

Ede, December 8, 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 17 July 2014, flight MH17, on its way to Kuala Lumpur, was shot out of the sky with a BUK Telar from the Russian army. All 298 passengers of 17 nationalities were killed. The plane flew over a war zone, where the airspace above 10 km was judged safe by the Ukrainian government. That same day dozens of civil aircraft flew over that area....

In the next few days you will talk to each other about Safer Skies. A very important issue for the many millions of passengers in civil aviation

I am invited to speak to you here as the representative of the relatives of the 298 victims of flight MH17 and also the representative of the victims of the shooting down of flight PS752 will speak to you. Two planes, which were brutally shot down as a result of military conflicts and the utter indifference or incompetence of warring parties. Two planes, full of many hundreds of completely innocent people. And before that, 8 more passenger planes have been shot down since 1955.

I probably don't have to tell you how much suffering this has inflicted on the countless relatives of the victims of these crimes. And how much additional suffering the aftermath of these crimes has added.

How difficult, if not impossible, it is to get the truth to the surface and to come to an account by the responsible parties and/or countries. How next of kin sometimes have to fight against political institutions, which either for financial interests or political interests could not afford to take responsibility. Or simply do not want to lose face. How next of kin end up in years of legal proceedings and have to fight against powerful institutions.

This is precisely the reason why we, as the MH17 Foundation, are not only committed to justice and accountability, but we also want to make a contribution to preventing this kind of tragedy in the future. After all, surviving relatives know better than anyone that you do not allow this kind of misery to happen to even your worst enemy.

Next of kin of the victims in flight MH17 first of all want those responsible for the shooting down of the plane to be traced, prosecuted and tried. But neither can it be that countries that do not take measures to make their airspace safer, or possibly close it, get away with it with impunity.

That is also the reason why we closely follow the developments around Safer Skies.

In the MH17 case, the Dutch Safety Board made many recommendations in its final report, which should lead to passengers in civil aviation no longer being flying targets. In 2019, the Dutch Safety Board investigated the extent to which the recommendations were followed by airlines and governments. The conclusion was that awareness had increased and that cooperation between intelligence services and airlines had received more attention and that international organizations in the field of aviation had also become more active.

But what had not changed since MH17 was the safety of airspace over conflict zones.

As a foundation, we have drawn the attention of our government and parliament to this issue and will continue to do so until effective measures have been taken.

Evidence of the lack of adequate policies in countries where conflicts are being fought could be seen to our horror in January of this year, when civilian flight PS752 was shot out of the sky with anti-aircraft missiles.

Then you think, really nobody learned from the drama with flight MH17? Do financial, commercial and/or military or political interests really outweigh the lives of large numbers of innocent civilians? And are governments not going to learn anything from the tragedy of flight PS752 and flight MH17?

Ladies and gentlemen, as relatives of victims of senseless war violence and as people who have to bear the consequences of sometimes indecisive governmental actions, we urge governments to take effective measures in an international context to ensure that passengers on airplanes no longer have to be defenceless potential victims. Don't let it stop at just an ineffectual paper tiger.

We wish you much wisdom at this important meeting.