

Opening address by Han Polman

Your Majesties, Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, Honoured Laureates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Four Freedoms stands for the essence of human life and strong, sustainable democracy: the freedom of speech and expression, of worship, freedom from want and from fear everywhere in the world. This was the message in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's State of the Union address on January 6th 1941.

His message was and is still relevant today. We see in all parts of the world that people are not free in their expression, not free in their religion, not able to live because of lack of food and water, not free because of the violence in their societies and communities.

The four freedoms gives inspiration to people in the world, to work for human dignity, democracy and peace. We remember how Eleanor Roosevelt set a standard with the four freedoms as a bases for the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Everywhere in the world, people and organizations are dedicated to protecting and if necessary, fighting for freedom. The Four Freedoms articulate the goals for a better world in a clear and strong way. The Four Freedoms sets the guidelines for decisionmaking of organisations and governments all over the world. The Four Freedoms also focuses on desicionmaking of individuals in day to day work and life.

We are here today to honour our laureates.

In what you do and how you work, you are powerful examples for people all over the world. You are real representatives of the Four Freedoms. You give inspiration to so many people.

We are very proud to have you as such great advocates of the Four Freedoms here with us.

Your Majesties, Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, Honoured Laureates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As King's Commissioner, and as president of the Roosevelt Foundation, it is my honour to welcome you here for the seventeenth Four Freedoms Awards ceremony in Middelburg. The inhabitants of Zeeland, de Zeeuwen, are proud to say that the ancestors of The Roosevelt Presidents came from this province, the village Oud Vossemeer.

Honored guests,

Your presence here today and your commitment to the Four Freedoms mean a great deal to us. Your presence here helps us to make todays' Laureates heard. I especially want to thank our sponsors, whose invaluable support helps us in our efforts to spread the message of President Roosevelt's State of the Union address.

I would like to thank you on behalf of the Roosevelt Foundation, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and the members of the Roosevelt family who, I am proud to say, always join us here in Middelburg.

It is with great pleasure and privilege to introduce our Prime Minister, Mr. Mark Rutte.