
5. The Netherlands

During the period 2000-2006, the Netherlands' commitment to human rights and democracy was reflected primarily in its financial assistance to a broad range of aid programmes and its active role in governance issues within relevant international bodies, most notably the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN). This commitment was significant, but did not translate into a clear and systematic approach towards strategic policy development or political dialogue aimed at furthering democratisation. Most Dutch democracy support went to one-off projects run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multilateral institutions and political foundations. The geographical focus of Dutch bilateral democracy promotion activities became more selective during the 2000-2006 period, focusing strongly on sub-Saharan Africa. For each of its 36 partner countries, the Netherlands used 'good governance' as one of five criteria for establishing and maintaining a bilateral aid relationship. Reflecting the Dutch preference for multilateral diplomacy, critical forms of engagement –conditionality, demarches or democracy-related dialogue– were adopted in nearly all cases only in close consultation with EU partners. Two ministers from the same political party within the

government coalition headed Dutch foreign and development policy-making for much of the period, and this area of policy was not subject to major political controversy.

General Policy Commitments

Dutch foreign policy and development co-operation in the 2000-2006 period was characterised by a strong internationalist perspective, with a preference for multilateral action, promotion of the rule of law and a significant commitment to international poverty reduction. In 2002, the first coalition government led by prime minister Balkenende – which incorporated the Christian Democrat party (CDA), the liberal party (VVD) and the new right-wing List Pim Fortuyn (LFP) – downgraded the cabinet ranking of the post of development minister and proposed several cuts in the Netherlands' relatively generous foreign aid budget. When this government collapsed in October 2002, after only 86 days in power, a second Balkenende-led coalition – consisting this time of the CDA, VVD and the liberal-democratic D66 – largely repaired the foreign aid cuts and quickly reinstalled Agnes Van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven as full minister for development co-operation. Prime minister Balkenende stated in the inaugural address of his second government in March 2003: 'This cabinet chooses to focus on international co-operation, because we see it as our moral duty to contribute to the development of poor countries ... In various operations we will contribute to the fight against terrorism, the promotion of peace and human rights.'¹

¹ *Regeringsverklaring*, presented in Dutch Parliament by prime minister Balkenende on 11 June 2003, available at, <http://www.nos.nl/archief/specials/balkenende2/paginas/regeringsverklaring/index.html>.

Dutch foreign policy and development co-operation are integrated within the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Responsibility for policy formulation and execution are divided between a minister for foreign affairs (from 2002, Bernard Bot from the CDA) and a minister for development co-operation (from 2002, Agnes Van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven, also from the CDA). Unlike in Germany, France or other European countries, the policy arenas of foreign affairs and development co-operation in the Netherlands are largely the prerogative of these two ministers, although important international policy matters are normally co-ordinated with the prime minister and other cabinet ministers. The broad base of the ruling three-party coalition government had a mitigating effect on internal disputes over policy. In the second Balkenende government (still in power in 2006), the main ministers involved in international affairs – including Bernard Bot, Agnes Van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven and defence minister, Henk Kamp (VVD) – sought closer collaboration. As part of this strategy, the Netherlands elaborated an integrated approach to international issues of peace and security, good governance and human rights, trade, poverty, the environment and migration. Eight identified foreign policy goals included the aims: ‘to strengthen the international legal order and respect for human rights’, and ‘to promote security and stability, effective humanitarian assistance, and good governance’.²

Building on an initial 1979 *Memorandum on Human Rights in Foreign Policy* that had first called for a human rights based approach to Dutch development policy, a new 2001 *Memorandum on Human Rights* committed the Netherlands to a policy based on a link between human rights protection and conflict prevention/management – in particular the

² See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website at <http://www.minbuza.nl>.

fight against impunity and support for the rule of law in post-conflict situations – and a shift in human rights policy from norm-setting to norm-implementation.³ As part of this new human rights policy, the Human Rights Division within the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs was reorganised and integrated into a new Department for Human Rights and Peacebuilding (DMV) at the beginning of 2000.

To underline the importance of human rights within Dutch foreign and development co-operation policy, a new human rights ambassador was appointed in 2000.⁴ The primary tasks of the Dutch ambassador at large for human rights were to integrate human rights into all areas of foreign and development co-operation policy; maintain and develop contacts on human rights issues with various groups in Dutch society; and conduct exploratory missions to countries to discuss human rights problems. Concerning the latter task, country visits of the human rights ambassador included Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Syria and Vietnam. In 2006, the work of the human rights ambassador placed a new emphasis on dialogue with the Arab world, including issues such as freedom of expression and women's rights.⁵

The basis for current Dutch development co-operation policy was provided by the policy paper *Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities: Dutch Development Co-operation en Route to 2015*, adopted when Agnes Van

3 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2001) *Mensenrechtenbeleid*. Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. 27742, nr. 1, Vergaderjaar 2000-2001, The Hague, pp.1-2.

