

Speech at Opening Roverway 2018 in The Hague

Good evening, fellow scouts,

I wish just for one second you could be standing where I'm standing now and see all these people gathered together from all these different nations, all with the same spirit of friendship, of coming together, of curiosity about each other's world and each other's aspirations.

Welcome to The Hague.

I hope you have a bit of patience left, because I know you want to do other things than listen to people speak from here. But please indulge me for just a few minutes. I have a few messages I would like to share with you.

I've said this about curiosity: there was once a great man whom I had the privilege to call my friend. His name was Shimon Peres, and he once told me – *[cheering from the audience]* We have Israeli scouts! – he once told me that human progress is a product of dissatisfaction and curiosity. You're not happy with the way things are and you're curious about a better world. And I think this is very, very true. The world will wither away if we lose our dissatisfaction with things that aren't right and if we lose our curiosity for making things better.

And in all my years living in many different countries, I learnt many things. Do you know the first thing you learn when you live in a different country? You don't learn first that much about that different country. You learn to look into yourself and understand where you're from.

I became a Dutchman because I lived in other countries. You understand your own identity better if you are in touch with other identities and open to other identities. And I think this is one of the most important messages I learnt as a young scout.

My childhood wasn't always very easy, but I always had a place to go to, where people would listen to me, where people would make fun of me if I exaggerated, but would put a hand on my shoulder if I needed it, where people would be there if I had a problem, where people taught me the sense of civic duty, where people taught me not to judge, but to ask.

Being a scout, I understood and learnt that it's easy to teach people to hate. But hate is taught. People aren't born hating. People aren't born xenophobes. People aren't born racist. People aren't born homophobes. Young children take people the way they are. And if there's one thing I would ask every single one of you to do, not just now, but in the years to come when you will all become leaders of Europe and other places around the world, the one thing I would ask you to do is always to keep an open mind.

If someone is different, don't judge them for being different. Ask them what drives them. If someone is poor, don't judge them for being poor. Ask them how you can help them. If someone is angry, don't judge them for being angry. Talk to them so they can take away their anger. If someone hates, don't look away, don't be afraid, don't isolate them, don't judge them. Talk to them. Hatred was taught, so hatred can be untaught. And if there's one duty for scouts, wherever you are, it's to teach people no longer to hate. This is for me the most important thing a scout can do.

In this world of ours, leadership is being redefined. We are no longer in a world where in a paternalistic way you can say "I am elected so I am above you, I can lead you". Leadership is something you have to build, you have to earn. It's based on moral fibre. It's based on an understanding of your values. It's based on what you have learnt. And as a scout, you learnt to understand difference, you learnt to respect nature, you learnt to understand that if you don't act, our natural environment is going to perish and we with it, you learnt that diversity is not a source of anger and frustration but a source of progress.

Just ask yourselves, in what environment are new inventions made? In what environment are solutions found? In an environment where everybody looks the same, acts the same, already agrees? Or an environment where different people come together, curious about each other's inspiration, curious about each other's difference?

I would say, be prepared. Be prepared for the world that is coming. Be prepared for a world where people are ready to exploit people's fears and create anger everywhere. Be prepared for that world and have an answer to that world. And that answer should be: we're in it together, we'll contribute, we will lead by example, we will show what we have learnt. And we will teach others to go the same way. If every single one of you - future leaders of Europe - are able to inspire at least ten people around you, you will change Europe in your image. You will create a Europe where people understand each other better, where people like the fact that we are all different, where different cultures are a source of inspiration, and where this diversity is going to show the rest of the world that Europe is able to shape its own future.

Thank you very, very much.