

## Speech Osnabrück 9 maart 2019: uitgesproken tekst

Viele dank für die Einladung. Ich werde auf English fortfahren, ich entschuldige mich.

It's great to be amongst the Young Liberals here today in Osnabrück. I am Samira Rafaela and I am number 3 on the D66 list for the elections of the European Parliament. Like the FDP, D66 currently has four seats in the European Parliament.

As a member of the Young Democrats, your sister party in the Netherlands, I found my feet in politics already some years ago. And it is within parties like these where the next generation can blossom.

Today I want to talk with you about the future, but before I do that I will address the present and the past and let me quote what Konrad Adenauer said in 1956:

*"The first period of European integration has ended. Its purpose was to ensure that a war may never break out between the European people... The objective of the second period of European integration is to ensure that Europe and the European countries retain their value, relevance and their standing in the world."*

Shall we ask the Brits how their standing in the world is now, as they are trying to exit the European Union? They have become a prey for the world outside. President Trump is pushing them to lower food standards in order to reach a trade agreement and their economy will crumble, especially if they leave our Union without a deal.

What lead to Brexit? Complacency. Luckily I see a group of motivated Young Liberals in front of me and I can see you do not take the advantages of the EU for granted. Parties such as Alternative für Deutschland or the Dutch parties Forum for Democracy and the Freedom Party have made it very clear that we can never take EU Membership for granted.

Brexit is only three weeks from now, but I am optimistic about what's ahead. Not that I think the U.K. might remain in the Union, no I think that ship has long gone. It is when I am among people like you or among the Young Democrats in the Netherlands that I feel that we can build a brighter future together. But only if we put our minds to it.

Way before the European Union, this city was already connected to many northwestern and central European towns in the Hanseatic League. Because, that's what we are: intertwined. However, the European Union is not a Union of trade, we are more than that. We form a Union of values. And with these values we can create a brighter future for all Europeans.

Today I will address three topics that are close to my heart and where I know we can make a difference in the European Parliament and build that brighter future. Namely, climate, inclusivity and online freedom in safety.

## **[In Europe we build a greener future]**

Firstly, I want to address climate change: because in Europe we build a greener future. For far too long we have neglected our environment, but the tide is changing. All around I see change. The US may have left the Paris Climate Agreement, but the push for a Green New Deal shows the pushback might even be stronger than the initial commitment.

Here in Europe I am encouraged to see that the European Commission is starting to take climate change seriously, albeit rather late. The recent vision towards a carbon-neutral European Union in 2050 is promising and the new goals for 2030 for renewable energy and energy efficiency are a step forward, but if these goals are not enough to live up to our commitment taken in the Paris Agreement we must not be afraid to raise them.

This is the moment when we must build upon the Paris Climate Agreement. Because we can't allow our generation and the next one to have a worse life than the generation that has brought us into this situation.

And what about the Yellow Vests? I don't think they are principally against climate measures. I think they fear that the costs of living are going to rise. This is exactly why I've published an article about social inequality, saying that the EU is responsible for this problem and should take the responsibility to solve this. And when the French intend to raise fuel prices when people can't afford to live closer to work and thus have no choice but to drive to work I can understand that anger.

The energy transition is often portrayed as a burden, but it has immense positive geopolitical consequences. It is also for this reason that we must reap the benefits of renewable energy. With wind, solar and new innovations we can reduce our dependency on oil from countries like Saudi Arabia or natural gas from Russia while cleaning the air in our cities.

This problem demands bold ideas and measures proposed and taken by a new generation of politicians and I am certainly not afraid to be bold!

## **[In Europe we build the future digital environment]**

Like climate change, the internet knows no borders and that is why it is in Europe where we build the future digital environment

While the internet has brought us many benefits we must be vigilant that it doesn't take control of our lives. And I can know that, as I work for the police in the Netherlands where we face challenges like cyber attacks.

The Cambridge Analytica scandal has shown us the dangers of platforms such as Facebook and Google. We can never allow companies harvesting our data without consent. Would Donald Trump have been elected without this data, would a majority in Britain have voted to leave the European Union had it not been for targeted ads with the assistance of Cambridge Analytica? The answer is, we will never know. We do know that it was impactful which is why we must ensure that we will not have to ask these questions ever again.

The internet has long been a Wild West free of the fundamental rights that we have fought to obtain in the physical world and are still fighting for. It is time to protect these rights online as well. Liberty, security, freedom of expression without censorship and equal treatment. And in the case of the latter I want to work on stronger net neutrality in the EU.

You can't talk about this topic without mentioning the big tech companies and their practices. They are all active in the EU, but their tax rate is laughable. It is for this reason that I endorse a digital tax for companies like Facebook, Amazon and Google so that they will pay their fair share for their activity in Europe.

Elections abroad have shown us how powerful social networks have become. For some people Facebook is their main or even only source of news. Algorithms determine what people get to see: not what they need to see, but what they want to see. What is convenient, not the inconvenient truths. What affirms their beliefs, not what makes them question their opinions.

Privacy should not become a privilege for those who can afford it.

## **[In Europe we build an inclusive future]**

Thirdly, I want to talk about something that is very close to my heart: equal opportunities for all: because in Europe we build an inclusive future.

My story is improbable. As the daughter of a jewish Dutch-Curaçaoan woman and a muslim Ghanese-Nigerian man my odds were not exactly in my favour. The fact that I'm standing here as candidate for the European Parliament is a win in itself. During my life I have had to face racism and bias. For example, I have been rejected for an internship because people did not believe someone with my name name was capable of writing the motivation letter that I wrote. But this is not about me, this is about so many others.

I want to see the EU as a promotor of social mobility. That's why I want the EU to expand the Erasmus programme to more education levels. It should not only be a programme for those in university.

Often when I visit people in schools where they learn practical skills I get the question if they too can become a member of my political party. The thought behind this is that they think they don't belong in politics or would not be welcomed by the so-called elite.

This is where I see a role for parties like ours: reaching out, and not only to those in university. When a political party does only consist of a certain slice of the population it risks being alienated from certain groups of people. Whether it is people on lower incomes or people from a migration background.

Oh, and unlike one of the current German MEPs, you would not have to pay if you would like to visit me in Brussels. My door will always be open.

**[End]**

We are the next generation and we have the opportunity to take control of our own destiny. The challenges we are facing are simply too important to leave to the old men in Brussels. Let's shape Europe's future together. I am looking forward to working with you in the coming years.

Because it is in Europe where we build a greener future

Because it is in Europe where we build the digital future

And because it is in Europe where we build an inclusive future for all

And let's build this beautiful future together!

Danke schön und viel Glück bei den Wahlen im Mai!