

Opening speech by the King's Commissioner in Zeeland and the President of the Roosevelt Foundation, mr. Han Polman, FFA-ceremony, 21 April Middelburg.

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Esteemed Laureates,
Members of the Roosevelt family, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As King's Commissioner or Governor of Zeeland, and as President of the Roosevelt Foundation, it is my enormous privilege to welcome you to the eighteenth Four Freedoms Awards ceremony in Middelburg.

Today, seventy five years after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt presented his vision of a world founded upon four essential freedoms, we are here to honor those individuals and organizations who fearlessly and steadfastly put themselves in harm's way to bring about those freedoms for others.

The freedoms of speech and religion, the freedom from want and fear, espoused by Roosevelt in 1941, remain to this day a moral compass for both these laureates and for all good men and women who strive to obtain a better, more just world for everyone.

We live in a world in which we face enormous challenges as witnessed by recent terrorist attacks in places around the world and the large numbers of people displaced by war and conflict.

But they are challenges we are able to face, if we join together. The realization of Roosevelt's vision for the world starts here, in our schools and homes, in our streets, in our towns and cities.

The four freedoms, and the ideas and principles they represent, connect us all. We must not look to world leaders alone to fight for freedom, but also look to ourselves. What can you and I learn from Roosevelt, learn from the advocates of freedom we honor here today?

Zeeland -- the ancestral home of the Roosevelt family -- has a long history of tolerance and diversity in an open society and of resistance to tyranny. Its motto is Luctor et Emergo: I struggle and emerge.

Honored guests, together we can overcome the struggles in our societies, our streets, towns and cities. Together we can emerge victorious.

On behalf of the Roosevelt Foundation, the Roosevelt Institute in New York and the members of the Roosevelt family who, I am proud to say, always join us here in Middelburg, I want to thank you for being here today, for committing to dedicate yourself to the four freedoms, to enable the dreams of others.

The program of today's ceremony includes a few short video portraits of the Laureates being interviewed by Ms. Pernille La Lau. Many of us know her as a presenter for Dutch television, but she is also an active Ambassador for the Stichting Vluchteling and she is the granddaughter of Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, the first United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you all an inspiring ceremony. Thank you very much.