

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to the Royal Netherlands Society of Engineers. This association was established in 1847 and comprises now of almost 20.000 engineers of all sorts throughout The Netherlands.

My name is Jan Wind and I am chairman of the Defence and Security division of the association.

We are delighted to host this celebration of the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State of Lithuania. Particularly because we strongly believe in European cooperation and the bond between our fellow citizens throughout the European Union and NATO. Not only in the division for defence and security technology of our association, but also in the EDTA, a European federation of 11 similar associations.

This bond is of growing importance in these days of slowly growing tension around our continent. Cyber attacks, little green men, IS terrorists and millions of refugees were unheard of just a few years ago. Now we read and see these developments daily in the press and on TV. In Lithuania even in the streets.

That makes the need for cooperation and a major step up in defence capabilities even stronger than when Lithuania joined the European Union and NATO in 2004.

I will however not dwell too much on this, as Ton Welter will do so later and tonight is a pleasurable occasion to mark the 99th anniversary of the Restoration of Lithuania's Statehood.

For this event I quickly pass the microphone to the Ambassador of Lithuania, Mr. Darius Semaska.