4 Between 2000 and 2003, Renée Jones-Bos served as the first human rights ambassador. In 2003, this position was taken over by Piet de Klerk.

5 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Memorie van Toelichting 2006. Begroting van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*. 30300 V, nr. 2, Vergaderjaar 2005-2006, The Hague, p. 22.

Ardenne-Van der Hoeven took office in May 2003.⁶ The main commitments of this new policy were to develop a more integrated policy towards foreign affairs, defence and development co-operation; support for sustainable development; partnership, especially between the public and private sector; a geographical focus on Africa; and a regional approach in policy implementation.⁷ In line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), priority themes included support to education, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, as well as the environment and water supply.⁸ However, the strategy also referred to good governance as 'a prerequisite for sustainable poverty reduction and for attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015'.⁹

In 2004, a *Handbook on Good Governance* was elaborated by the DMV to add content and weight to the concept of good governance and further operationalise key themes such as democratisation, human rights and the rule of law. In practice, the handbook provided a useful assessment of failing governance in many developing countries but did not enhance operational guidelines for Dutch aid officers in the field to any significant extent.

The promotion of democracy was seen as an integral part of the good governance agenda, but became a priority issue on the Dutch policy agenda from 2004-2005. In October 2005, Agnes van Ardenne-van der

⁶ Agnes Van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven had also been minister of development co-operation, albeit with a lower cabinet rank, in the first Balkenende government between July 2002 and May 2003.

⁷ The three regional focus areas in Dutch development co-operation policy are the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes (in central Africa) and the Balkans.

⁸ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003) *Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities – Dutch Development Co-operation en Route to 2015*. Directorate-General for International Co-operation, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague.

⁹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003) *Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities – Dutch Development Co-operation en Route to 2015*. Directorate-General for International Co-operation, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, p. 9.

Hoeven stressed the Dutch government's commitment to 'move beyond technocratic development co-operation towards a development policy that embraces the political dimension'.¹⁰ In a later speech in November 2005, she declared that 'democracies, both rich and poor, maintain stability by allowing people to fight out their differences with words instead of weapons. This makes promoting democracy a viable strategy for conflict prevention. Since democracy also has a superior track record when it comes to jump-starting development, I have consistently supported democratic institutions and accountable, legitimate governments in developing countries.'¹¹

Within the parameters of a broad consensus on democracy and human rights issues, regular and vibrant debate occurred within the Dutch Parliament. Persistent questions by parliamentarians, from both opposition and coalition parties, often pushed the government into responding to serious deteriorations in democratic rights. When this did happen, the Dutch government almost always acted in co-ordination with other donor countries or through multilateral organisations like the UN and EU. In those cases where it decided to withhold, cut or stop its bilateral aid, the Netherlands normally maintained its diplomatic relations with the government in question and commonly shifted funds towards humanitarian programmes.¹² There were some cases – notably Rwanda, Uganda and

10 Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005) *The Ship and the Raft*, address by Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven (minister of development co-operation) at Nederlands Genootschap voor Internationale Zaken, 13 October 2005, Clingendael Institute. Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague. See also Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005) *The World's Banlieues*. Address by Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven (minister of development co-operation) at the Symposium on the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, 15 November 2005, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague.

11 Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005) *The World's Banlieues*, op. cit.

12 See also 'Netherlands', in Robert G. Herman and Theodore Piccone (2002) *Defending Democracy: A Global Survey of Foreign Policy Trends 1992-2002*, Washington, D.C.: Democracy Coalition Project, pp. 140-144.

China – on which the government was criticised by parliament for doing too little, being too permissive or ‘not being political enough.’¹³ The opposition Labour party (PvdA) has been slightly more outspoken on democracy-related issues.¹⁴ In general, however, most democracy promotion policies were supported by a wide majority in the Dutch Parliament.

Democracy Funding

The Netherlands has been among the most generous donor countries in the provision of development assistance. Its 2003 development co-operation budget of 3.5 billion euros represented 0.8 per cent of GDP¹⁵ and exceeded the UN’s official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 per cent. Reforms to the structure of governmental aid budgets made it more difficult to calculate how much the Netherlands spent on democracy promotion-related activities. Categories were defined more broadly than in the case of most other donors. Aid for ‘good governance, human rights and peacebuilding’ increased incrementally, but was then reduced notably in 2004. A change in aid categories from 2005 included human rights and good governance assistance within different and more broadly defined budgets. While this militated against direct comparisons, it could be concluded that the overall support for politically related projects increased from 2005.

