

ROOSEVELT FOUNDATION

**Speech by Dr. Angela Merkel, Federal Chancellor of Germany, on the occasion of the presentation of The Franklin D. Roosevelt International Four Freedoms Award in Middelburg, April 21, 2016**

Your Majesties, Prime Minister, my dear friend Mark, honored laureates, Your Royal Highness, ladies and gentlemen, and, last but not least, Mayor Bergmann. I would like to thank you and the people of Middelburg for the warm welcome I was given.

Mr. Polman, I would like to thank you for the moving words you addressed to us.

I would of course like to congratulate my fellow- laureates. It is incredibly moving to hear what you do, how you work and under what circumstances. We also appreciate Human Rights Watch's outspokenness in principle, even if it is not always easy to accept it graciously.

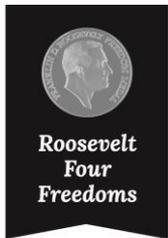
My thanks naturally also go to the Roosevelt Foundation and the members of the Roosevelt family. Receiving the International Four Freedoms Award is not only a special honour for me personally but also for my country and its people.

Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear. These are the freedoms President Roosevelt proclaimed in his State of the Union address on June 6, 1941 as essential freedoms that people everywhere in the world should enjoy. Roosevelt's vision should not remain just a theory. We all know the human cost at which these freedoms were gained. We have not forgotten the price the United States and its allies paid during World War II to liberate Europe from the horrors of the war and the Holocaust, for which Germany was responsible, and to pave the way for freedom and peace.

Germany, which once brought such unspeakable suffering to the world, is today a respected member of the international community. We have our firm place within Europe and we are always grateful for it.

The present relationship between the people of Germany and the Netherlands is a wonderful example which shows us that the horrors of the past do not prevent things from changing for the better. The terrible chapters in the history of the German occupation during World War II will forever be part of our common past. Middelburg was almost completely destroyed back then. Thanks to the loving and expert restoration of the historic cityscape, this is now hard to believe, but the memory remains, as indeed it should.

In a couple of weeks, on May 5, you will celebrate Liberation Day in the Netherlands. A day of remembering is becoming a day of festivities, a celebration of freedom. Four years ago President Joachim Gauck of Germany was the first Head of State ever to be invited to give the speech on Liberation Day. This shows how close the relationship between our two countries is today and how



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we are connected in our responsibility to lead our lives together in peace and freedom today and in the future.

We do this in a common understanding of basic principles – of universal human rights and tolerance, democracy, the constitutional state and freedom. These principles are the basis of our trustful partnership which is a great gift for us Germans. Mark Rutte and myself rely on this partnership in numerous, sometimes seemingly endless meetings – such as the 15 European Councils we have had since the beginning of 2015. And time and again, we find solutions.

Your Majesties, you contribute in a special way to the good relations between our countries. You accompanied Queen Beatrix on her state visit five years ago, making a great impression in my country, just as you did during your own first official visit in 2013. A few days ago you visited Bavaria. Whilst there, you made a stadium glow, in bright orange of course.

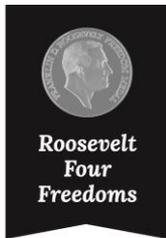
Of course, our similarities, our understanding of each other, and that fact that we know each other well, is also felt time and again in our bilateral governmental work. This afternoon we will hold intergovernmental consultations in Eindhoven about innovations and about what is needed to shape the future of our two countries.

Many of our common themes have a European context and it is in this eventful period that the Netherlands holds the EU Presidency. Thank you very much, Mark, for all your work. One key task is finding a convincing answer to the migration crisis. This is a special challenge that touches on the fundamental values we share in Europe.

The EU-Turkey refugee deal made four weeks ago gives us a real prospect of depriving the despicable human traffickers in the Aegean of their business model. It opens up a way to significantly and lastingly reduce irregular migration from Turkey and offers the refugees the opportunity to find shelter in Europe legally, without risking life and limb.

Too many people have already lost their lives in their flight. The EU-Turkey deal did not come a moment too soon. Now it is important to continue our efforts, in particular with regard to an equitable allocation of refugees and our joint response to the causes of flight and expulsion.

We can take our bearings from President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms: the freedom to say what you think, the freedom to choose your religion and exercise it, the freedom from want and the freedom from fear. To realize these freedoms all over the world was, according to President Roosevelt, the challenge of his generation. What was achieved was and remains both a bequest to and a demanding duty for all generations thereafter. Freedom is a fragile thing and it can be abused. One's freedom ends where that of another starts. Freedom leads to new responsibilities for oneself, for others and for society as a whole.



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Being conscious of this responsibility also involves understanding that experiencing freedom and the defence of freedom are two sides of the same coin. For us in Europe, too, it is important to realize that we can only demand freedom if we ourselves act to defend it. That is the only way in which we can remain credible and spread the message. The reason this is so important is obvious in a world that seems to be getting ever smaller. It is because whenever freedom is under threat or attack anywhere in the world, the foundations of all freedom-loving peoples and nations are weakened.

A clear example is IS. This terrorist militia is challenging us in the Middle East, and now also in the centre of Europe, as the Brussels and Paris attacks have again shown us so painfully. Such inhuman attacks not only affect the victims, their families and friends. They affect us all. And we are all responding with determination. We stand up to the enemies of our freedom with the instruments and full weight of a vigilant constitutional state. We do not stand up to them by putting fundamental freedoms into doubt ourselves. We are and shall remain open societies and will protect our freedom and way of life.

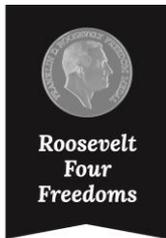
It is with this determination that we are engaged with our partners in the crisis regions on Europe's doorstep: as part of the international operation to fight IS, participating in the training mission in Iraq, supporting our French friends in the Mediterranean and taking part in the mission in Mali.

The bestowal of the Four Freedoms Awards on laureates from the Central African Republic, the Congo and Syria highlights the fact that everywhere in the world men and women fight for freedom. Their candidness, their courage, their willingness to stand up for their principles even when in danger, deserve respect and recognition. Words cannot express what you go through every day. That is why I am so happy that today's award sends such a clear message. It makes many of us conscious just how many people fight for freedom.

I am deeply convinced that although often menaced, freedom cannot be suppressed. Speaking from experience, I am also convinced of the power that freedom holds. The fall of the Berlin wall, which paved the way for the unification of Germany, is among the happiest events in German and European history.

The desire for freedom is fundamental to mankind. While the fundamental freedoms are human rights, it is also the case that nations and countries have a right to freedom. In Europe, we only need to look at Ukraine as an example. The Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter must retain their full validity as the embodiment of the shared convictions of their signatories.

This example shows the relevance of Roosevelt's speech, even after 75 years. We must take responsibility now and in the future to preserve the principle of freedom of opinion worldwide and protect it wherever and whenever it is in danger.



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We must also champion freedom of religion worldwide and protect it whenever it is in danger. This includes protecting the right of Christians to exercise their religion in countries with a Muslim majority, and conversely protecting that of Muslims living in countries with a Christian majority. This also includes rejecting all blanket judgements about a religion, even if fanatics and terrorists commit their crimes in its name.

Worldwide we should campaign to ensure that people can live free from want and fear, and to ensure that these values are protected. We, the international community, should ensure that the 2030 Agenda does not remain a dead letter. We should endorse it and put it into practice by, for example, mitigating climate change and endeavouring to find solutions to wars and conflicts.

Our work for peace and freedom has many facets. That is why I am so grateful to all those who are united in their constant efforts to do justice to the legacy of President Roosevelt.

Thank you.