Speaking notes for Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, at the presentation of the Dutch translation of the book *The new golden rule* by Amitai Etzioni, The Hague, 7 December 2005

My dear Amitai, ladies and gentlemen,

- I am very happy to be receiving from your own hands today the Dutch translation of *The new golden rule*. I always find it very inspiring to exchange views with you, to hear you speak, and to read your work. Today I have the opportunity to do all three! So I consider myself very fortunate indeed.
- I first read *The new golden rule* many years ago; in fact I once referred to it as my favourite book. I re-read it this summer, after the publisher had asked me to write a foreword to the Dutch edition.
- I must say, it is the kind of book that is well worth re-reading now and then. This time too, it gave me all sorts of new ideas. As I wrote in the foreword, *The new golden rule* has two characteristics that mark a book as superior: it makes you think and it contains practical tips for action.
- Amitai Etzioni is an advocate of the communitarian movement. It is an ideology that greatly appeals to me; I've never made a secret of that. I also try to put the ideas it preaches into practice. It's not easy but I am convinced that it is possible and that it works. And that's why I continue to call for debate about the basic values of society.
- Like Professor Etzioni, I strongly believe that upholding certain values is essential to preserving the smooth functioning of society. I am referring to shared core values, which not only connect different communities within a state, but may also connect different states.
- I still clearly remember your valuable words on this subject at the conference "The politics of European values", here in The Hague in September 2004.
- The image of a mosaic within a strong frame as a metaphor for society also appeals to me. A diverse, multi-ethnic community poses no problem as long as there is agreement about its shared core values.
- *The new golden rule* outlines many of Amitai Etzioni's ideas. So I hope that this Dutch translation will reach a wide readership in this country.