

Excellencies, dear colleagues, dear friends

I don't intend to bother you with a long speech, I just want to thank all of you to be among us and to share with us the commemoration of this important date for my country, that of the first of November, which, as many of you may know, is not the independence day of Algeria, but the date without which the independence of the country would not have been possible.

It is indeed the first of November 1954 that the Algerian people decided to take in hand its fate and to turn over the darkest page of its long history; that of 132 years of colonization, domination, oppression and acculturation.

It is the day on which the Algerian people decided to make all sacrifices, including the ultimate sacrifice, the self-giving, in order to achieve its aspiration to freedom, dignity and justice. Almost one million and a half martyrs was the price of this freedom. More than an armed uprising, the war of liberation that has begun that day was a real revolution against the colonial system, a revolution that shaped the personality of the Algerian people and forged its values and principles, which guided its moving forward.

You will easily agree that we have good reasons to be proud in Algeria of courage, self-denial and self-giving of these martyrs. Paying tribute to them is the least of the acknowledgments from our nation and I thank you for sharing with us this tribute.

But beyond the martyrs and the suffering of war, there is one aspect that always concerns me and that I like to share. Do you now that at the independence of Algeria after 132 years of colonization, less than five hundred Algerian have had the chance to reach the University.

Far from any quest of victimization, it is not in the style of the Algeria and thanks to God, there is over one million students in the 48 universities that exists today in Algeria.

That's to say that those who want to understand Africa, they have to keep in mind these. It does not justify every things, but it explains a lot of things. It should, in any case, moderate value judgments and sanctimonious speeches we hear here and there.

And while speaking about Africa, from Netherland, allow to say few words in testimony of what I know about the full implication of the Netherlands, and especially of HEMr. Koenders in the quest of peace and stability in Mali and in the Sahel Region.

Mr. Koenders brought, thanks to his personal commitment and high qualities, a decisive contribution in the implementation and the deployment of the MINUSMA, and thus to the stabilization of the situation in Mali, in a particularly complex and difficult context. In this vein, the Netherlands supplied a significant assistance through military staff and logistics, mainly air assets, with the provision of helicopters, a contribution that was so precious for the realization of the objectives of peace.

Algeria and the Netherlands decided to build on this friendly and sincere cooperation in favor of the peace in Mali and the Sahel region, in order to undertake a re-energization of the bilateral relations

Within two years, Minister LAMAMRA, the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Koenders, have met four times and we see the visits to Algiers of Mrs Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and Mr. Henk KAMP, Minister of Economic Affairs

This means that these relations have never been better than today. I should be more prudent while stating this because history sometimes reserve us some surprises. And you will be surprised by what Mr. Tutuncu will reveal to us.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, dear friends, dear guests

As it the first time I am organizing this ceremony here in the Hague, I thought it necessary to say a few words, just to thank all of you to be among us and to share with us the commemoration of this important date for my country, that of the first of November, which , as many of you may know, is not the independence day of Algeria, but the date without which the independence of the country would not have been possible.