¹³ Unfortunately, an in-depth analysis of the quality or effect of Dutch political initiatives in particular country cases exceeds the scope of this chapter.

¹⁴ A recent report detailing the PvdA’s vision on development co-operation emphasizes the need to draw more attention to the political dimensions of development and to commit partner countries’ governments to agreements (preferably in the form of memoranda of understanding) on democratic progress, respect for human rights and the fight against corruption. See PvdA (2005) *Een Goede Ontwikkeling. Internationale Samenwerking in Sociaal-Democratisch Perspectief*. ZNC-Subcommissie PvdA & OS (Commissie Koenders), 21 November 2005.

¹⁵ OECD/DAC *Aid at a Glance 2004: Netherlands*, available at, <http://www.oecd.org/dac>.

Relevant expenditure was as follows:

'Good Governance, Human Rights and Peacebuilding':	2002	75 million euros
	2003	64 million euros
	2004	42 million euros ¹⁶
<hr/>		
'Good Governance' (change of category):	2005	158 million euros
	2006	154 million euros(alloc)

For 2005-2006, the amounts for 'Good Governance' came from a 'Security, humanitarian assistance and good governance' category, amounting to 990 million in 2005 and 872 million in 2006.

For 2005-2006, an additional amount was made available for a 'Legal Order and Human Rights' category, totalling 100 million euros in 2005 and 87 million euros (allocated) for 2006.¹⁷

Several other budget lines also funded democracy-related activities. These included the 'MAatschappelijke TRAnsformatie' (Societal Transformation) or MATRA programme, aimed at supporting political transition in countries in central, southeast and eastern Europe and countries in the EU 'neighbourhood'. The MATRA budget was 43 million euros in 2004. Countries supported by the MATRA programme included Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Turkey, and subsequently Morocco and Jordan.¹⁸

¹⁶ Homogeneous Budget for International Co-operation (HGIS) Nota 2004.

¹⁷ HGIS Nota 2006.

¹⁸ The total 2004 MATRA budget of 43 million euros was divided between 'MATRA for European Co-operation' (15 million) and 'MATRA Good Governance' (28 million). See Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Bijlage bij Kamerbrief inzake Beleidsvoornemens Matraprogramma*. Brief van de Staatssecretaris van Buitenlandse Zaken. 23987, nr. 39, Vergaderjaar 2004-2005, The Hague.

In addition, the Theme-based Co-financing System (TMF) for Dutch NGOs and the Strategic Alliance with International NGOs (Salin) for non-Dutch NGOs supported civil society in developing countries and included good governance projects. The 2002-2006 budget for TMF was 156 million euros. The newer and smaller Salin budget line was allocated 80 million euros for 2006-2010.¹⁹ A separate 700,000 euros went to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and another 2 million euros to the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund.

Combining these different aid budgets, it can be roughly calculated that overall Dutch funding for democracy-related activities amounted to approximately 127 million euros in 2004. This represented just under 4 per cent of development co-operation funds.

In general terms, due to the lack of a clear good governance framework of its own, the Netherlands continued to rely heavily on highly-aggregated indicator-based measurements devised by the World Bank²⁰ and other organisations. Within the DMV, efforts were commenced to integrate human rights and good governance reporting more systematically into the multi-annual strategic plans of Dutch embassies in partner and non-partner countries. With the exception of a few partner countries, however, political assessments of the prospects for democratisation were, in the period 2000-2006, not strongly linked to Dutch bilateral aid activities.

¹⁹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005) *Kamerbrief inzake Beleidskader Programma Thematische Medefinanciering Ronde 2006-2010*. DS1/MY-52/05, The Hague, 2 March 2005, p. 2; and Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Kamerbrief inzake Beleidskader INGOs 2006-2010*. Brief van de Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. 29800 V, nr. 123, Vergaderjaar 2004-2005, The Hague.

²⁰ These include the Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIAs) and the governance indicators developed by Daniel Kaufmann of the World Bank Institute. See Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Massimo Mastruzzi (2004) *Governance Matters III: Governance Indicators for 1996-2002*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank Institute.

In terms of regional and country focus, Dutch assistance for human rights, good governance and democratisation had traditionally been spread thinly over many parts of the developing world. Under Jan Pronk, minister for development co-operation between 1989 and 1998, the Netherlands had some form of bilateral development relationship with more than 70 developing countries. When Eveline Herfkens took over as minister between 1998 and 2002, she drastically reduced the number of recipient countries, ultimately limiting them to a group of '17 + 3' – the '17' embracing a list of less developed states, the '3' additional and more politically-justified recipients being Egypt, the Palestinian Territories and South Africa.

