



## **Concept note of the Second Delta Coalition Ministerial Conference and Working Group Meeting:**

### **Background**

River deltas comprise roughly five percent of global land area and are home to more than 500 million people. These are incredibly important in determining and forming the human geography of a region. Tropical mega-deltas contain some of the most significant areas of urban, agricultural and industrial development in the world. These regions are recognized as economic and environmental hotspots and often support high population densities, with particular concentrations in Africa, South, South-East and East Asia.

Deltas form important wetland habitats supporting fisheries and extensive biodiversity along with a range of valuable ecosystems. Delta ecosystems are, however, fragile and sensitive to changes in environmental conditions, and thereby, becomes highly endangered due to the increasing pace of human development activities and effects of climate change. In tropical mega-deltas, functionality of the ecosystems has altered drastically and produced escalating economic and sociocultural impacts, which is a threat to critical food producing areas.

Deltas, many of which are found in Asia and Africa, were identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as being especially vulnerable hotspots to climate change and sea-level rise with poor understanding of the possible adaptation responses, according to IMF. The impacts resulted in increased risk of death, injury, ill-health, or disrupted livelihoods in low-lying coastal zones due to storm surges, coastal flooding, and sea level rise. In addition, it has increased also risk of loss of marine and coastal ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecosystem goods, functions, and services they provide for coastal livelihoods, especially in the tropics and the Arctic. These challenges required measures to increase resilience and an integrated management of Delta.

During the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), the Netherlands, Colombia and Japan co-hosted an event on “Building an international coalition for integrated delta management and resilience”. The outcome of the event conceived the concept of a coalition of states to address the challenges that deltaic countries face. Its objective was to enhance cooperation for strengthening development among the members of the coalition. The Delta Coalition was initiated following the event.

The Working Session in November 2015 in Amsterdam witnessed the beginning of the expansion of Coalition. In May 2016, the Coalition was officially launched at a ministerial conference in Rotterdam. The Delta Coalition currently includes 12 governments states from 4 continents: Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Mozambique, Myanmar, South Korea, The Netherlands, The Philippines and Vietnam. The Netherlands served as the first Chair of the Group. Bangladesh assumed the Chairmanship of the Delta Coalition on the 21st of September 2016 from the Netherlands. As Chair of the Coalition, Bangladesh is going to hold the Second Ministerial Conference and Working Group Meeting of the Coalition in Dhaka on 28-29 July 2017.

## **Goals**

The main goal of the Second Delta Coalition meeting in Dhaka will be to promote the agenda of the Coalition. In this context, the meeting will aim at increasing its knowledge base on development and management of sustainable Delta through sharing best practices and innovation among the members of the Coalition. The overall goal is to explore ways to sustain, secure and improve the life and livelihood of the people through initiating adaptive, preventive and resilience measures as well as introducing income generating activities in the Deltaic regions in the context of the impacts of climate change.

## **Objectives**

The key objectives of the Conference of this year are based on the overall objectives of the Delta Coalition. In this regard, Bangladesh is looking forward to expand over the following areas:

- Efforts will be aimed at increased visibility of the Coalition in global water discourse through organizing parallel events of Regional Water Conference and an interaction with the Sherpas of the High Level Panel on Water (HLPW). Efforts will be doubled to liaise also with the members of the academia and civil society working on water issues with a view to expanding the group.
- Strengthen the institutional and governance mechanism of the Coalition as well as streamlining the Delta Coalition activities in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- The conference will aim at creating a platform to facilitate project oriented activities and promote financing for strengthening climate change resilience of deltaic regions.

## **Outcome**

1. Institutional: During the Second Ministerial Conference, top priority will be attached on the creation of awareness among the countries/entities in the global arena. In this pursuit, a Regional Water Conference will be arranged on 29-30 July 2017 in parallel with the Delta Coalition Conference, which will be

participated by the countries of South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. Besides, the Sherpas of the High Level Panel on Water (HLPW) will have an interaction with the participants of the Delta Coalition during the Conference. Dhaka Conference will also focus on strengthening the institutional aspect of the Coalition through the adoption of the Terms of reference, and exploring the possibilities of setting up permanent Secretariat, as well as a financial mechanism to support this

2. Functional: Action Plan for the Next Five Years and Report of the Working Group will be adopted during the Second Conference of the Delta Coalition.
3. Conceptual: The Conference will focus on sharing knowledge, views and best practices among the participating countries in three thematic sessions. The Second Ministerial Conference will adopt Dhaka Declaration.

## **Theme of the Conference**

### ***Sustainable Delta for Life***

UN member states adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in 2015. States agreed, inter alia, to sustainably manage and protect coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration (Target 14.2), by 2030. UN Members also committed to expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water related activities and programmes, including desalination, water efficiency, (6.b).

