



Statement by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende after cabinet meeting, Saturday 20 February 2010

Later today I will tender the resignation of the Labour Party ministers and state secretaries to Her Majesty the Queen. I will also put the offices and portfolios of the other ministers and state secretaries at her disposal. As leader of the cabinet, I have regrettably had to conclude that there is no fruitful way forward for this coalition government of the Christian Democratic Alliance, Labour Party and Christian Union.

In recent days you have been able to observe that unity was undermined by the rigid stance taken by some members of the government. By statements that are at odds with recent government decisions of which the House of Representatives has been informed. These statements placed too high a price tag on continuing to work together as colleagues. They have prevented us from giving due consideration to our men and women in Afghanistan, and to our relations with our NATO partners.

At today's cabinet meeting we explored whether trust could be restored. Reaffirmation of the agreements that we made 10 days ago and that we set out in our letter to the House of Representatives would have laid a basis for continued cooperation. The responsible ministers could then have made a proposal that would have satisfied the entire government – by 1 March, if possible.

For a minority of the cabinet, this proved to be a bridge too far. Without trust, any attempt to agree on matters of substance is doomed to failure. At best it would have been the prelude to fresh controversies in the future. Especially in view of the challenges facing the Netherlands – which call for firm resolve rather than taking the easy option.

A government's survival can never be an end in itself. The jobs and prosperity of the Dutch people must come first – now and in the future. And also the contribution that the Netherlands can reasonably make to a better world. That was the intention of my colleagues and myself three years ago when the government took office. Collectively and individually, we regard the fact that we have fallen short as a defeat. But that does not alter the facts of the situation or the conclusion that we have had to draw.