THE NETHERLANDS

(Speech given by His Excellency D. U. Stikker, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, at the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, D.C., on April 4, 1949.)

"The treaty we are about to sign marks the end of an illusion: the hope that the United Nations would, by itself, ensure international peace.

"Regretfully we were driven to the conclusion that the Charter, though essential, is not enough, in the world as it is, to protect those vital principles for which we of the Western world who have gathered here stand.

"Therefore we felt it our duty to make this treaty. So far from merely marking the end of an illusion, it most especially marks the birth of a new hope of enduring peace.

"Its opponents are clamouring that this treaty aims at war. That is a lie. Its aim is peace—peace, not after a new war, but peace now, and from now on.

"We who are vitally interested in the security of the North Atlantic area henceforth stand united in our resolve to repel aggression, just as we stand united in our resolve not to attack others.

"Such, then, is the treaty's unshakable moral basis. We shall sign with a clear conscience in the face of God.

"Various aspects of the new treaty are being explained by my fellow speakers. Let me add and stress this:

"Together we are determined in our mutual interest to gird the North Atlantic with a chain of strength. That chain is, necessarily, as strong as its weakest link. Let us then strive together, on a basis of equal treatment for all, to uphold the strength of the strongest links and to increase that of the weakest, for weak links are a common peril. This is a dictate of plain common sense.

"Here, as in so many other fields of international cooperation and integration, the Netherlands will not be found wanting. As we have participated in making and implementing the Brussels Pact, and Benelux, and OEEC, and a Western European Federation (to name only these), so shall we participate in making the treaty now before us a living and inspiring reality. We know that you all in turn will not fail us.

"We rejoice at the thought that at last the truth prevails that the North Atlantic is a highway that unites, not a barrier that divides. We rejoice at the thought that North Americans and Western Europeans have found each other in a common edifice dedicated to peace. Freedom from fear is being brought nearer to all of us today.

"Let me close with a word of Netherlands gratitude to all those who have laboured towards bringing us here together. In saying this, I am thinking not only of the negotiators, whom I thank most warmly, but also, and no less, of those enlightened men who built that massive pedestal of popular support on which this treaty now securely stands: Members of
Congress, parliamentarians, moulders and interpreters of public opinion in all our countries.

"And so, with a humble prayer for God's merciful blessing, I declare the Netherlands Government's readiness to sign this treaty for peace."