



**Ministerial Declaration and launch of the  
Delta Coalition  
Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
May 10, 2016**

**Preamble**

1. We, Ministers and High Representatives with responsibilities for water affairs, environment and the sustainable development of deltas from twelve countries throughout the world, have assembled on the occasion of the Delta Coalition Conference in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, to officially launch the Delta Coalition and its Operational Plan 2016-2017.
2. The Delta Coalition is the world's first international coalition of governments that have formed a partnership to deal with inclusive and sustainable development in deltas, by combining economic development with adaptation and preventive measures reducing climate change risks and strengthening resilience. Most importantly, it will allow delta countries to join forces to stimulate sharing best practices and innovation, and to increase opportunities for financing in order to facilitate the implementation of projects that will reduce vulnerability to climate change. Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Mozambique, Myanmar, the Netherlands, the Philippines and Vietnam have already joined.
3. The objectives of the Delta Coalition are: 1) work together to put urbanizing deltas on the agenda worldwide; 2) facilitate developing and exchanging knowledge on deltas, resilience and inclusive sustainable development of urban deltas and increasing availability of it, and 3) promote practical implementation and cooperation to increase the resilience of deltas and investments in inclusive and sustainable development of urban deltas.
4. We stress that deltas are the most challenging regions in the world, considering their large concentrations of population, their roles in the world's ecosystems, in contributing to food security and their significance to the world's economy. Delta cities are drivers for economic development and historically ideal places for urban settlements, because of their positions on the crossroads of land, rivers, seas and international trade and because of the fertility of alluvial plains and coastal waters.
5. We emphasize our mutual concern to maintain the integrity of deltas, protect their inhabitants and safeguard their natural, social and economic assets and to work towards sustainable development. Sustainable development of deltas plays a vital role in poverty eradication, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods, economic growth as well as sustaining ecosystems.

6. We confirm the importance to be fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The inclusive and sustainable development of urban deltas will play a key role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and should give an important impetus to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6 and 11 and other related goals and targets. These SDGs are calling for cities and human settlements to be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. We express our deep concern that between 1980 and 2013 due to floods more than 220,000 people already lost their lives and direct economic losses exceeded \$ 1 trillion. It is expected that populations which are vulnerable to flooding caused by storm surges, will multiply a tenfold or more over the 21st century. This will affect an estimated 100 million people and result in tremendous economic losses. Urbanizing deltas will become even more vulnerable due to the combination of social, economic, natural and environmental dynamics in deltas.
8. We underline that urbanization and densification of urban and rural land have resulted in the disappearance of natural land-water transition zones, which are important as buffers in times of high water levels and droughts. The decrease of the natural resilience capacity of deltas is reinforced by sea level rise and other impacts due to climate change, which results in increased flood risk, sedimentation, water logging, water scarcity, water availability and quality problems and salinization. In addition, land subsidence caused by intense drainage, groundwater extraction, and tectonic dynamics often results in levels below mean sea level. This further increases the vulnerability of urbanized deltas to climate change impacts and flood risk, with increasing numbers of victims as a result, and subsequent economic and ecological losses.
9. We underline the need for a transition towards sustainable deltas through increased energy efficiency, use of renewable energy and creating a circular economy using the principles of recycling, reuse and replacement and thus contributing to reduced pressures on the global demand for scarce and critical raw materials.

### **Strengthening Governance**

10. With the aim of ending the unsustainable exploitation of deltas, we agree to intensify our cooperation, to put in place solid, transparent and accountable governance structures, and to propose delta development and management strategies at transboundary, transnational, national and local levels.
11. Sustainable delta management requires an integrated approach and thus a multi-stakeholder involvement in which all levels of government have a role in ensuring and facilitating gender responsive and inclusive sustainable urban delta development. Each country should have in place functioning arrangements for multi-level governance of delta development. We urge city authorities, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector to join with government and contribute to sustainable delta solutions and to strengthen investment and management capabilities.

### **Capacity Building and Technology Transfer**

12. We recognize that capacity building and innovative methodologies and technologies need to be further developed – both for national and local governments as well as for the private sector – to optimize delta management and ensure sustainable development.
13. We support the development, increase of availability and accessibility and exchange of knowledge on sustainable delta development. The Delta Alliance, an existing network of knowledge institutes in fifteen delta countries, can provide the knowledge base for the government-to-government dialogues in the Delta Coalition. We particularly promote practical implementation and cooperation to increase the resilience of deltas and investments in sustainable delta management.

### **Create Bankability and Financial Arrangements**

14. We urge to address the enormous gap in funding investments in sustainable delta development including structural and non-structural disaster risk reduction measures such as developing critical water infrastructure and its maintenance, knowledge development and exchange, training and capacity building.
15. We urge to close this gap using existing resources more efficiently and with combined additional financial resources from all sources: public investment budgets, private sector, capital markets, and community based finance, user and polluter charges; as well as international development financing from public, multilateral and private sources, particularly for developing countries to reflect the acute needs in urbanizing deltas. The latter will particularly support the mitigation and adaptation of climate change impacts and natural disasters on the most vulnerable groups with gender-responsive actions.

### **Inclusion of Urbanizing Deltas in the New Urban Agenda**

16. We especially call on the Habitat III conference to be held in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 to 20 October 2016, to include a special agenda for urbanizing deltas in the New Urban Agenda, containing the following action points;
  - a. Include preventive risk reduction strategies on water-related disasters in all urban planning.
  - b. Work on restoring the resiliency and adaptability of natural areas and adding the catchment areas to the scale of the future cities strengthening urban-rural linkages.
  - c. Implement a preventive, inclusive, integrated and gender responsive approach, combining interventions concerning prevention, spatial adaptation and disaster management taking into account nature-based solutions, water, and climate resilient infrastructure.
  - d. Promote efforts towards a circular economy achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication in deltas, to enable cities to make the best use of natural resources, focusing on resource efficiency and promoting effective land management and “multiple use of space principle” in order to prevent urban sprawl.

- e. Promote multi-stakeholder and multilevel governance arrangements with smart financial mechanisms and arrangements, knowledge exchange and capacity building for delta cities and the promotion of innovative ways to increase civic participation in particularly the most vulnerable groups in decision-making processes.

**Asserting our Commitments:**

17. We commit to the objectives of the Delta Coalition and will elaborate an Operational Plan by the end of 2016 to guide their practical implementation. We welcome national governments having deltas to join the Delta Coalition.
18. We thank the government of the Netherlands for its hospitality to host this important launching event and its determination to promote sustainable urban delta development and for creating a multi-stakeholder approach and practicing multi-level governance.