

Welcoming Remarks Mariëlle Vavier at Closing Plenary
***“Can Arms Trade Bring About Peace?”* 18/04/2025 ASIL**

Dear all,

I want to begin by thanking the American Society for International Law for once again inviting the city of The Hague to participate in its annual conference. We are convening in turbulent times and I am delighted to be here with you all today to discuss the issues that matter most.

As a city council, The Hague has always cherished its international partnerships. Both with ASIL as well as with other legal institutions here in the United States. And I really hope that we can continue to meet and work together in our efforts for a more just world, just like we have this week.

At the end of June, in just over two months' time, The Hague will host the NATO Summit.

45 heads of government, six thousand delegation members and two thousand journalists will convene in my hometown. To address the most pressing security challenges facing the alliance.

We are proud of the fact that we are hosting such an important international conference. Because as the International City of Peace and Justice, The Hague has always wanted to be exactly that; an international meeting place for addressing and tackling global challenges.

That is why we are also using the NATO Summit as an opportunity to showcase all the wonderful work being done in The Hague to find alternative pathways to peace. A special ‘Road to Summit’ program in the weeks leading up to the summit will provide a wide range of activities for everyone in The Hague. This includes debates, lectures, exhibitions, as well as cultural performances.

Peace, justice, and security have always been closely intertwined. Several initiatives have already been introduced in recent years to better protect the staff, buildings and IT-systems of The Hague's international ecosystem.

But there is now an increasing realization that we have to do even more to ensure our own security. Whether we like it or not. If we want to continue to strive towards that higher goal of a more peaceful and just world, *everyone* needs to step up.

The question of this year's closing plenary is therefore a fitting one. Can arms trade bring about meaningful and lasting peace? How do we find a balance between ensuring security on the one hand, while preventing the potential adverse effects of increasing armaments on the other?

These questions are a primary focus for us in The Hague. How can we make our defenses, economy and populations more resilient in order to guarantee our security? Without these efforts coming at the expense of that unique profile as the world's legal capital; a position we have worked hard to achieve over the last 125 years. We deeply believe that the best way to resolve conflicts is through the rule of law, not through war.

I am very curious to hear the panel members' views on these issues. A big thank you to the Asser Institute for organizing this session.

Now, more than ever, it is important to connect, maintain meaningful dialogue, and continue working together on Peace and Justice. And please know you will always find The Hague at your side in these efforts.

Thank you.