

Speech by Dr. Bernard Bot
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Europe and Japan: Sharing a Past, Shaping the Future

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Japan Institute of International Affairs

Tokyo, 8 April 2005

(Introduction)

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to be speaking at this prestigious institute today about the relationship between Europe and Japan. I wish to extend my sincerest thanks to President Sato and Executive Director Matsumoto for their invitation. I am delighted that the Japanese ambassador to the Netherlands, Mr Komachi, has come all the way from The Hague to attend this event today. I would also like to thank the former Japanese ambassador to the Netherlands, Mr Koike, for joining us.

(Ties that bind / bilateral)

2. Next week, the Dutch pavilion at EXPO 2005 in Aichi will celebrate the anniversary of the landing of the first Dutch ship in Japan, 405 years ago. That ship was called *De Liefde*, which, as you may know, means “love”, or, in its biblical sense, “charity”.
3. After *De Liefde* landed on the Kyushu seaboard, the first contacts between the Dutch crew and the shogun marked the beginning of very productive relations between the Netherlands and Japan. I cannot think of better proof of the Japanese saying that a merchant’s happiness depends on chance, winds and waves.
4. Soon afterwards, Dutch merchants settled on Hirado, and from 1639 onwards on Deshima, which was Japan’s gateway to Europe for many years. Deshima was also Europe’s gateway to Japan. It served as a focal point in both trade relations and the exchange of knowledge about science, culture and industrial development.
5. But even in those days, our relationship was based on more than just chance, winds and waves. It also depended on mutual respect and on what I would call “fair play”. There were clear rules and both the Japanese and the Dutch played by those rules, out of enlightened self-interest and out of respect for each other’s interests and principles.
6. Now, more than four centuries later, the Netherlands is still Japan’s gateway to Europe. Over 6 billion euros worth of Japanese products are imported every year via the port of Rotterdam and Schiphol airport. Many are then exported on to other parts

of Europe's internal market. The role of Japanese culture in Dutch daily life is a prominent one, going well beyond our love of sushi. Japanese schools are flourishing, and Japanese businesses are active supporters of Dutch civil society. [*And my speechwriter has asked me not to forget the important contribution Shinji Ono is making to his favourite football team.*] (In leesversie aanpassen)]

7. More than 350 of your country's companies have head offices or distribution centres in the Netherlands, giving a major boost to the Dutch economy and job market. In recent years, foreign investment between our two countries has grown, promoting the health of trade figures in Japan and the Netherlands.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. To be sure, since the days of Deshima we have also had our differences, to say the least. In 2000, the government of the Netherlands voiced its appreciation for the Japanese government's words of remorse and apology on the subject of Dutch war victims. We must remain mindful of our shared history in all its aspects, its bright and prosperous moments as well as its darker ones. And we must go on building an ever stronger relationship.
9. Indeed, we must face the future, without delay, for the world is confronted with serious transnational challenges. They require collective responses. Which brings me back to "fair play" – and to its opposite, the "great game".

(Fair Play versus the Great Game)

10. The project of European integration is built on fair play – it seeks to merge different national interests into one common interest that serves all the member states. It is, moreover, a successful model that has brought Europe unprecedented security, stability and prosperity. It is important for Europeans to promote this model outside Europe's borders as well, for both moral and practical reasons. After all, the greatest threats to Europe and its friends have no regard for borders. So they must be tackled by a united international community. Those threats are climate change and energy scarcity, scarcity of clean water, global terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Clearly, they make all national, cultural and ethnic boundaries irrelevant. Only by working together can we tackle them successfully.

11. In view of these challenges, fair play is far preferable to the alternative: a new Great Game. By “Great Game”, I mean a competition between different parts of the world over access to energy sources, scarce raw materials or clean water. A competition that would be self-defeating. It would drive oil and gas prices to unnecessary heights, jeopardise logistical networks, make net consumers unduly dependent on net producers and undermine progress in developing sustainable energy technologies. Ultimately, mankind as a whole could lose the battle against climate change. A recent UN report warned that we already risk destroying numerous ecosystems in the sea and on land forever.
12. Against this background, I believe that in our regular dialogue we should place a greater emphasis on sustainable development and intelligent energy policies. Together, we should intensify our efforts to be more economical in our consumption, diversify our energy portfolios and expand the role of renewable energy sources.
13. Certainly, it is always tempting for us to act in our short-term self-interest, but in the twenty-first century, *Realpolitik* means steering clear of the-winner-takes-all principle and instead focusing on win-win situations. We - Europeans, Japanese, Americans, Russians and others, will all benefit from trying to reconcile our own interests with those of others. Or, as the French philosopher Voltaire once said: “He who is good for himself alone is good for nothing.”¹

(Crisis management / Iraq)

14. A country that aspires to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council must be a trustworthy pillar of the multilateral system. Japan, of course, understands this full well, as is demonstrated by its increased willingness to take on responsibility for crisis management and post-conflict state-building. This country’s support for the developing world is also impressive, although Japan still has a long way to go before it reaches the agreed ODA level of 0.7 per cent of GDP. (My own country spends 0.8 per cent of its GDP on ODA.)

