! I only need to mention the name Guus Hiddink to remind everyone here of how sport can inspire us.

A Korean setting can also inspire Dutch athletes to excel, as the Queen and I witnessed in PyeongChang in 2018.

Mr President, your visit to our country is a wonderful opportunity for us to deepen our excellent relations across the board. Technology occupies a central place in this regard. We saw this today, too, during our visit to ASML. But our strategic partnership goes beyond semiconductor equipment and computer chips. We are sharing brain power and joining forces in many areas, including agriculture, architecture, security, sustainable energy and the fight against climate change.

In an unstable world we need to hold on to each other and help each other. I am thankful that your visit is reinforcing

the special bond between our countries. Thank you, on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands:

감사합니다

Please would you all join me in raising a glass.

To your health, Mr President, and the health of your spouse.

And to our partnership and friendship.