In addition, three thematic lists were drawn up including one specifically for countries qualifying for assistance in the field of good governance, human rights and peacebuilding. This so-called 'GMV list' included Albania, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Kenya, Moldova, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, El Salvador and Zimbabwe.²¹

Much discussion took place in the Dutch Parliament over which countries qualified for the lists and on what basis.²² Most contested were the three criteria that were used in the selection process: the level of poverty, the quality of governments' socio-economic policy and the quality of governance. Ironically, the initiative to reduce the number of countries soon led to the development of new unwieldy country lists that effectively

21 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (1999) *Landenbeleid Structurele Bilaterale Hulp* [Country Policy Structural Bilateral Aid]. Brief van de Minister van Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. 26433, nr. 28, Vergaderjaar 2000-2001, The Hague, p. 6.

22 The deteriorating governance situation in Rwanda and its role in the war in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo between 1999 and 2000, for example, finally led to the exclusion of Rwanda from the 17 + 4 list.

continued the fragmentation of Dutch development co-operation policy. This was somewhat improved when Agnes Van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven became minister in 2003. One of her first policy initiatives was to discard the confusing variety of lists introduced by her predecessors and on the basis of five criteria²³ nominate 36 bilateral 'partner countries'²⁴ that could benefit from a broad range of Dutch assistance programmes, including support for human rights, good governance and other democracy-related programmes. Under strong pressure from parliament, the Netherlands government, in 2004, also created a Strategic Facility for Human Rights and Good Governance Activities (FSA) for non-partner countries, comprising some 9 million euros in 2005, which supported political dialogue and civil society initiatives in the Middle East.²⁵

Overall, during the period 2000-2006, the Netherlands made some moves towards being more selective in its distribution of governance aid. 'Good governance', rather than 'democracy', was the main category of definition, and featured as one of the key aspects of bilateral assistance relationships with partner countries like Albania, Benin, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Rwanda and Uganda.

In terms of thematic priorities, Dutch financial and political support for democracy promotion was broken down into standard areas of assistance: human rights, elections, political party development, parliamentary

23 These included continuity of policy, level of poverty, quality of policy and governance of recipient countries, size and value-added of Dutch aid, and Dutch foreign policy priorities.

24 The current 36 partner countries include Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Yemen, Cape Verde, Kenya, Macedonia, Mali, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestinian Authority, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Surinam, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia and South Africa.

25 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Memorie van Toelichting 2006. Begroting van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*. 30300 V, nr. 2, Vergaderjaar 2005-2006, The Hague, p. 22.

strengthening, decentralisation and local governance, anti-corruption activities, media support, civil society aid and democracy support channelled through international organisations. Below is a short overview of the key features of each area.

- Dutch activities in the field of **human rights** comprised a broad range of issues.²⁶ These included funding for human rights activities run by international NGOs like the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH); activities aimed at the protection from torture through an annual contribution to the UN's Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture; the UN secretary-general's special representative for children and armed conflict and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; programmes aimed at improving women's participation in education, political decision-making and public administration; funding for war crime tribunals (the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda); and backing for the African Court on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). An independent evaluation of Dutch human rights policy qualified the impact of such assistance as largely positive.²⁷
- Dutch **electoral assistance** was oriented increasingly towards sending observers only as part of co-ordinated international missions, such as those run by the EU, UN or Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In formal terms, such missions were favoured where

²⁶ For this paragraph, extensive use has been made of the section on Dutch Human Rights Policy on the website of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at, <http://www.minbuza.nl>.

²⁷ Based on information provided by the Policy and Operations Evaluations Department (IOB). At the time of writing, the final report of the human rights evaluation by IOB was not yet published.

elections were judged to be part of an ongoing process of democratisation.²⁸ Dutch observers monitored elections in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Cambodia, Guatemala, Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan – at least some of which appeared not to meet the ‘ongoing democratisation’ criterion. In total, between 2000-2003, the Netherlands financed more than 100 election-related activities in over 35 countries with a total cost of 20 million euros. The majority of these activities focused on civic education (28 per cent), support to national election observation (16 per cent) and election commission capacity-building (10 per cent).²⁹ One assessment noted a trend in Dutch electoral assistance towards more sustainable forms of assistance, including support for the institutional strengthening of election commissions.³⁰

- In the period after 2000, the Netherlands became one of the main European donors in the field of **political party support**.³¹ The overwhelming majority of this aid was channelled through foundations linked to political parties in the Dutch Parliament. Eight ‘political foundations’ receive their funds mainly from the Dutch government. They have a large degree of autonomy in deciding how this money is spent, although they engage in regular consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the countries and projects seen as worthwhile to support. Seven of the foundations (EFS, AMS-EFDS, HvSS, FSS,

²⁸ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1997) *Notitie inzake Verkiezingswaarneming*, The Hague; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1999) *Brief inzake Verkiezingswaarneming*, The Hague.

