

Speech by Mr. André Driessen
Chargé d'affaires a.i. Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
On the occasion of International Women's Day – 8 March 2017

- **Check against delivery** -

- Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, friends and guests,

International women's day

- It is a great pleasure to host this event together with the European Union and the United Nations Theme Group on Gender.
- International Women's Day is an important day.
- On this day we celebrate the achievements of women worldwide. Economic achievements. Social achievements. And also political achievements.
- At the same time this is also a day of critical reflection and discussion. Because despite improvement in the position of women and girls worldwide, big challenges remain to be tackled. Think of discrimination at work. Violence against women. And these days even forms of cyber bullying.

She decides

- Another challenge is to protect the fundamental right of women and girls to decide freely and for themselves whether, when and how many children they wish to have.
- In this light, the Netherlands Minister for International Development, Ms. Lilianne Ploumen, recently initiated the global "SHE DECIDES" initiative on sexual health and family planning. At a high-level conference in Belgium last week, governments, civil society and individuals donated more than 180 million Euro to support this initiative.

Domestic violence

- At today's event we wish to address another pressing issue: domestic violence. This is perhaps the most persistent form of violence against women. Not only against women, but also against men, children and the elderly.
- It is a form of violence that is present in all layers of society. It occurs in a place where people should feel safe and loved: at home. Both in rich homes and in poor homes. In Europe, in The Netherlands and in China.

- Take my country as an example. It is estimated that on an annual basis, roughly 200.000 people face serious or repeated forms of domestic violence. This has a huge impact on the wellbeing of women, children and families. It also has a big economic impact, because people with physical or psychological problems are often far less productive.

Adressing domestic violence

- To address domestic violence we need a mix of instruments. Laws that prohibit domestic violence are essential. But there is also a strong need for a robust infrastructure of institutions that are able to recognize, report and address domestic violence. Victims are in need of protection and safe ways of report abuse. Public awareness must be raised through campaigns.
- We also need international cooperation. By sharing experiences and expertise we must be able to tackle domestic violence. The United Nations plays an important role in this respect. Last November, The Netherlands and France introduced a resolution in New York to prevent and eliminate violence against women, with a focus on domestic violence.
- This resolution was adopted by all 193 UN Member States. This means all countries agree that we need to address domestic violence. This is an excellent starting point for combined international effort I would say!

Domestic violence in China

- Also in China the issue of domestic violence is a big challenge. Last year – in March 2016 – China’s first national Anti-Domestic Violence Law entered into force. This is an important first step by the government to address the problem.
- We are ready to cooperate with China – with the government and with civil society – to share knowledge and experience and enter into dialogue on how to make sure this legislation reaches the intended results.
- I am therefore grateful that we have a panel of experts here today, that work hard to prevent and eliminate domestic violence in China. Through their experience, they are in an excellent position to discuss the impact of the Law and to make recommendations for the future.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide campaign video

- Before we start the panel discussion however, I think it is good to give a face to today’s topic.

- Through it is a "*JUSTICE4HER*" campaign, the Dutch organization Radio Netherlands Worldwide is raising public awareness on violence against women. They have made an award winning video to reach the Chinese audience on this important topic.
- I won't give away the clue. It is a powerful message so be prepared.
Let's just watch it.
- Thank you and I hope you have a fruitful exchange of views and discussion this afternoon.