Delta regions are major contributors to national economies. The deltaic ecosystem shapes a dynamic ecological and social environments, as well as socio-cultural dynamics of the population of delta regions. Ecosystem services influence and shape various aspects of human livelihood and development, such as health and income, and long-term sustainability of agriculture and natural resources. On the other hand, human activities and natural factors influence the delta, deltaic ecosystem and the livelihood of deltaic population. Given the particular interdependence between human activities, natural factors and delta, it is crucial to address the challenges in delta regions in a planned way.

Given the climate change impacts that threaten the deltaic physiognomy - resilient, sustained, social and economic development in the delta requires the capability to cope with sea level rise, salinization of soil and water, storms and floods compounded by climate change on the one-hand, and development, industrialization, population growth and rapid urbanization on the other. These challenges require an appropriate form of management given the potential environmental, social and economic costs. Effective management strategies are required in coastal deltas to improve environmental conditions and to support local populations that depend on coastal deltas for their livelihoods.

## **Coastal Delta Management**

Coastal deltas are rich in natural values, teeming with high and unique biodiversity and ecosystem, and vibrant in livelihood activities of the people.

However, the challenges to the deltas are gradually increasing due to the natural causes and human activities. In this scenario, Delta stability can be challenged by environmental changes and development activities. Unplanned and unmanaged development activities can affect the delta ecosystems (Bianchi and Allison, 2009) by reducing adaptation capacity and may ultimately affect future economic and development factors. Various scientific studies show that more than 60% of coastal wetlands have already been severely degraded. As a result the collapse of natural resources, as well as hazards such as erosion, coastal flooding and salinity intrusion are increasingly affecting the resilience of coastal populations. Impacts of climate change add to this vulnerability mix, particularly in low-lying areas.

Demographic change, upstream activities, economic and technological development, impacts of climate change, rapid urbanization etc. are seriously affecting the balance in the eco-system and build-up of the coastal areas in various ways. A few to put forth: loss of land owing to coastal erosion is forcing the people to migrate within and beyond the border, salinity intrusion due to sea level rise and low discharge of the rivers are causing agricultural and food production to decline etc. Further challenges add up owing to the impacts of climate change. 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment report of the IPCC specifies that the global mean sea level rise and the high-water-level events will continue to threaten coastal systems and low-lying severely, even if the global mean temperature is stabilized. High frequency of extreme events like storm, cyclone, flood, drought etc. are affecting the annual yield of food crops, availability of potable water and fresh water for irrigation as well as aquatic systems in the coastal areas. The report shows high confidence on findings that climate change will increase risks inter alia, for people, health, assets, economies and ecosystems in urban areas. Rural areas are expected to experience the major brunt on water availability and supply, food security, infrastructure, and agricultural income, including shifts in the production areas of food and non-food crops. As a result, growing challenges are likely to affect the achievements in food and water security, poverty reduction, raising income of the people in the deltaic regions.

Increased urbanization is adding new and additional challenges to all the deltaic countries. This is creating unbearable pressure on space causing subsidence, additional demand of potable water and shortage of fresh water leading to excessive extraction of ground water etc. Hydrological characteristics in the urbanized areas are at risks as well. This is also putting additional load of pollutants in delta waters and soils perturbing the ecological balance in the whole river basin.

The challenges to coastal areas and economy are more visible in the case of the deltas having trans-boundary rivers owing to divergent pursuits and realities of various countries. Integrated development and delta management and cross border cooperation

for basin wide management of the international rivers are required to address such issues. In such cases, regional and sub-regional cooperation are critically important.

The natural delta patterns have been modified and natural delta processes have been disrupted by means of large scale infrastructure in the delta areas which has, in turn, generated new type of problems and challenges. Further corrective measures through technological interventions are very common in such cases.

Adaptation to salinization, effective use and treatment of water, management of fresh water, conservation of wetland should get top priority to lessen the impact of ongoing degradation of coastal environment. Besides, adaptive measures like salinity resilient crops, income generating activities for the people along with infrastructural development might be put in place with a view to building with nature and natural safety.

The discussions under this sub-theme envisages to focus on following aspects:

1. How can the rich valuable resources and ecosystem that coastal wetlands provide sustain?
2. How to integrate ecosystem management in strategies disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for strengthening the resilience of Delta community/population? How do we integrate potential benefits of planned migration with other adaptation?

### **Financing Deltas**

Deltas have long been recognized as highly sensitive to sea-level rise (Ericson et al., 2006; Woodroffe et al., 2006). Rates of relative sea-level rise can greatly exceed the global average in many heavily populated deltaic areas due to subsidence, because of human activities. Particularly, infrastructure intervention has disrupted the delta process and altered the Delta pattern engendering numerous challenges for the ecosystem and biodiversity of the deltas.

