

SPEECH AMBASSADOR HERRERA 28TH OF JULY

Excellencies, friends and fellow Peruvians,

I profoundly want to thank every single one of you for joining us today, in spite of the holiday season, in order to celebrate another year of our country's republican life. This is a special year for Peruvians. It is the first one of a new government which started on 28 July 2016. And it had to face many challenges.

I am thinking, particularly, on the "Coastal Niño" phenomenon, which struck our country at the beginning of this year. The Netherlands offered its vast experience in water management to help our country in the efforts of reconstruction. The Special Envoy of the Netherlands for Water Affairs, Mr. Henk Ovink, visited Peru and met our president and high-ranking officials as part of this process. We are certain that Peru, together with the collaboration of the Netherlands and other friends, can move forward on the Government's policy of "reconstruction with change".

The People of the Netherlands and Peruvians living in this country have also expressed their solidarity. As a result, the account that the Peruvian Consulate in Amsterdam set up for fund raising reached close to sixteen thousand euros which were sent to Peru for helping those ones in need.

This is not the only event that has shown the Peruvian-Dutch friendship in the past year. We celebrated twenty years of the twinning between the Dutch city of Amstelveen and the Peruvian district of Villa El Salvador. In this occasion, I had the honour to inaugurate, together with the mayors of both cities the sculpture "Embryo" from the renowned Peruvian contemporary artist Iliana Scheggia, which was placed in such a significant occasion as a lasting symbol of the friendship between the people of both countries. You will see this sculpture in a picture in the goodie bag that you will get when you are leaving, but obviously I also invite you to see it in front of the Municipality of Amstelveen.

We also had the visit of nine Mayors of rural areas within the framework of the program "Sierra Exportadora". They visited the port of Rotterdam, numerous business, the Dutch Municipalities Association and a sustainable cheese farm.

Rotterdam will also be, by the way, and in a few days, the scenario of a new important milestone: the arrival of the Peruvian Navy Training Ship "Unión". This tall ship is the biggest of its type in Latin America and the second in the world. It is a sort of itinerant Embassy of Peru, being a distinctive symbol of our national and maritime power in the fields of diplomacy, culture, trade and military, and will arrive in the Netherlands with the purpose of strengthening the ties between both of our countries.

In other areas of interest, the Netherlands remains as one of the top markets for our exports, and keeps growing. Last year we saw an increase in 13% of our exports, reaching almost a thousand million USD\$. Being an important buyer of our avocados, mangos, grapes and cacao, The Netherlands is the second largest business partner worldwide for fruits and vegetables.

The Netherlands also scores high as country of origin for Foreign Direct Investment in Peru, occupying the fourth position, with focus on four main sectors: Finance, Mining, Industry and energy.

At the multilateral level, next year Peru and the Netherlands will be non-permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, which is an excellent opportunity to strengthen our ties in order to promote global objectives of common interest, such as the pacific solution of controversies and fighting against global warming, among others, on the basis of our shared values in the areas of the defence of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

I close this brief account with one of the favourite topics in this Embassy: Culture, and within this subject, one of the most relevant issues for Peruvians: the gastronomy. In the last twelve months, we had a presentation from Jorge Eduardo Benavides linking gastronomy and literature, and two major events including the first Peruvian Gastronomic Festival at the Crown Plaza in The Hague. We are focusing on a program of “training of trainers” which we expect that can lead to a new generation of Dutch chefs able to work accurately with the Peruvian flavours in the local market. As a result, the prestigious HotelSchool will host a Peruvian Gastronomic Night at the beginning of September, in which the students will create a Peruvian Menu at their premises in The Hague.

It is also important to mention the increasing number of Peruvian Restaurants in the Netherlands. We have already a Food truck that goes around the Netherlands promoting our gastronomy, and five restaurants distributed in Amsterdam, in Rotterdam and The Hague. We are certain that there are more Peruvian restaurants to come.

But I think that I have talked enough. I invite you to try the buffet prepared by Alberto Lara, one of those young chefs who, in a brief period, have contributed to the spread of the traditions and rich flavours of the Peruvian cuisine that are behind the international prestige of our country in such a competitive area.

Then, let me propose a toast, my friends, for Peru, for the Netherlands and for the well-being for each and every one of you.

Proost! Salud!