

## Press release

Amsterdam, 13 January 2009

### **Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands hands over *Boek van Belang* (*Book of Importance/interest*) to Mrs. Verbeet - the President of the House of Representatives**

**On January 15, 2009 Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands hands over the "*Boek van Belang*" (*Book of Importance/interest*) to the President of the House of Representatives Mrs. Gerdi Verbeet in the Dutch House of Representatives in The Hague at 10 am.**

**The "*Boek van Belang*" is a common initiative taken by Amsterdam Wereldboekenstad (Amsterdam World Book Capitol), de Stichting Lezen & Schrijven (Reading & Writing Foundation) and the Global Campaign for Education that draw attention to the importance of literacy in the Netherlands and world-wide. A variety of prominent Dutch writers, actors, politicians, tv presentors and sportsmen have confirmed their contribution to the Book. Princess Laurentien, who is also patroness of Amsterdam World Book Capital, wrote the preface of the Book.**

In the Netherlands about 1.5 million adults face low literacy levels; they cannot or have severe difficulties in reading and writing. Worldwide almost 800 million people – two third of them being women – cannot read or write. Language and reading are invaluable importance for society in general, for communication between people, for welfare, health and the ability to claim rights. Therefore, literacy should deserve international attention and the Book is a tool to push the topic higher on the agenda. After the receipt by Mrs. Verbeet the Book will travel throughout the country. Prominent Dutchmen will give their (handwritten) contribution to the Book by stating what reading and writing means to them. On April 22 - the international action day of the Global Campaign for Education and the closing ceremony of Amsterdam Worldbook Capital - the finalised version of the Book will be presented to the Dutch audience. In the same week a special lesson about illiteracy will be given in Dutch schools throughout the country. Ms. Verbeet is the first in a row of well-known Dutchmen to receive the book. As President of the House of Representatives she represents the importance of literacy for a well-functioning democracy.

Contributions to the book are confirmed by Hedy d'Ancona (former Minister and womans rights activist), Job Cohen (Mayor of Amsterdam), Abdelkader Benali (writer), Marjan Berk (actor/writer), Vincent Bijlo (comedian), Floris Jan Bovelanders (Hockey player), Pia Dijkstra (news-reader), Jacco Eltingh & Paul Haarhuis (tennis players), Elsbeth Etty (professor of literary criticism), Ewout Genemans (tv presentor), Frank Groothof (actor), Gerda Havertong (actor), Loek Hermans (former minister and chairman MKB Netherlands), Catherine Keyl (tv presentor), Lieke van Lexmond (actor), Nelleke Noordervliet (writer), Alexander Rinnooy Kan (Chairman Social Economic Comite) , Harmen Siezen (news-reader), Chris Tates (actor) en Doekle Terpstra (Chairman Board of Higher Educational Institutes and former trade union leader).

From 23 April 2008 until 22 April 2009 Amsterdam is World Book Capitol. This UNESCO initiative is bringing Amsterdam a broad programs, such as 'Open Book, Open Mind, in wich books, reading, writing, and freedom of expression are central issues.

The Global Campaign for Education is a worldwide campaign for the right to education of good quality for everybody – this year the action is focusing on literacy. The Aob (General Education Union), CNV Onderwijs (Christian Education Union), Edukans, ICCO/Church in Action, Oxfam Novib, Plan Netherlands and Save the Children are part of the Dutch coalition.