

Brightlands Horizon welcome, 22 March 2019, in the House on the River Meuse

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to this House of Limburg– “Brightlands Country”.

A welcome that I express on behalf of both the Province and Maastricht University, who are jointly organising this third Brightlands Horizon event.

Today, we will be looking at industry in Limburg. And the opportunities it can grasp. With the energy transition being a particularly hot topic right now – and rightly so. Better a hot topic than a hot earth.

I am welcoming you at a special time.

It was just two days ago that the elections for the Provincial Government took place. The people of Limburg have spoken and elected their new parliament.

And that new parliament will have to take up this hot topic very soon.

Just last week, we passed another milestone, when our national planning agencies presented their financial impact assessments of the draft Climate Agreement.

It took our national government in The Hague just half an hour to respond.

With proposals for significant amendments to the climate change measures that the five climate roundtables produced right before Christmas.

Financial wizards, discussion tables in the spirit of the Dutch consensus model, and even, in the end, the national government. We all negotiate and talk things out.

Something to be proud of as Dutch citizens, and particularly as Limburgers too. Because on top of this, we are out there actively building partnerships, like in the triple helix.

And at this point there is already a lot happening, for instance:

- We in Limburg are already building heat nets. For a great example of the results, look no further than this house, which has been connected to one such network since last summer. Now we're no longer dependent on gas.

- And ten thousand Limburg families are now making their homes more sustainable with an extremely low-interest loan from our Limburg Fund 'Duurzaam Thuis'.
- And the Province bought "Mijnwater BV", a company that takes surpluses from the combined heating-cooling networks and uses that energy to serve eight thousand households. In time, even two million households.

And those are just three examples of many. As I said in my New Year address: Limburg ... is doing pretty well. Also in this area.

Ladies and gentlemen. Last year, the second Brightlands Horizon was about the possible "Einstein" telescope deep under the Limburg soil.

And partly because of that event, we have made significant strides towards making that new "wonder of the world" a reality for our province. Things like Maastricht University's recent appointment of a full professor to better highlight the research facilitated by the telescope.

But as I said, today we will be delving into industry, and specifically our chemical hotspot in Sittard-Geleen: Chemelot. It has targeted a very green ambition: to be entirely climate-neutral by two thousand and fifty.

To get our discussions going today, I have the privilege of introducing two, or really three, very special guests.

Firstly, Manon Jansen. You may already know her as CEO of international consulting firm Ecorys *and* the figurehead of the Energy Top Sector; she is both of these things, but in the past year she brought her own unique style to the Industry Roundtable for the Climate Accord.

It was a roundtable with a huge task, made up of participants with tremendous interests at stake in the energy transition. I am very much looking forward to hearing about her experiences and, knowing her, she will also dare to comment on current affairs.

Next, we will be hearing from Chemelot executive director Robert Claasen. We know him well in Limburg, of course, but he's gradually becoming a familiar face in The Hague too.

A real connector who – thanks to his decades of experience in industry (including in also beautiful Italy) and his natural drive for bringing people together – is proving to be decisive in shaping Chemelot for its sustainable future...

...The bosses at the Chemelot site don't always make it easy for him, but that's something we will surely have a chance to talk about today.

And finally, I would like to extend a special welcome to Remco de Boer, who will be taking over the rest of this morning's discussions.

you will be stimulated and inspired to form a strong coalition with Maastricht University and our Province to make our beautiful country more sustainable.

A role that fits this researcher, publicist and energy transition consultant like a glove. Being so enthusiastic himself, he also knows how to get the best from his discussion partners.

All in all, I hope that today you learn all about the opportunities for Limburg's industries. And that you will be inspired to forge an unshakeable coalition with Maastricht University and our province, to make our world, our country more sustainable. With, of course, our beautiful Limburg leading the way.