

Keynote: Mr. Wim Kuijken

Delta Programme Commissioner of the Netherlands

4 November 2015

Distinguished representatives and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a great honor to be here for this important event to discuss about the 'Urban resilience and adaptation to Climate Change'. A matter that is our daily business in the Netherlands and part of my responsibility as Deltacommissioner. A short movie shows you how the Netherlands will respond to the challenges we are facing.
2. Our Deltaprogramme stands for a safe and attractive Netherlands. Now and tomorrow, where flood risk management, spatial planning and fresh water supplies are organized effectively in relation to changing circumstances. The aim of the Deltaprogramme is to improve the current situation *and* prepare ourselves for the future. In fact, through my coordinating role we achieve synergy and prioritization at national and local level. Every year a progress-report is prepared, including a proposal on necessary measures and interventions. The Government submits this proposal to the Parliament for approval. An annual budget of 1.2 billion Euro is made available through the *Delta Fund* and secured by law, the *Delta Law*.
3. The Dutch Delta Programme has entered a new phase: from policy development by setting down frameworks, norms and standards [2010-2015], to elaboration, implementation and realization of the measures in the coming decades. Work is in progress with emphasis to three specific issues: *flood risk management*, *freshwater supply* and *spatial planning*. Let me explain the challenges we are facing and our response up to the year of 2050 and further in relation to these three issues in more detail.  
  
(*Flood risk management*)
4. As a low lying delta the Netherlands is extremely vulnerable to floods. Flood risks relate to the coastal area, around our rivers, lakes and cities. Therefore flood risk management is one of the major focus areas of our programme. Safety standards for our dykes were drawn up in the 60's. Due to change in river discharge, rainfall but also new demographic and economic developments we have decided to actualize and raise the safety standards. These new standards will guarantee every citizen in the Netherlands in 2050 a probability of drowning of less than 1/100.000 per year. As was mentioned in the movie, an additional protection is assigned for high risk areas in sense of population numbers, vital infrastructure or economic value.

5. But there is more than just enforcing our dykes. The Flood Risk Management programme also emphasizes in creating a more resilient coastal area and optimizing the control of the water levels in our fresh water lakes. It also includes living with water instead of fighting it. Good examples are sand supplies at the coastline and the 'room for the river projects'. This to give the river more room to be able to manage increased discharges or allow peak storage in specially designed retention areas in case of extreme river floods. At more than 30 locations, measures are implemented that give the river space to discharge safely. Moreover, the measures are designed in such a way that they improve the quality of the immediate surroundings.

*(Meekoppelen)*

6. Combining other spatial interests in the surrounding areas with the foreseen flood reduction, measures will stimulate a more integrated approach and create added value for society. This will result in a more efficient package of measures, be more cost effective and will stimulate more creativity in the solutions, as well as stimulating innovative solutions.

*(Fresh Water Strategy)*

7. Another important aspect of the delta programme is the fresh water strategy. Sectors such as agriculture, shipping and many forms of industry strongly depend on the availability of fresh water. Sufficient fresh water is also crucial to the stability of dykes, urban development, the drinking water supply, electricity supply, nature and more. In the future we expect more frequent water shortage and drought as a result of climate change, salinization and socio-economic developments. Therefore a new supply-levels tool is introduced as well as an associated adaptive investment programme.

*(ruimtelijke adaptatie)*

8. The third issue addressed by the delta programme is on spatial adaptation. It is a key component, where central government, provinces, municipalities and district water boards agree to take flood risk management and climate-proofing into full consideration in spatial developments. It is mainly focused on tailor made solutions that fit the local environment.
9. The ambition is that by 2020, climate-proof action and water-robust design will constitute an integrated component of the policies and actions of these parties. A number of supporting instruments is available to this end, such as an incentive programme with an associated digital knowledge portal, guidelines for spatial adaptation, and the so-called Water Review. This Water Review will assess if new designs are indeed sufficient water proof and resilient. Furthermore, a monitoring and evaluation programme has been drawn up to measure progress and impact.
10. Within the framework of Spatial Adaptation another particular focus is on vital and vulnerable infrastructure. These are functions that are crucial to flood disaster management or functions that can entail serious damage to people, the environment or the economy in the event of a flood. Some examples are energy

supply plants, ICT-infrastructure, telecom or main road network. By no later than 2050 these vital and vulnerable functions should be flood resistant.

11. Another issue in our cities is increasing heat stress and lack of infiltration capacity. Sewerage systems are overloaded during severe rainfall and in fact little water recharges the aquifer. Therefore green solutions are promoted within cities to stimulate infiltration and reduce heat stress.
12. The global challenge to respond to climate change and sea level rise is enormous. Adequate solutions need to be developed based on an increased knowledge base and new technological insights. This requires smooth cooperation between governments  
-national and international-, knowledge institutes and private sector to fill knowledge gaps and create state of the art solutions. Local conditions are always different and require tailor made solutions.
13. The Dutch Delta programme will make the Netherlands more robust and resilient to the effects of climate change. That's our goal for 2050. The Netherlands has learned from the past and understands that avoiding disaster is more cost effective and socio-economic a smart choice. Within the uncertain context we have to find a balance between "too much, too early" and "too little ,too late". Therefore we adopt an adaptive approach with low-regret measures. This leaves us options in the future as well to respond to climate change adequately.
14. To conclude, I would like to wish you all the best with the adaptation strategies you are dealing with in the countries you represent. Please remember that you are not alone in this and the Netherlands can offer an excellent platform of knowledge and experience to support your ideas and exchange views to create the optimum strategy for your specific situation.

Thank you for your attention.