

**Speech by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Alphons Hennekens on the occasion of the press conference on the visiting mission of Water Mondiaal and Queen's Day 2010 in the Westin on Sunday 25 April 2010 from 14.30 – 15.30 hrs.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, members of the media, members of the mission of Water Mondiaal, and colleagues, all protocol observed, I am pleased to welcome you at this press conference.

The main reason of today's briefing is to inform you about the Netherlands involvement in the water sector in Bangladesh, and our activities worldwide. Like Bangladesh, the Netherlands lies in a delta and like Bangladesh we face water management challenges.

The Netherlands has been providing support to the Bangladesh water sector for many years. Our support focused on institutional strengthening of the public agencies in the water sector.

This week a delegation from the Netherlands is in Bangladesh to assess the possibilities to expand cooperation between the Netherlands and Bangladesh in the water

sector. This mission is part of a Dutch government program called 'Water Mondiaal' ("Global Water") covering the period 2010-2015.

Water Mondiaal is a programme in which several ministries in the Netherlands cooperate, each making their extensive network in the water sector available.

This Water Mondiaal programme envisages to contribute to the broadening of the existing cooperation programme with the partner countries in the water sector by facilitating intensified and high level exchange of knowledge and experiences, capacity building and institutional strengthening.

The Water Mondiaal programme will ultimately focus on five major deltas in the world and envisions long term cooperation agreements with the countries of these deltas. These partnerships will build upon existing bilateral cooperation programmes in the respective countries. The Water Mondiaal programme as a new concept of development cooperation has already been introduced in Indonesia and Vietnam.

It is my pleasure to announce that Bangladesh has been identified as one of the five delta- partner countries for this programme. The central themes of Water Mondiaal in Bangladesh are to be: Water Supply & Sanitation, Water, Food & Ecosystems, Water & Safety, and there will be two overall, general themes: Climate Change Adaptation and Water Governance. However, as a result of the meetings in Bangladesh, it is possible that other themes, like inland water transport, could be included.

One of the mission members, Mr. Peter de Vries, will elaborate on purposes and the Global Water programme and its particular objectives in Bangladesh.

The members arrived yesterday and will stay from the 24-30<sup>th</sup> of April 2010 in Bangladesh. It is my pleasure to introduce them to you.

- Mr Peter de Vries, Environment, Water, Climate and Energy Department at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mission leader)
- Mr Ben Lamoree, Netherlands Water Partnership
- Mr Raimond Hafkenscheid, Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate

- Ms Catharien Terwisscha van Scheltinga, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Food
- Mr Martijn van de Groep, Netherlands Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management
- Mr Jaap van der Velden, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Jakarta.

As mentioned the mission will look for opportunities to broaden the cooperation programme in the water sector with Bangladesh. Currently the Netherlands aims to support governance reforms in the water sector with special attention for strengthening government interventions in the fragile and disaster-prone coastal zone areas and river erosion management.

Over 38 years the Netherlands assisted Bangladesh with direct project support, knowledge exchanges and built up close relationships with the responsible government agencies. I am proud to highlight our contribution to land reclamation (by the way, the Dutch name for reclaimed land is 'polder' which is now used in Bangla also) and participatory water management in Bangladesh, the two areas where the Netherlands has built up its strong expertise since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Participatory Water Management (PWM) has proven to be an effective way to ensure operation and maintenance of water infrastructure through the support and involvement of local communities. At this moment PWM is being integrated in water programmes which cover the whole country. The effective involvement of men and women in water management in some of Bangladesh's poorest and most fragile areas, will be even more crucial in the years to come. The coastal zone, e.g. will be heavily affected by climate change, which will further deepen poverty and can lead to mass migration.

For both the Netherlands and Bangladesh, effective water management is about survival. Without effective coastal protection, our territories will flood and our peoples will be displaced and starve by lack of lands to feed them. The climate change prospects will affect our countries disproportionately.

This Water Mondiaal therefore also comes at a moment where the sense of urgency is clear to all. Improving water governance - that is having the GoB stewarding public resources for improved service delivery for its people - is an immediate need and not a long term elusive objective. Already demand outpaces the supply of services. It is not

acceptable that refugees of the floods in 2007 are still deprived of shelter and other basic services. The funds are available, the institutions of government need to be fully equipped to deliver the basic services effectively and efficiently.

The Dutch government also worked with the private sector and non-governmental institutions and assists Bangladesh in a large water and sanitation programme through BRAC and facilitates private sector intervention in the water sector. We aim to intensify these efforts to support Bangladesh to achieve MDG's and become a Middle Income Country by 2021.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you on Queen's Day, our National Day, on which we celebrate the official birthday of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. Festivities in the Netherlands take place on Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, but in Bangladesh, for obvious reasons, we will do this one day earlier and celebrate Queen's Day on Thursday 29 of April.

Each year we approach newspapers with information on the Netherlands and the relationship between our two countries.

This year the articles will focus on the expertise available in the Dutch water sector.

Let me conclude by saying that the mission and the Embassy look forward to fruitful discussions with government, businesses, civil society and naturally the journalists.

Please do not forget to take the documentation for your newspaper on your way out. The articles on the water sector are provided in English as well as in Bangla on a CD. The information is supplemented by photographs, and accompanied by a book called 'Here's Holland' and a booklet with the latest facts and figures on the Netherlands called 'Here's Holland Compared'. I would appreciate if you publish this information in your newspaper or magazine or broadcast it on the occasion of our Queen's day.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me give the floor now to my colleague Peter de Vries from the Water Mondiaal Mission of the Netherlands. After his introduction, there are opportunities for Questions and Answers.

Thank you very much.