Mangroves, mudflats, and salt marshes in coastal deltas provide millions of people with a vital source of income and protect them as natural barrier from natural disasters. As such they are the basis for safety and of a prosperous economy. Conserving and restoring these wetlands are important for creating a resilient coastal landscape and the protection of their unique biodiversity.

In the backdrop of the impacts of climate change, risks and vulnerability of the deltaic countries to extreme natural events like flood, cyclone and drought are on the rise. According to UNISDR, disaster related damages cost \$1.4 trillion and affected 1.7 billion people in 2014. 87% of these disasters were climate related. Hence preventive, adaptive and resilience measures are to be taken to reduce such risks and vulnerability.

Besides, salinity intrusion in the coastal areas is seriously damaging the paradigm of livelihood activities which may be addressed through alternative income generating activities and innovation of salinity and drought resilient crop variety. As such, this requires innovation and technology transfer as well as research activities which will be useful in countering present and future challenges.

Quality and quantity of potable water as well as of fresh water for irrigation and industrial production have always been an important issue in global water discourse. Hence closer cooperation among the member countries may be harnessed in water purification and management of water bodies.

Therefore, financing is indispensable for implementation of sustainable delta solutions. Responding to the climate challenge requires collective action from all countries, cities, businesses, and private citizens. With currently USD 10.3 billion pledged, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), is the world's largest climate fund and is designed to be the main financial instrument to meet the global commitment made by advanced economies to jointly mobilise \$100 billion per year by 2020, from a variety of sources, to address the pressing mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries (ref. [https://www.acclimatise.uk.com/login/uploaded/resources/GCF%20project%20Toolkit\\_20.01.2017\\_For%20Publication.pdf](https://www.acclimatise.uk.com/login/uploaded/resources/GCF%20project%20Toolkit_20.01.2017_For%20Publication.pdf)).

To reflect visible impact in the areas of challenges, project based activities need to be initiated for which financing mechanism need to be explored. In the pursuit, strategic partnerships between the Delta Coalition and key financing facilities and foundations have great potential. However, the formulation of bankable projects remains a challenge. / among the participating countries from the Delta member countries may also provide possible options.



**Tentative programme of the Delta Coalition Ministerial Conference and Working Group Meeting on 28-29 July 2017:**

<b><u>Friday, 28 July 2017</u></b>	
<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Activity</u></b>
0830 hrs-0900 hrs	Registration
0900 hrs - 0915 hrs	Opening Session
0915 hrs -1115 hrs	Organizational Session
1120 hrs – 1220 hrs	Thematic session I: Coastal Delta Management Presentation by Bangladesh
1220 hrs -1420 hrs	Lunch
1420 hrs -1520 hrs	Thematic Session II : Financing Deltas Presentation by Egypt
1525 hrs – 1625 hrs	Thematic session III: Learning Deltas Initiative Presentation by Myanmar
1630 hrs – 1730 hrs	Concluding Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Adoption of TOR ( financing mechanism, extension of term, Secretariat), Observers, new members, New/Next Chair</li> <li>ii. Adoption of Dhaka Declaration</li> <li>iii. Concluding remarks</li> </ul>
1800 hrs	River Cruise and Dinner (hosted by Hon'ble Minister of Water Resources in honour of the Delta Ministers and Sherpas)
<b><u>Saturday, 29 July 2017</u></b>	
1030 hrs -1230 hrs	Inauguration of the 'Dhaka Water Conference' by the Hon'ble Prime Minister
1230 hrs -1400 hrs	Lunch to be hosted by the Hon'ble LGRD Minister (Hon'ble Prime Minister may kindly join)
1400 hrs -1600 hrs	Ministerial Conference
1600 hrs-1630 hrs.	Tea break
1630 hrs – 1730 hrs	Session on Building Bridges: Exchange of views and experience between Delta Coalition and High Level Panel on Water (HLPW)
1930 hrs	Cultural programme and dinner (hosted by Hon'ble LGRD Minister in honour of the Delta Ministers and Delta delegation, Sherpas, and delegation members of the Dhaka Water Conference)

**Provisional agenda of the Organizational Session (draft as of 04 June 2017):**

(Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Date: 28 July 2017, Time: 0945 hrs. – 1145 hrs.)

- Revision of Terms of Reference
- Inclusion of new members
- Fixing next Chair and date of the meeting
- Setting up of Permanent Secretariat and funding
- Action Plan for Next Five Years
- Framework Agreement
- Dhaka Declaration

**Provisional agenda of the Ministerial Conference:**

(Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Date: 29 July 2017, Time: 1400 hrs. – 1530 hrs.)

- Welcome remarks
- Statement by the Ministers
- Adoption of Terms of Reference
- Adoption of Dhaka Declaration
- Adoption of the Report of the Organizational Session
- Concluding remarks