²⁹ Consultants for Development Programmes (2005) *Evaluatie Verkiezingsondersteuning 1999-2003*, The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 13.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. vii.

³¹ See Jos van Wersch and Jeroen de Zeeuw (2005) *Mapping European Democracy Assistance. Tracing the Activities and Financial Flows of Political Foundations*. CRU Working Paper 36, The Hague: Clingendael Institute.

EEPT-SGP, DCP-CU and IDI)³² were supported mainly through the earlier MATRA programme, which included a facility (of 1.7 million euros in 2004) for strengthening parties and, to a lesser extent, civil society organisations in young and transitional democracies in central and eastern Europe, Eurasia, and subsequently also Morocco and Jordan. The eighth organisation, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), was formed in 2000 by seven Dutch political parties, and received its 31 million euro budget for 2003-2006 from the TMF programme. NIMD activities focused mainly on sub-Saharan Africa (accounting for 69 per cent of its spending), Central and South America (21 per cent) and Asia (10 per cent).

- Support for the creation and implementation of **anti-corruption** mechanisms was a central element of Dutch democracy promotion. Projects focused on capacity-building for government-level institutions, such as Ombudsmen and Auditor Generals Offices; the civil society level, through support for local NGOs; the private sector, through assistance in strengthening regulations for good corporate governance and Chambers of Commerce; and the monitoring of donor funds in direct budget support.³³ Recipient organisations included Transparency International, the Global Forum on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity II in 2000, the Utstein Anti-Corruption Virtual Resource Centre, and the Anti-Corruption Committee and Court in

³² The Eduardo Frei Stichting (EFS) is the political foundation linked to the Christian democrat party (CDA); the Alfred Mozer Stichting (AMS-EFDS) is linked to the social democratic party (PvdA); the Haya van Someren Stichting (HvSS) is linked to the liberal party (VVD); the Foundation on Sustainable Solidarity (FSS) is linked to the green party (GroenLinks); the Eastern Europe Project Team (EEPT-SGP) is linked to the reformed Christian party (SGP); the Development Co-operation project (DCP-CU) is linked to the Christian party (ChristenUnie); and the International Democratic Initiative (IDI) is linked to the social liberal party (D66). The other two Dutch political parties in parliament – the Socialist Party (SP) and the Party Pim Fortuyn (LPF) – have not applied for funding.

³³ Ibid, pp. 8-12.

Indonesia. Partly in response to strong parliamentary pressure, in early 2005, an Anti-Corruption Task Force was created and tasked with monitoring the compliance of integrity and anti-corruption rules both by civil servants within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by its partners in developing countries.

- The Netherlands' main sources of funding for **civil society support** abroad were the TMF, which was allocated a 156 million euro budget for 2002-2006, for both Dutch and non-Dutch NGOs, and the more general Co-Financing Programme (MFP), which allocated funds to a limited number of Dutch NGOs, including Cordaid, ICCO, Novib, Hivos, Terre des Hommes and Plan Nederland. The MFP accounted for 11-14 per cent of the annual development co-operation budget, amounting to some 417 million euros in 2005. Only a small part of these budgets was allocated to civil society building from a democracy promotion perspective; the largest part was related rather to poverty reduction activities. Notable examples of Dutch democracy-related civil society assistance included support for the activities of Press Now, the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA), Search for Common Ground (SfCG) and Afrobarometer.
- Dutch funding also supported **parliamentary, local government, rule of law and media projects**. In the parliamentary field, finance was provided to the Amsterdam-based European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), Parliamentarians for Global Action and the International Parliamentary Union. Support for decentralisation and local governance programmes aimed to improve service delivery and increase local administrations' transparency and accountability to citizens.³⁴

³⁴ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2002) *Notitie Decentralisatie en Lokaal Bestuur*. Brief van de Minister van Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. 28000 V, nr. 55, Vergaderjaar 2001-2002, The Hague.

