



## Toespraak

Kort woordje van prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer, tijdens de receptie ter ere van het Chinees Nieuwjaar

*datum 24 januari 2020*

Honourable Ambassador,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Xin nián kuài lè! Or: Happy New Year!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here today to celebrate the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar, also known as the Spring Festival, and I would like to thank the honourable Ambassador, Mr. Xu Hong, for organizing this event.

The Chinese New Year actually starts tomorrow and I know that there will be lots of celebrations here in The Hague and also in other cities across the country. I know that for Chinese people, it is also a time to be home with family. A time of cooking, drinking and eating together. A time to have some quality time with your loved ones, which is of course very important.

This year will be different since – as we know now – eight cities in China have been closed from the outside world. The people living there cannot travel to their families living elsewhere, and other families will be mourning the loss of their relatives. What will happen with regard to the health situation is very uncertain as more people are affected each day by the virus. I'd like you to know that we are thinking of your country and hoping that the virus will be contained as soon as possible.

According to the Chinese zodiac, tomorrow will be the start of the Year of the Rat. Chinese astrology learns us that people born in a Year of the Rat are clever and quick thinkers. Optimistic and energetic, but also satisfied with living a quiet and peaceful life. People from roughly the years 1948, 1960, 1972 and 1984 were also born in the Year of the Rat, so I am sure that some of you here must recognize themselves in these characteristics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that this new year will bring prosperity, health and fortune, for you personally, but also with regard to world politics. We all know that there are a lot of important events coming up this year, starting very soon with Brexit probably on the 31st of January. In November, the United States will elect a new President, while at this moment we are waiting for the outcome of the impeachment procedure in the US Senate. And in the Netherlands, we celebrate 75 years of freedom, after our country was liberated from Nazi repression in May 1945.

I hope that peace and freedom will also be achieved in the Middle East, in Africa and in many other regions in the world, where conflict and instability have been dominant factors for far too long. And above all I hope that the international community will be able to work together to find common solutions for the many common challenges we face in this world today. Mr. Ambassador, thank you once again for this opportunity. I am sure we will have a wonderful afternoon.

Thank you.