

Video message by King Willem-Alexander on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, 21 September 2020

Today, on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I'd like to pay tribute to the men and women who laid the foundations for the United Nations 75 years ago.

Not just the statesmen and diplomats. But also the delegates representing workers, businesses, women's organisations and social and cultural groups. Everyone who helped draft the UN Charter in San Francisco in the spring of 1945.

In a radio message, President Truman called them: 'architects of the better world'.

They came together after half a decade of war and human suffering. The differences between them were great. But they were all driven by an unshakeable resolve to build back a better world.

Their ambition became reality as more and more countries joined the UN. Both my generation and the next are grateful for the opportunities this has given us.

The United Nations hasn't been able to end violence, injustice and poverty. But it *has* been able to contain and reduce them. And thanks to the International Criminal Court and international tribunals, impunity may one day be a thing of the past.

Billions of people benefit from these achievements in their daily lives.

In the canon of world history, the United Nations deserves a prominent place among the greatest forces for good.

Now, once again, we face a challenge that knows no borders. The COVID-19 pandemic can't be compared to a world war, but it impacts us all. Young people are seeing their future prospects dwindle. How should we respond?

The best way is to ask them what *they* think. So I'm delighted to give the floor to one of our UN Youth Delegates: Hajar Yagkoubi.

UN Youth Delegate:

As young people we can't help but wonder in what kind of world we will be celebrating the next UN-anniversaries.

We want to live in a world that provides everyone an equal chance to develop their potential regardless of who they are.

We want to live in a world with fundamental human rights. Not as lofty aims and fine words on paper but as a certainty, you can always rely on.

We want to live in a world that protects both people and planet. A world where we finally put the brakes on the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and global warming.

We want to live in a world where that thinks about the long-term.

When stating these aspirations, as a young person, I have too often also been told that I'm too optimistic, naive, or too idealistic. However, all I would like to say to that is: Imagine what kind of world we could live in if its leaders had just a fraction of the idealism we share as young people.

What a brave world that could be.

So all I want to ask you today is, to be brave with us.

King Willem-Alexander:

I hope with all my heart that we can summon the spirit of the UN's founders and say to each other: 'Let our recovery be a leap forward'.

In his farewell speech in 1953, the very first Secretary-General of the UN, Trygve Lie, put it like this:

'Our organisation reflects the imperfections of our time, but it is also an expression of the most constructive forces of our world and a symbol of hope for the future.'

On behalf of the four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – in Europe and the Caribbean – I congratulate our United Nations on its 75th anniversary. And I wish all architects of the better world – whatever their age, nationality or background – every success!