

**Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands**  
**Video Message on the Inauguration of Nord Stream's Second**  
**Pipeline, 8 October 2012**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Less than a year ago, we celebrated the opening of the first Nord Stream pipeline in Germany.

It was a fantastic occasion and I look back on it with great pleasure.

Unfortunately, I cannot be with you in person at today's launch of Nord Stream Two in Russia.

But I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you how proud the Netherlands is of this achievement.

We are proud of the excellent working relationship between our four countries.

And we are proud of the role our own Gasunie has played.

This is another world-class joint achievement, and I warmly congratulate everyone on this outstanding result.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the Nord Stream project.

The International Energy Agency calls this 'the Golden Age of Gas'. And with good reason.

Natural gas is relatively cheap and much cleaner than other fossil fuels.

So as we seek large-scale renewable energy solutions, natural gas remains the transition fuel of choice.

There is an extra dimension to all this for the Netherlands – the largest producer and exporter of natural gas in the European Union.

Some 66,000 people in our country earn their living directly or indirectly in the gas sector.

And it's a sector with growth potential.

That alone explains the Netherlands' ambition to remain the gas hub for Northwestern Europe.

The Dutch government and business community are also investing in that goal.

In new technologies aimed at producing sustainable natural gas.

In the largest gas-storage facility in Europe.

And in the development of responsible ways of exploiting new gas fields in vulnerable regions like the Arctic.

Because we believe in the future of natural gas.

Of course, investing in times of economic uncertainty takes courage and vision. Just as creating the international energy market of the future takes courage and vision.

But the investment will pay off.

All the partners in the Nord Stream project have shown that international cooperation is crucial to energy supply security across national borders.

We've also shown how successful and profitable this cooperation can be.

Today we reflect on that achievement.

Tomorrow, we'll be back on the job.

Because there is still a lot of work to be done.

To conclude, 2013 will be the Russian-Dutch Bilateral Year.

I look forward to all the contacts and visits back and forth between our countries.

Our cooperation in the area of energy will be a special focus area.

And I hope to meet many of you personally then.

Again, let me congratulate everyone involved in Nord Stream Two. I wish you every success with the rest of the project.

And perhaps: see you in 2013!