

Keynote: Mr. Wim Kuijken

Delta Programme Commissioner of the Netherlands

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Distinguished representatives and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is good to see that so many delegations from all over the world have registered for this important event to discuss integrated water solutions for a green economy. An important goal is to share views with each other as well as lessons learnt, to speed up integrated ways of water management for sustainable economic development. It needs no further explanation that this is our daily business in our low lying delta Country - The Netherlands.

Let me explain a little bit more about my role as Delta Programme Commissioner (2010). My responsibility is to *direct* the Dutch Delta Programme to avoid new disasters as we had in 1953. This programme stands for a safe and attractive Netherlands, now and tomorrow, where flood risk management and fresh water supplies are organized effectively. The aim of the Delta Programme is to improve the current situation *and* prepare ourselves for the future. In fact, through the coordinating role, we achieve synergy and prioritization in response to climate change at national and local/regional level. Therefore, every year a proposal specifying the Delta Programme is submitted to the Cabinet and Parliament for approval. Last month our most recent Delta Programme for 2014 was presented.

Important when developing a national programme is to support such approach with a clear administrative authority to support policy development, administration and decision making. Generally speaking, most of the delta's can be characterized by involvement of several layers of government with their specific responsibilities and different party's with specific interests in water. The conflict in water demand becomes most apparent if it concerns drought. In my opinion solutions to water conflicts require national goals and a national and sometimes even international coordination. The Delta Programme was designed to coordinate this process in the Netherlands and achieve synergy and a coherent approach facing the future.

There is a close relation between the national economic performance and the response to climate change. Due to the uncertainties around climate change as well as uncertainty regarding our future economy, we have developed a flexible and adaptive approach. Although we understand the

implications of climate change, it is still hard to estimate the required speed and amplitude of measures as they are often costly. Therefore, it is required to develop several future scenario's to respond to these variables with specific adaptive responses and strategies. It will enable to switch between scenario's and answers according to urge and the economic situation.

An adequate response should take into account tipping points of the water system and spatial system as these provide the opportunity for new adaptive measures. A tipping point is when water-infrastructure needs to be replaced due to the fact that it cannot comply with the new requirements of the adaptive measure.

To achieve our long term goals, it is necessary to connect short term decisions to long term challenges. It is important to maintain maximum flexibility to still be able to adjust between future scenarios, or in other words, to primarily choose for no-regret measures and postponing the tipping points.

Response to climate change depends on today's knowledge and technology. Priority should be with no-regret solutions to avoid limitations in future decision making as well as creating irreversible situations. Successful Dutch approaches are with 'Building with Nature' and 'Room for the River'. These strategies are flexible and often easy to accelerate or slow down according to urge and economic status.

These new insights on 'national goals', 'multi layered governance' and the 'adaptive delta management approach', as I explained, are cornerstones of our Dutch strategy, implemented since 2010.

The global challenge to respond to climate change and sea level rise is enormous. Adequate solutions need to be developed, based on an increased knowledgebase and new technological insights shared on a knowledge agenda. This requires smooth cooperation between governments, knowledge institutes and private sector to fill knowledge gaps and create state of the art solutions. Innovation will reduce the costs of investments and will diversify the pallet of choices for adequate response. Local conditions are always different and require tailor made solutions. In the slide you see some of many new innovations. For example, the use of geotextiles to limit piping at dikes, 3 dimensional modelling to simulate dike breaches and the consequences of floods, and technology to limited salt intrusion through a screen of air bubbles in a waterway.

So where do we stand at the moment in the Netherlands? In fact we work hard on implementation programmes on watersafety. Completion is scheduled between 2015/2017. Emphasis in the Dutch approach is on the safety (primary safety through dyke-rings), spatial planning (adaptive spatial design to adapt to climate change) and evacuation scenarios (emergency plans in case of emergencies). 3 layerapproch.

Nine sub-programmes (3 national 6 regional) are underway in preparation for five delta decisions, which in turn pave the way for the future after 2017. These decisions will have a significant impact on the country's future while providing for a start-up of the 'Delta Works for the Future'. Adequate

resources have been reserved for 'Safety', 'Fresh water' and 'New urban development and Restructuring', the nationwide, national sub-programmes.

To come to a closure of my presentation, I would like to stress the importance of International Cooperation. On the slide you can see the floods around the world since 1985 monitored by the Dartmouth Flood Observatory. Generally speaking floods occur more frequent and more severe around the world. International cooperation is essential to share new insights, learn from each other and fill the gaps of knowledge.

The last years good progress was made through international cooperation. An example is the close cooperation with the United States where integrated river basin planning is moving towards more adaptive spatial planning and room for the river. Another example is Vietnam where jointly a new climate change adaptation strategy for the Mekong delta is to be finalized next month. Also Bangladesh has demonstrated to be committed to develop a climate change adaptation strategy and has made the first preparations. I hope that this week will trigger more partnerships for future cooperation.

Finally. It would be a mistake to underestimate the impact of climate change on Urban Deltas. Although the future is uncertain, the direction is clear. We all should be better prepared for future events of floods and droughts. Instead of end of pipe solutions, we better choose for ongoing , longterm adaptive and no-regret responses to create flexibility and keep options open. This requires improved (water)governance, shared knowledge, smart monitoring and innovative, integrated multifunctional solutions based on a thorough understanding of the water and spatial system. An integrated approach will support decision makers in choices regarding adaptive measures at lowest cost and with the best timing.

Thank you for your attention.

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