

The Islamic Republic of Iran wants to resume dialogue with Europe

Exchanging views on international relations

The report was prepared by Monica Bouman, introduction and following section were edited by Mr. H. v. Malekshah.

Deputy Head of Mission of Islamic Republic of Iran in The Netherlands, Mr. H. v. Malekshah, has met Mr. E. van der Kooij director of Feeling Europe Foundation on Thursday 18 July at The Hague, in the company of Mrs. J. ter Kulve-van Os and Ms. M. Bouman. They exchanged views on Iran's current developments, Indonesia's historical parallels and the European image of Iran.

In the meeting several issues such as presidential election of Iran and victory of its elect-president Dr. Hassan Rouhani, which will hopefully bring a change in Iran's international relations, and last decade of Iran's foreign policy and external relations were discussed.

Although periodical inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) starting from 2002, gave no evidence, they neither could remove the existing mistrust. Furthermore, the United States and Europe have imposed several tough economic sanctions against Iran and even severely implemented ultra UN resolutions like medicine and medical equipment's embargo that deprived Iranian people to free access to them. Besides that, the United States and Israel have even threatened to wage war against the Islamic Republic of Iran. By now Western sanctions have caused a sharp currency depreciation, stagnant economy and rising unemployment in Iran.

In his campaign for Presidency, Dr. Rohani promised a wise, hope and moderate course, far from all extremism. He is for friendly and close relations with the surrounding neighbour and European countries, based on mutual respect and interests. For a solution of the atomic issue he calls for Iran's continued cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Dr. Rouhani's call for moderation and political cooperation has succeeded in Iran. With more than 50% of the votes, he now is elected Iran's new president. The presidential inauguration will be on 4 August in the Parliament of Iran.

Mr. H. v. Malekshah, Deputy Head of Mission, of Islamic Republic of Iran: The image of Iran in the West is not in line with reality and nature of Iranian people, its civilization, culture and peace_loving country. The existing walls of mistrust in Western countries makes a real communication very difficult. The West's suspicion of Iran preparing for nuclear weapons, is just an accusation and even IAEA and USA intelligence service outlined that Iran is not for WMD. Now the question is that how to convince Europe and the United States that our nuclear programs are for peaceful means only, for energy plants and medical research? How can we break through the existing prejudices? In Islam, constructing nuclear weaponry is 'haram', forbidden. Even the leader of Islamic Republic stressed and repeated that WMD is against the Islamic teachings and believes. WMD is not in Iran's Defence policy too. We cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and also offered to cooperate with other countries too.

Coming back to the history, for hundred of years Iran was not an aggressor country. Contrary, Iran was attacked by Iraq, in the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1989), which cost the lives of hundreds of thousands Iranians, no country helped us when Saddam Hoessein violated international law

and invaded Iran, as an independent and member of UN and even used chemical weapons against Iranian and Iraqi population. In 1980's European countries such as The Netherlands have been the destination of plenty of Iranian soldiers who has been severely injured by chemical weapons. If the United States of America and European countries and particularly Security Council could punish the aggressor Saddam, then had helped to defeat Saddam in the Kuwait war, this war and others in our region would have easily been avoided. We do oppose war and believe in peace and tranquility which our interests and security dealt with it. Look at Balkan, Iraq, Afghanistan now.

Iran is striving for talks, negotiations, mutual respects and its internationally recognized rights. We want to live in peace with our neighbour countries and strive for friendship with the whole countries even with Europe we believe that our common grounds are more than our differences. Last decade, Europe was the second trade partner of Iran but unfortunately today Europe engulfed with financial and economic problems, deprived itself from Iran economic potentiality and capacities. Lot of European trades and businessmen and companies know well our granites and financial functions.

Iran is a modern democratic state, where women participate in all sectors of public life; at the universities, in business life, in the parliament. In Iran, like Indonesia, democracy, Islam, and modern life go together. Iran has a lot to offer to Europe. Europe has plenty of thing that Iran needs. Iran's culture and civilization are well known among old generation and I hope we could make it more brilliant for new and young people. Anyone who has visited my country, would admire its culture, arts, civilization and achievements.

