

## **The Delta Programme in the Netherlands: the Delta Works of the Future**

Wim Kuijken, Delta Commissioner, the Netherlands

Your royal highness, your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

I would prefer to take you all out, into a helicopter and fly with you over the Netherlands, to show you what we are working on. But unfortunately, I have only got ten minutes. So, I have to go to plan B: showing you a brand new video about the Delta Programme, our Delta Works of the future. But first, please allow me to introduce the movie you are about to see.

As his royal highness the Prince of Orange and his Excellency Mr. Lai just illustrated, all over the world delta regions are faced with a similar situation. We all have to deal with the expected climate change and with soil subsidence. At the same time, our urban areas are continuously expanding. In every delta region in the world there are many lives to be protected and valuable property to be preserved.

In the Netherlands, almost sixty per cent of the country is prone to flooding. We have a long history of protecting the land against the water. Now we are challenged once again. The main issues are flood risk management and fresh water supply. Both are essential for the future of our nation and our open economy and culminate in this Rotterdam region.

As Government Commissioner for the Delta Programme, I am responsible for the preparation of the national Delta Programme and the implementation of the measures. The objective of this programme is to keep the Netherlands safe for the long term and an attractive place to live and work. Not as a response to a disaster but to avoid it. This requires political courage.

There is still time to prepare ourselves, realistically and down to earth, as the Dutch are used to. But we have to start right now, since the planning and implementation of measures takes decades. The first Delta programme was presented last week at the opening of the Dutch parliamentary year. I will update the programme annually.

Measures will not only involve dikes and other barriers. If possible we chose sustainable solutions, working with nature and taking into account the economy and other aspects of integrated spatial planning. A good example is the extra room we give to our main rivers. This will not only improve safety, but also the environmental quality.

One of the biggest challenges is dealing with uncertainties in the future climate, but also in population, economy and society. This requires a new way of planning, which we call adaptive delta planning. It seeks to maximise flexibility; keeping options open and avoiding 'lock-in'. In the meantime, we prepare the so-called delta decisions about the measures to take if our current water system reaches its limits.

In addition, a solid financial and legal base is required to guarantee implementation in the long term. So in the Netherlands we work with five D's: Delta Programme, Delta Decisions, Delta Fund, Delta Act and Delta Commissioner. This approach is also an interesting export product.

I am looking forward to hearing how other countries are dealing with the challenge of deltas in times of climate change. But first, as promised, allow me to show you the short movie on our approach. The Dutch TV journalist Charles Groenhuijsen will take you on a short trip through the Dutch delta. I hope it will be an inspirational journey for you all.