Decentralisation programmes were normally supported through either local government co-operation 'twinning', through the International Co-operation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG-International) or the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). Notable Dutch support in this field went to Bolivia, India, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Indonesia, Macedonia and Rwanda.³⁵ Technical assistance for legal reform was provided during the constitutional review process in Kenya and Indonesia; for transitional justice in post-conflict situations, for example in Sierra Leone; for capacity-building of the police and security sector (for example, in Afghanistan and Indonesia), the prison system (in Rwanda) and the judiciary (in Uganda). A significant new project in the area of media reform included a 15 million euro grant for 'Media Diversity in Iran', aimed at promoting more pluralistic media in the Islamic Republic.³⁶

Apart from supporting activities directly, the Netherlands also supported the democracy work of a number of international organisations. First, the Netherlands advocated increases in European Community democracy funding throughout the 2000-2006 period and was one of the strongest advocates of an enhanced focus on democracy in sub-Saharan Africa through the Cotonou Convention. Second, the Netherlands supported the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw in its programmes on democratisation, human rights, elections and gender equality. Third, the Netherlands was one of the largest donors to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Indeed, by 2005 the Netherlands was UNDP's largest core donor with an annual contribution of 90 million euros, a

³⁵ See <http://www.minbuza.nl>.

³⁶ *Grant Framework on 'Media Diversity in Iran'*, see: <http://www.minbuza.nl>.

share of which went to the Thematic Trust Fund for Democratic Governance.³⁷ Fourth, the Netherlands was one of the founding members of International IDEA in Stockholm and, after 2004, was the organisation's second largest donor.

Geographical Examples and Variation³⁸

- **Africa** was by the far the principal arena of Dutch democracy promotion activity. One of the most notable examples was **Uganda**. In 2005, Dutch bilateral support to Uganda amounted to 34 million euros, including approximately 650,000 euros for human rights and 4.5 million euros for good governance related activities. During bilateral talks and informal meetings with Ugandan government officials between 2003 and 2005, the Netherlands repeatedly signalled its discontent with the deterioration in respect for political and human rights. In mid-2005 the continuation of direct budget support was made conditional on four indicators: a 'yes' vote in the July 2005 referendum on the reintroduction of multiparty politics; a revised law on political parties; a cessation of government financing of the National Resistance Movement (NRM); and a more sincere official effort towards conflict resolution in northern Uganda. When it became clear at the end of 2005 that these conditions had not been met, the Dutch government (in consultation with other bilateral donors such as the

³⁷ Between 2001-2003, the Netherlands contributed 8.8 million US dollars (approximately 7.4 million euros) to UNDP's Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF). UNDP (2005): *Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund*, New York: UNDP.

³⁸ The financial information on Dutch ODA to the partner countries mentioned was taken from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website (available at, <http://www.minbuza.nl>) and from Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2006) *Antwoorden op Feitelijke Vragen Begroting Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*. Tweede Kamer, 30300 V, vergaderjaar 2005-2006, The Hague.

United Kingdom, Norway and Ireland) decided to cut its 6 million euros of direct budget support and re-channel assistance to relief efforts in northern Uganda.

In 2005, Dutch bilateral support to **Ethiopia** amounted to 21 million euros, focusing mainly on food security, healthcare and education. After election-related violence in May and November 2005, in which more than 80 people were killed by Ethiopian government forces and hundreds of opposition activists were arrested and detained, the Netherlands cut the share of its aid going through the federal Ethiopian government from 35 to 15 per cent and increased support for good governance programmes.

In 2005, Dutch aid to **Rwanda** amounted to 17.4 million euros, and included 5.1 million euros for good governance related activities. As one of the cases attracting most critical scrutiny from the Dutch Parliament, the Netherlands government sought to maintain a critical dialogue with the Rwandan authorities on governance-related issues and regularly reviewed its bilateral memorandum of understanding with Rwanda. However, in terms of concrete policy responses, critical pressure on the Kagame regime did not appear strong. When five members of the Rwandan opposition disappeared in the run-up to the August 2003 parliamentary elections, the Netherlands withheld a 250,000 euro contribution to the organisation of elections, although it adopted this measure only after strong pressure from parliamentary opposition parties. A Rwandan parliamentary report accusing Dutch-supported Rwandan human rights NGOs of instigating ethnic divisions (a serious claim in post-genocide Rwanda) met with little critical official response from the Dutch government.

Dutch ODA to **Kenya** was a far more modest 4.5 million euros in 2005, with 700,000 euros allocated for strengthening the rule of law and 3.8 million euros for other good governance related activities. In the late 1990s, during the final years of the Moi regime, the Netherlands gradually reduced its bilateral aid flows to Kenya mainly because of high levels of government corruption, the regime's poor human rights record and the flawed elections of 1992 and 1997. Between 1999 and 2002, Kenya was placed on the good governance and human rights list ('GMV-list') that benefited non-governmental organisations with the aim of fostering an independent Kenyan civil society. When Moi's KANU party was defeated by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in 2002, and Mwai Kibaki was elected president, the Netherlands rekindled its bilateral relationship with the new democratically-elected government and reinstated Kenya as an official partner country. In relation to subsequent allegations of large-scale government corruption in Kenya and the limited political willingness of the Kibaki administration to address this problem, the Netherlands did not respond with any official sanctions.

