

Remarks by Former Minister Dr. Bernard Bot

Tree planting Wassenaar 23 September 2020

Mr. Mayor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Just like Joty ter Kulve, enthusiastically supported by Monica Bouman, who took the very timely initiative to plant three freedom trees, and just like many others present here today, I feel very much connected with Indonesia. I was born there and spent part of my youth in Batavia during a period of profound change and upheaval. In a certain way, I can even say that I was present at the creation on August 17, 1945 albeit as a young boy.

Our relationship with Indonesia in the meantime has grown into a mature one, strongly anchored in past and recent history. And even more important, it remains a dynamic and ever developing relationship.

As a symbol of these developments, I therefore welcome full-heartedly the initiative taken by Joty and Monica to plant today three freedom trees with the very appropriate motto: "Three freedom trees which show people the road towards the future."

My Indonesian friends sometimes tell me that, as a young nation, they are more forward looking while we, Dutch, are sometimes too much backward looking. The beauty and the value of this initiative lies precisely in the fact that here these two characteristics merge in a symbolic but natural way. The three trees remind us both of our shared history and of the roles played by the United Nations, Netherlands, Indonesia over the past 75 years, at the same time constructively pointing to new avenues towards the future.

Every relationship requires constant care and attention. These trees remind us of the importance of working optimistically at improving that relationship and making it grow. Especially the younger generation should regularly be reminded of the importance of maintaining a warm and forward-looking relationship with Indonesia, lest we forget what it took to reach this stage.

Thank you