¹ “C’est n’être bon à rien de n’être bon qu’ à soi.” (Voltaire: *Discours VII*)

15. The Netherlands believes there is a need for an effective multilateral system. And we believe that to be effective, the multilateral system requires the input of countries like Japan.
16. Japan's role in addressing the North Korea question is a case in point. It is also a good example of much-needed regional cooperation in Asia.
17. Another fine illustration of Japan's growing international outlook was its decision to engage its Self-Defence Forces in Iraq, which showed great vision and courage. The Netherlands could not have hoped for a better partner on its mission in the southern Iraqi province of al-Muthanna, and is proud to have worked together with Japan to such good effect.
18. The present situation in al-Muthanna inspires a good deal of optimism about the future of the Iraqis there. It is the most stable region in the whole of Iraq, and its local councils have made great strides down the road of democratisation. Our troops have also supported the establishment of a reliable Iraqi police force and other security services.
19. Last month the Dutch troops in al-Muthanna handed over their responsibilities to British forces. The Netherlands greatly respects Japan's decision to lengthen the stay of its troops in Iraq and is convinced that Japan is making a real contribution to Iraq's development, one which will have tangible results.
20. Similarly, the Netherlands is maintaining and even increasing its commitment in Afghanistan, in both ISAF and Enduring Freedom.

(UN reform)

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. I realise that you expect me to give you the Dutch view on reform of the United Nations and Japan's bid for permanent membership of the Security Council. Let me stress right away that in the upcoming negotiations on UN reform, and in particular on the allotment of seats in the Security Council, fair play by all parties will be an indispensable requirement for success.

22. For the Netherlands, strengthening the legitimacy of the Security Council is of prime importance. However, in expanding the Security Council we must not undermine its effectiveness. Therefore, we agree with the High Level Panel report that new members should not be granted veto powers. The High Level Panel report rightly attaches importance to criteria such as military, financial and political contributions by member states. With that in mind, we are disappointed that the current models do not take sufficient account of these criteria. As a result, actively engaged “pocket-sized medium powers”, like the Netherlands, have poor prospects of a temporary seat. The Netherlands, together with like-minded countries, is exploring alternatives that could solve this problem.
23. We feel that a compromise can be found by combining an enlargement of the Security Council with the introduction of a review clause. In other words, new permanent memberships should be subject to review, perhaps after ten years. We believe that this idea could form the basis of a global consensus between countries that wish to become permanent members, along with their supporters, and countries that oppose adding new permanent members to the Council. This approach would also ensure that new permanent members will live up to the financial, political and military responsibilities that come with the position.
24. I know that Japan is ready to take on those responsibilities. If we expand the Security Council, we hope that Japan will help to build a compromise along the lines I have just sketched. In that situation, we would consider Japan a logical candidate for permanent membership of the Security Council. We hope that these issues will be resolved well before the summit in September.
25. Closer to home, the Netherlands also favours a joint European seat on the Security Council – possibly preceded by a German seat with a tangible European dimension. That brings me to the need for a coherent European voice on the global stage.

(Europe’s external policy)

26. One of the key lessons we have learned from more than fifty years of European integration is that we can achieve unity without giving up diversity. Increasingly, every individual EU member state – from the smallest to the largest – depends on the European Union to be heard on the global stage. It is by singing from the same song

sheet that we Europeans make our voices heard loud and clear. Europe's powers of persuasion are the product of European unity.

27. I should add that unity does not replace the individual voices of the member states. True, some would say there is a zero-sum choice between national solo performances and European close harmony. But they have forgotten about Johann Sebastian Bach. His music shows that individual voices, even when singing completely different musical lines, can produce beautiful harmonies. Europeans do not have to replace their national foreign policies with a single European foreign policy; we must simply make sure that we use our national strengths to reinforce the European message. This will give us a truly global audience. As a Japanese proverb rightly says: a single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle.
28. The new constitution will make it possible for Europe's voice to ring out more clearly in the United States, China, India, Russia, and, of course, in your country. It creates a European Minister of Foreign Affairs, the director of the European choir, supported by an independent staff of diplomats.