- Colonial history helped ensure a strong, although often delicate, Dutch interest in post-Suharto **Indonesia**. The Netherlands allocated one of its largest bilateral aid programmes to Indonesia that was worth 89 million euros in 2005; 11.2 million of this went to good governance related activities. The Netherlands consistently pushed for a political and peaceful settlement of the secessionist conflicts over Aceh and Papua New Guinea, between the Indonesian Army and various insurgent groups. It favoured the installation of a civilian government in both areas, which would be granted a high level of autonomy under Indonesia's Special Autonomy laws. The Netherlands was one of the

biggest donors to the Partnership for Governance Reform, a partnership project between the Indonesian government, academia, civil society, the corporate sector and donor governments aimed at promoting good governance, legal reform and police and security sector reforms.³⁹

- Support for reforms in the **Middle East** increased after 2001, but was still extremely cautious. In 2005, Dutch bilateral support to **Egypt** amounted to 7 million euros, of which 1.1 million went to good governance related activities. In the run-up to the November/December 2005 elections, the Dutch ambassador (representing the Luxembourg presidency of the EU) communicated his concerns over the arrest of Egyptian parliamentarians and opposition leaders to the Egyptian authorities, but no concrete action was taken. The Dutch government was to increase assistance to women's rights organisations and other human rights programmes in 2006.⁴⁰ In **Iraq**, between July 2003 and April 2005, the Dutch government deployed 7,500 troops as part of the Stabilisation Force Iraq (SFIR) and was responsible for security and reconstruction efforts in the southern Iraqi province of Al-Muthanna. In 2004, the Netherlands also provided 5 million euros in humanitarian assistance to Iraq, but broader political instability ensured a limited contribution directly to Iraqi democracy-building challenges.

Finally, the Dutch government provided significant assistance to **Yemen**, motivated to a large extent by the country's strategic position on the Arabian peninsula and as a means to improve broader dialogue with the Arab world. With a 2005 ODA budget of 22 million euros – mainly spent

³⁹ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2004) *Indonesië*. Brief van de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken. 26049, nr. 41, Vergaderjaar 2003-2004, The Hague.

⁴⁰ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Kamervragen van het lid Koenders met Antwoord*. Nr. 1197, vergaderjaar 2004-2005, The Hague.

on education, healthcare and sanitation as well as good governance, human rights, private sector development and women's rights – the Netherlands was the third largest aid donor in Yemen.

- In **Afghanistan**, the Netherlands supported the presidential elections in 2004 and parliamentary elections in 2005. The majority of Dutch aid was channelled through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which was targeted at strengthening the central government in Kabul. Between 2001 and 2004, Dutch aid contributions to the country totalled some 217 million euros. In addition, in 2006, the Dutch government was to send more than 1,200 troops to Afghanistan to take part in various International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Kabul, Uruzgan and Pol-e-Khomri.
- In **Russia**, the Netherlands was one of the EU states moderately critical of the Putin administration. During a state visit by president Putin in December 2005, the Dutch minister of foreign affairs criticised deteriorating human rights and democracy conditions in Russia. The Netherlands was one the strongest supporters of the reform recommendations of the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner. Via its embassy in Moscow, the Dutch government offered small-scale support to Russian human rights NGOs. In 2005, the Netherlands made available some 500,000 euros for Russian NGOs through the MATRA programme and the Strategic Facility for Human Rights. In addition, a visit to Russia by the Dutch human rights ambassador was planned for 2006.
- The Dutch played a firm but not prominent role in **Belarus**. In talks between the EU and the Russian Federation, the Dutch government

argued that it stressed the importance of allowing independent OSCE election monitors to be present during the March 2006 elections in Belarus. In response to arrests of opposition leaders and increasing political pressure on the media, the Netherlands sponsored EU statements condemning these actions and advocated sanctions (including trade and travel restrictions) against officials from the Lukaschenko regime.⁴¹ During **Ukraine's** Orange Revolution the Netherlands played an active role as EU chair, with a policy based on facilitating a pacted agreement between the Yanukovitch and Yushchenko camps. When the second round of elections was re-run on 26 December 2004, the Netherlands sent 65 observers as part of the OSCE election monitoring mission.⁴² The Netherlands, however, subsequently was one of the EU member states least keen on offering Ukraine EU membership – in particular after the Dutch 'no' vote in the 2005 referendum on the EU constitution.

