

Adaptation to climate change, a new challenge for spatial planning

Speech **minister Cramer**, minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment for the congress 'On the road to a climate proof society' on November 27<sup>th</sup> 2008 at 'the Doelen' in Rotterdam

The City of Rotterdam has offered to be the host for the congress. The congress has been organised by the programmes 'Knowledge for Climate' and 'Climate change spatial planning' and marks the start of the programme 'Knowledge for Climate'

Ladies and gentlemen,

- During the coming decades, an enormous effort is needed worldwide to moderate the emissions of greenhouse gasses to limit temperature rising to within a few degrees Celsius. The publication of 'The State of the climate in the Netherlands' by our Dutch Meteorological Institute (KNMI) this year proves the urgency of action. In this publication it has been made clear that since 1950, temperatures in the Netherlands have risen twice as much as the average world temperature.
- The past decade (1998-2007) was the warmest since at least 1850. The warm water of the North Sea seems to be strengthening summer rainfall along the shoreline. This effect will grow stronger, while the warming up of the Netherlands will continue.
- During the next century, we have to prepare ourselves for a temperature rise of 2 to 4 degrees Celsius. We will have higher precipitation in the rivers in wintertime and lower in summer. We will have more rainfall in wintertime, especially in the western part of the country and stronger showers in summer. Dry summers will also occur more frequently. Sea level may rise in a range from 0,30 to 1,20 metres in 2100 (KNMI/probably; Veerman: worst case).
- You all know the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This report concluded that even the most stringent mitigation efforts cannot avoid further impacts of climate change during this century. These impacts also make investment in adaptation essential. The Stern report and other studies show that the cost of acting now to mitigate climate change will be far less than the cost of delaying action. Yet ambitious mitigation remains key!
- If we have learned anything in recent months, it is that we can only resolve the worldwide financial crisis by working together internationally. Countries cannot do much on their own. **But together we can. And we must!**
- The same is true for the climate crisis. The financial crisis has made the urgency of solving the climate crisis more obvious than ever. I recently attended the International Climate Conference in Warsaw, where Eurocommissioner Dimas said in no uncertain terms: 'Climate change action is part of the solution to the financial crisis'. I couldn't agree more.
- Poland will be the host of the UN climate conference in Poznan next month. Poznan is a stop-over on the way to Copenhagen next year. The Copenhagen conference will be very important. Our task there will be to reach a global climate agreement. That is what we decided in Bali last year.
- The Polish government invited me and a small group of ministers from other countries to discuss the possible outcomes of the Poznan conference. I suggested to the Polish president of the conference that it would be a good idea to concentrate on a number of important points in the future Copenhagen agreement. For example, establishing a global target for reducing emissions and working out the details of the International Financial Architecture.
- This is a term you will hear more and more: International Financial Architecture. But what does it mean? Very simply, it concerns who is going to actually provide the financial support that rich countries give to developing countries. I took the lead on this issue a few months ago and put forward some proposals on behalf of the Netherlands. I am happy that the EU, through the French presidency, has adopted our proposals. It became clear at the meeting in Warsaw that the EU can act as a locomotive. We can and must assume that role. We, the European Union, must show the world that we are serious. We must show the world that we, the European Union, intend to meet our ambitious targets for 2020.

- How much money is needed for climate action? How will that money be collected? What are the rules for national contributions and how will the funds be managed? These are some of the questions that will be addressed at the Poznan conference.
- Why are these questions so important? If one thing is clear, and if there is one thing I intend to fight for, it is that developing countries must be given financial support.
- **They** are the first victims of the global climate crisis. A crisis caused primarily by the rich nations of the world, by us. The poorer developing countries must be protected and helped. **They** will be hit first and hardest. And I intend to argue this point in every international forum. That is my commitment and my conviction!
- Ladies and gentleman, climate change is often linked with the need to protect the country against rising sea level and higher precipitation in the rivers. That aspect of safety is of great importance in a country like the Netherlands. The Delta Committee, a State advisory committee under the leadership of former minister Veerman - one of the speakers this afternoon - recently presented some serious proposals in their advice to the Dutch cabinet. The Delta Committee stated that the Netherlands delta is safe, but preserving this safety over the long term involves action now.
- For the Delta Committee the basic issue is security, but security measures can only be realized in a strong relationship with spatial planning for housing, work, agriculture, nature, leisure, landscape, infrastructure and energy.
- Climate change has to be concerned:

Firstly with threats to public health, with flooding, drought and heat-waves,

Secondly with changing habitats for species of plants and animals,

And thirdly with possible economic damage, for example agriculture facing salty soils.

This illustrates that climate proofing the Netherlands involves the entire spatial development of the country.

- Ladies and gentlemen, talking about the way I want to implement adaptation to climate change, I mention three examples:

#### **First example**

We are currently preparing policy guidelines for climate adaptation. And at the same time, we are planning to create five shining examples of climate proof spatial planning projects.

In the context of the policy arrangements with twenty urban regions concerning urban renewal and urban development for the period 2010-2019, which my colleague responsible for Housing still has to make, I want to achieve higher ambitions in climate proof spatial planning. The expected changes in rainfall and warmer summers require spatially related measures now! Now we have the chance to imbed measures in new plans. For cities this means more parks, green rooftops and walls and water-squares, which control flooding and mitigate stress caused by heat-waves. At the same time, the quality of the physical environment will improve. The city of Rotterdam provides a good example of such a policy, and I would like to take the opportunity to compliment them on this!

#### **Second example**

An important part of our programme 'Adaptation to Climate Change in Spatial Planning' (ARK) has been the involvement of numerous stakeholders in regionally organised consultation meetings. These meetings have resulted in 24 projects, eighteen of which are currently illustrated on posters in the Hall of this Concert Centre. Together with other involved organisations, I would like to stimulate these projects.

#### **Third example**

By gradually bringing in and re-using natural processes, we are able to improve our resilience against climate change in a very sustainable and attractive way. Natural climate buffers contribute

to water safety, -storage and -quality as well as to biodiversity and beautiful landscapes. They also provide new opportunities for economy, recreation and tourism. During the coming years, I will continue to invest in climate buffers.

- Ladies and gentlemen,  
The present need to invest in public capital also means investment in the development of knowledge and innovation. Knowledge, policymaking and daily practice have to influence each other continuously.
- Last year I successfully proposed that the Dutch cabinet should reserve € 50 mln. for the programme 'Knowledge for Climate'. Together with the planned co-financing at the end of 2013, € 100 mln. will be spent on research that must contribute to a climate proof development of eight national regions, the so-called 'hot spots'. The knowledge gathered can also be implemented elsewhere. At the same time, a cooperation arrangement on the field of spatial planning and climate adaptation will start with a few international 'hot spots'. The research and the experiments must offer practical solutions for making these eight national regions climate proof.
- This congress, 'On the road to a climate-proof society', for which the city of Rotterdam has offered to be the host, marks the formal start of the programme 'Knowledge for Climate'.
- I'm delighted to announce to you that this programme can make a full start today! The European Commission, through its member commissioner Neelie Kroes, has just notified the legal document of my ministry. This document functions as the basis for the implementation of the programme!
- I wish the Foundation 'Knowledge for Climate', especially the Executive Board, a lot of success. We all expect that the programme will result in a vital contribution to making the Netherlands climate proof.

Thank You!