Ladies and gentlemen,

29. As you know, the Netherlands is one of the founding fathers of the European Union, along with Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and Luxembourg. Those six states shared a vision of Europe's future, in which cooperation put an end to armed conflict and pooled sovereignty triumphed over discord. Our countries were prepared to make sacrifices so their vision could become a reality. Like a magnet, the European project attracted many other states. That is only natural, given that in the final analysis everybody wants to be on the "right side of history".
30. Europeans are now facing a new choice. Again, the question is whether we will be on the right side of history. Will we or will we not ratify the draft European constitution? The Dutch will be asked to show their support for the new constitution in a referendum on the first of June. It will be the first referendum in my country since 1815. I hope the answer will be "yes".
31. Our European house is in urgent need of renovation if it is to successfully accommodate the latest round of enlargement and future rounds. The Convention

and the governments of Europe have come up with a new design. Now we need the Union's citizens to endorse it, through referendums and their national parliaments.

32. I stress the importance of the new constitution because it can help the EU solve a paradox it now faces. The greater the number of member states, the greater the need to speak with one voice, but the more difficult it is in practice. Almost a year ago, ten new members joined the European Union, ending the Communist era and the artificial partition of Europe for good. It was as if a frozen river came back to life under a warm spring sun, finally resuming its natural course.
33. We now have a family of twenty-five EU member states sleeping under one institutional roof. And even the current borders of the European Union are not final. Bulgaria and Romania are expected to join in 2007. Croatia too is a candidate for membership, provided it cooperates fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. During the Dutch EU presidency, from July to December 2004, we also agreed to start negotiations with Turkey. Those negotiations will be tough, and they will take time, but the European Union has now offered the clear prospect of membership.
34. Because of its enlargement, not in spite of it, the European Union will be compelled to look beyond its borders. Our concern with internal aspects of integration between European countries will need to make way for a broad geopolitical perspective. The game we are playing is growing more complex. And it is no longer limited by Europe's boundaries; we are now facing a global playing field. To play constructively on that field, we need reliable friends like Japan. Friends who are willing to abide by the rules of fair play. Friends who know that a sacrifice for the common good, for a clear and achievable purpose, benefits even the country that makes the sacrifice.
35. Envisage the European Union with Turkey as a member. It borders on Syria, Iraq, Armenia and the Caucasus. The Broader Middle East is its next-door neighbour. In this new neighbourhood, there are many risks, ranging from regional conflicts and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to some of the main sources of terrorism. But there are also many opportunities. Bordering on the Middle East would put the EU in an excellent position to strengthen the political, economic and cultural bridges to the region.

36. One important element of this approach is the new European security strategy, which identifies terrorism, proliferation, organised crime, regional tensions and failed states as major threats to international stability. To address these problems, we need to make extensive use of our full range of diplomatic instruments, whether in the domain of politics, the military, trade or development. We must use force only to protect and strengthen the international order, and only if the rules of that order allow it. Our strategy is to avoid clashes, while seeking dialogue. The EU understands that preventing crises requires early, rapid and sometimes robust measures. To make these elements of its security doctrine viable, the EU wants to further develop its strategic partnerships with Japan and other partners.
37. As I said, fair play must be practised from a position of strength. Europe is working hard to enhance not only its political unity, but its military capabilities as well. The European Union has created European battle groups that can be deployed rapidly under either NATO or EU command. Last week I proposed the introduction of vanguard groups within NATO. Under clearly established conditions, allies would be allowed to create these vanguard groups: smaller groups of NATO members engaging in closer cooperation in areas like capacity building, civil protection and certain military operations.

(Conclusion)

Ladies and gentlemen,

38. There is another Japanese saying: “Vision without action is a daydream, but action without vision is a nightmare.” This captures the point I have tried to make here today. Countries like the Netherlands and Japan, which have demonstrated their willingness to actively promote freedom, democracy and free trade, must abide by clear rules to make their vision a reality. By being strategic partners and adhering to an international code of fair play, the EU and Japan must help to avoid a global Great Game, and instead leave a better world for our children and grandchildren.
39. Europe and Japan face the common challenge of a geopolitical approach that is both effective and legitimate. Let us therefore go on exchanging our products, our knowledge and our wisdom. Let us continue what we began four centuries ago. Let us work together to advance our common interests. A famous Dutch author once spoke of the “enigma of Japanese power”. He was only partly right. Japan is a major

world power, but it is not an enigma. Japan is a trusted friend – with a very open and visible presence in the Netherlands and Europe. And I sincerely hope it stays that way.

Thank you.