- Through supporting institutions like the Supreme Court and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Netherlands developed small-scale rule of law efforts in **China**. The Dutch human rights ambassador was sent regularly to China for bilateral talks with Chinese government officials on various human rights issues, including the abolition of the death penalty, the protection of Tibetan religious traditions and culture and the protection of human rights activists. Finally, in relation to the limited progress of the Chinese human rights situation, the Netherlands was one of the strongest advocates within the EU of maintaining the arms embargo against China. However, out of fear that the Netherlands would

⁴¹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006) *Beantwoording Vragen van het lid Koenders over de Aanstaaende Verkiezingen in Wit-Rusland*, The Hague, 20 January.

⁴² Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Oekraïne. Brief van de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken*. 29933, nr. 3, vergaderjaar 2004-2005, The Hague.

become isolated, the Dutch government indicated, in late 2004, that the Netherlands would not veto a majority EU decision to remove the embargo in the future.⁴³

- The **Balkans** was one of three Dutch priority regions. Governance-related activities, including public sector reform, rule of law, decentralisation, inter-ethnic co-operation, but also promotion of the private sector, were part of the Dutch development assistance portfolio to this region. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Netherlands took part in the EU peacekeeping force 'Althea' (with a contribution of 354 troops). The Netherlands supported the Stabilisation and Association process, aimed at EU membership, in return for progress on economic and political reforms. However, in the case of Croatia and Serbia, the Dutch government repeatedly emphasised that further talks on EU accession should be conditional on compliance with requests for indictees to be handed over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), based in The Hague.⁴⁴
- In **Latin America**, the Netherlands ran bilateral aid programmes with Nicaragua, Bolivia, Surinam, Colombia and Guatemala. Guatemala, in particular, was a priority country in terms of human rights and good governance support. In 2005, the Netherlands was Guatemala's fourth largest aid donor after the United States, Japan and Spain, and supported projects on strengthening the judicial system and the Truth Commission. In 2005, Dutch bilateral support to Colombia amounted to 10.1 million euros, which included 1.4 million euros for human rights

⁴³ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2004) *Kamervragen met Antwoord*. Nr. 542, vergaderjaar 2004-2005, The Hague.

⁴⁴ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Kamervragen van het lid Van Bommel met Antwoord*. Nr. 243, vergaderjaar 2005-2006, The Hague.

and 500,000 euros for good governance. While not a least-developed country, Colombia was selected as a bilateral partner country because of the country's violent conflicts and its vicinity to the Dutch Antilles and Aruba. The Netherlands supported the mission by the Organization of American States to monitor the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of illegal armed combatants.⁴⁵

- In the case of some other, smaller but difficult democracy promotion cases, the Netherlands again attributed most importance to strengthening action at the EU level. By 2005, the Netherlands was firmly advocating referring **Burma** to the UN Security Council because of the deteriorating political and human rights situation and actively discouraged Dutch companies from investing in Burma.⁴⁶ In addition, the Netherlands supported the EU Common Position on sanctions against **Cuba**. With financial assistance from the Netherlands government, a number of Dutch NGOs supported Cuban civil society organisations.

Summary

In the period 2000-2006, the Netherlands consolidated its position as a strong advocate of democracy and human rights issues. The Netherlands played an active role in international human rights norm-setting and often took the first steps to initiate negotiations over new international humanrights laws. Its development aid programmes included a strong

⁴⁵ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Kamervragen van het lid Ferrier met Antwoord*. Nr. 93, vergaderjaar 2005-2006, The Hague.

⁴⁶ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2005) *Kamervragen van het lid Koenders en Samsom met Antwoord*. Nr. 366, vergaderjaar 2005-2006, The Hague.

good governance component. Partly as the result of a strong lobby within the Dutch Parliament, political attention for human rights violations was consistently high, as was the level of financial assistance for human rights projects. However, it was doubtful that such policy concerns would be translated into a broader or firmly-pursued strategy of democracy promotion. Funding for democracy-related activities remained limited in comparison to other development programmes. There was little evidence of strategic decision-making in this field, absent mechanisms for systematically linking together regular country assessments, democracy programming, ongoing political dialogue and evaluation reporting. Some parliamentarians and development experts questioned whether the Dutch government was very often willing to expend its political capital and put in place tougher measures when confronted with the undemocratic behaviour of its partner countries' leaders. The strongly consensual nature of Dutch politics and a preference to work through multilateral institutions and NGOs militated against the Netherlands' developing a significantly more critical and interventionist bilateral stance in promoting democracy abroad. Speeches in 2005 by minister Van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven suggested a possible move towards a more outspoken Dutch democracy promotion policy, but the need for a more coherent articulation of such policy remained.