

**PRESS RELEASE
OF THE EMBASSY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
IN THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

February 13, 2018

We took note of the interview with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Halbe Zijlstra that was published on February 12 in the Dutch newspaper “de Volkskrant”. In that interview the minister contrary to his previous statements admitted that he had not been present at the meeting of Shell’s senior management with the Russian President in 2006 when, according to Minister Zijlstra, President Vladimir Putin allegedly spoke about his ambition to create a “Great Russia” that would include Belarus, Ukraine, the Baltic states and Kazakhstan.

The Foreign Minister’s statement is being widely commented in the Netherlands. Prime Minister Mark Rutte and a number of prominent politicians and parliamentarians have spoken their minds.

We are not in a position to comment on their assessments of Minister Zijlstra’s actions. We consider it as an internal affair of the Netherlands.

At the same time we cannot ignore how perceptions of Russia’s aggressive intentions are being persistently propagated in the Dutch public opinion. As we can see, this is the reason behind this whole story with the alleged meeting between Minister Zijlstra and President Putin.

According to the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, our actions in the international arena are aimed at promoting relations with all countries on an equal basis and with respect for the interests of each other. Russia stands against strengthening one’s security by weakening the security of others. The Russian President has repeatedly advocated for the creation of a common economic and humanitarian area from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

The attempts to attribute to Russia “great-power ambitions” and the desire to recreate “the Soviet Empire” do not hold up against any criticism. This can only be heard from those who are interested in presenting Russia as an enemy and who under the pretext of the notorious “Russian threat” keep pushing NATO military infrastructure eastwards, therefore consciously provoking military confrontation.

In the Netherlands Russia is being blamed for disseminating disinformation. Dutch officials are constantly making such unfounded statements. Sadly, Dutch media outlets are willingly spreading the idea conceived in someone’s inflamed imagination that Russian authorities are obsessed with creating a “Great Russia”. Moreover, it is presented as something self-evident and not requiring any proof. Isn’t this an example of fake news directed against our country?

We would like to hope that common sense will prevail, and that in the end the Netherlands will return to the understanding that Russia is an indispensable partner in the struggle against new challenges and threats.