Mr. E. van der Kooij, director Feeling Europe Foundation. For many centuries European countries had been fighting each other. After World War II the Germans were deeply mistrusted and despised by the freed citizens of former occupied countries. It was by leaders like Robert Schumann / Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer, who had been former enemies that a vicious circle was broken. They paved the way to European cooperation and common prosperity: by reconciliation, mutual respect mutual trust. As always, it all starts with personal encounter, getting to know each other, creating hope. When will European leaders reach out to I.R. of Iran?

Mrs. J. ter Kulve –van Os, Indonesia Nederland Society. I recognize what you are saying. It reminds me of the Dutch distrust towards the Indonesian nationalist leaders in 1945/1946 who strove for recognition of an independent Indonesia. I was young and found that Netherland was right and that the Indonesians were not to be trusted. But the house at Linggajati, where I lived as a child, built by my father, was the place where Dutch and Indonesian diplomats met each other, respectfully, with mutual esteem. There they have drawn up a draft agreement, the Linggajati agreement, that would become the basis for the unbundling of the colonial relationship between Nederland and indonesia.

Unfortunately not all the Dutch and Indonesian political parties thought so and first years of armed struggle came. In December 1949, under pressure from the international community, Nederland conferred the sovereignty to Indonesia, which the Indonesian people already declared to the world in 1945. The atonement. between the two countries was only 60 years later, in 2005 expressed by our former Minister Bernard Bot, who declared that Netherlands once "had been on the wrong side of history". Now, to Netherland and Indonesia, the road is open to cooperate on equal footing, to strengthen each other's capabilities, to invest in mutual friendship. This is precisely what the Indonesia Netherlands Society strives to further in the fields of culture, economics, science education and bilateral relations between Netherlands and & Indonesia. Maybe it would be an idea to establish an Iran Netherlands Society.

Ms. M. Bouman, Indonesia Nederland Society. The comparison of Iran with Indonesia affects me. Each of them has an ancient civilization and shared, young history. During the Bandung Conference In 1955, both countries stood at the cradle of the Non Aligned Movement. Young sovereign states, moderate in their approach, independent of colonial or great powers, trying to become not involved in the Cold War. They supported each other, they still do.

In March 2008, de UN Security Council by Resolution 1803 required Iran to cease and desist from any and all uranium enrichment. The resolution also required Iran to stop any research and development associated with centrifuges and uranium enrichment, Indonesia, then a non-permanent member to the Security Council, as only member abstained. President Yudhoyono, the Indonesian president, later explained that he abstained based on objective and independent considerations retrieved from the February 2008 IAEA report, which stated that Iran was actively cooperating. After the Security Council session, President Yudhoyono visited President Ahmadinejad in Teheran and established new friendship and trade relations with Iran. Now, in 2013, Indonesia is a modern, democratic state in South-East Asia, with worldwide the largest Muslim population. A member of Asean, Indonesia is also a G20 member.

Historically the fifties looked promising for the promotion of international cooperation. In the view of Dag Hammarskjöld, then UN Secretary-General, this exactly was a United Nations' task. In 1955 the United Nations organized its first Conference on the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy. In 1955 the IAEA was founded too. Independently from the United Nations, but with the help of the United States the nuclear program of Iran was launched as part of Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program in 1957.

We know that the road to international cooperation not only confronts us with other people, but also with ourselves. I close this report on an inspiring and thought-provoking encounter by quoting Dag Hammarskjöld, from his speech "The walls of distrust" which he delivered 5 June 1959, at Cambridge University.

"All of us, in whatever field of intellectual activity we work, influence to some degree the spiritual trend of our time. All of us may contribute to the breakdown of the walls of distrust and towards checking fatal tendencies in the direction of stale conformism and propaganda. How can this be done more effectively than by simple faithfulness to the independence of the spirit and to the right of the free man to free thinking and free expression of his thoughts?"

"There is a maturity of mind required of those who give up rights. There is a maturity of mind required of those who acquire new rights. Let us hope, that to an increasing extent, the necessary qualities will be shown on all sides."

Dag Hammarskjöld