

The Hague  
June 2013

Dear reader,

In spring 2012 the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands tasked an external advisory committee with advising on the modernisation of the diplomatic service. He requested an in-depth analysis of the challenges facing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and how to move forward with adapting the Ministry and foreign service to the demands of these times. The Advisory Committee on Modernising the Diplomatic Service was made up of five seasoned external specialists, each an authority in their own field. In the course of slightly over a year we spoke to hundreds of people – both inside and outside the Ministry. We travelled to various embassies and extensively researched and debated the available literature on diplomacy and government in the 21st century.

The document before you is the first official progress report, containing our preliminary findings and recommendations to the Ministry. Our work is by no means finished, but in light of the political reality in the Netherlands, the Committee accepted the wish of the Minister to produce a serious interim report. We hope it will serve as valuable input in the policy debate and in the choices to be made on the role and scope of the foreign service against the background of severe austerity measures currently being implemented in the Netherlands. The report itself focuses on the changed dynamics in world affairs, how this requires a recalibration to what we have coined 'hybrid' diplomacy, and how this will affect the organisation and functioning of the Dutch diplomatic service.

Although the report is written with the Dutch reality in mind, the Committee believes that much of the analysis and recommendations extend beyond the Dutch context. The debate on the role of diplomacy and the *raison d'être* of the foreign service is by no means an isolated one. On the contrary, the Committee noted early on in its work that foreign ministries around the world are having similar discussions. We will have to learn from each other about what works and how to proceed. We are therefore pleased to be able to share with you this interim report in the hope that it may be conducive to the debate on diplomacy in a wider context.

Should you have any remarks or questions you would like to share with us, please do not hesitate to contact us through the Committee's secretariat ([BSG@minbuza.nl](mailto:BSG@minbuza.nl)).

Yours faithfully,



Arthur Docters van Leeuwen  
Chair of the Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Modernising the Diplomatic Service