

World Congress of Families 2009

Tekst videoboodschap Minister voor Jeugd en Gezin André Rouvoet

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome! Today marks the beginning of the fifth World Congress of Families. You've gathered here in Amsterdam from every corner of the globe to reflect on a truly wonderful theme:

empowering families.

As the Dutch Minister for Youth and Families, I'd like to wish you every success with this! Families are the foundation of society. This holds true in every society: in the Netherlands and in China, in Kenya and in the United States. Every era and each nation faces its own unique issues and new challenges. That's why it's so critical that we continually revisit the topic of 'families.'

Family policy is a top priority in the Netherlands. For the first time in our history, the Dutch government has appointed a Minister for Youth and Families, and I am greatly honoured to serve in this position.

Broadly speaking, family policy in the Netherlands consists of three main pillars:

1. Giving families more time together.

One example is providing parental leave.

Another is encouraging flexibility in the workplace so that parents can more easily balance family and working life.

2. Investing in families.

For instance, by providing specific child benefits, and by taking measures to significantly reduce the social exclusion experienced by underprivileged children.

3. Supporting parents in raising their children.

For example, through our Youth and Family Centres, where parents can seek out answers to their parenting and relationship questions.

By addressing these questions at an early stage, we hope to prevent problems from escalating.

Although there may be different opinions on certain aspects of government policy concerning family issues, I'm sure you'll all agree with me that families need space, in more than one sense.

The best foundation we can give our children is a stable, safe and loving family. As a member of the Dutch government I feel responsible for the protection and support of children living in any form of family structure.

I am aware of the outspoken views on the family that many of your organisations

have. That's why I want to challenge you to build bridges on the topic of how to live together in a plural society with differing views on the family. Over the next few days, you'll be exploring many aspects of family life from a variety of angles, all culminating in the central theme of 'Challenges and Hope for the Future.'

Indeed, children and loving families are our future, and therefore our hope as well.

I wish you an inspiring, productive, and engaging congress!