**Beat: Vips**

# Willem-Alexander Becomes New Dutch King After Queen Beatrix Abdicates The Throne

**first Dutch king in more than a century**

Amsterdam, 30.04.2013, 16:54 Time

**USPA NEWS -** The generational change in the House of Orange-Nassau gave the Netherlands a moment of celebration, pageantry and brief respite as this trading nation of nearly 17 million struggles through a lengthy recession brought on by the European credit crisis.

Visibly emotional, the much-loved Beatrix ended her 33-year reign as queen in a nationally televised signing ceremony as thousands of orange-clad people cheered outside. Millions more were expected to watch on television.

Just over four hours later, King Willem-Alexander, wearing a fur-trimmed ceremonial mantle, swore an oath of allegiance to his country and the constitution in the historic New Church.

In a speech in the church, Europe's youngest monarch underscored the ceremonial nature of his monarchy in this egalitarian society but also the symbolic and economic value a king can deliver on state visits aimed at drumming up trade.

"I will proudly represent the kingdom and help discover new opportunities," he said.

The investiture ceremony was the final formal act on a day of high emotion within the House of Orange-Nassau and was to be followed by an evening boat tour around the historic Amsterdam waterfront.

The new king gripped his mother's hand and looked briefly into her eyes after they both signed the abdication document in the Royal Palace on downtown Amsterdam's Dam Square.

Beatrix looked close to tears as she then appeared on a balcony decked out with tulips, roses and oranges, overlooking 25,000 of her subjects.

"I am happy and grateful to introduce to you your new king, Willem-Alexander," she told the cheering crowd, which chanted: "Bea bedankt" ("Thanks Bea.")

Moments later, in a striking symbol of the generational shift, she left the balcony and King Willem-Alexander, his wife and three daughters “" the children in matching yellow dresses and headbands “" waved to the crowd.

"Dear mother, today you relinquished the throne. Thirty-three moving and inspiring years. We are intensely, intensely grateful to you," the new king said.

Willem-Alexander has said he wants to be a 21st century king who unites and encourages his people; not a "protocol fetishist," but a king who puts his people at ease.

He will do so as unemployment is on the rise in this traditionally strong economy. European Union figures released Tuesday showed Dutch unemployment continuing to trend upward to 6.4 percent “" still well below the EU average of 10.9 percent, but higher than it has been for years in the Netherlands.

"I am taking the job at a time when many in the kingdom feel vulnerable and uncertain," Willem-Alexander said. "Vulnerable in their work or health. Uncertain about their income or home environment."

**Article online:**
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-881/willem-alexander-becomes-new-dutch-king-after-queen-beatrix-abdicates-the-throne.html

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V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Leon Koop

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United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com