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# Speech by Mr. Schaap

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Your Highness, Your Excellence, Spectabilis chancellor, Ladies and gentlemen, and honoured guests

As president of the Dutch Association of Water-boards and as a member of the Dutch team, it is an honour to congratulate the Czech and the Dutch partners of the Risk Analysis project with the successful completion of it. A special word of respect concerns the Dutch fund Partners for Water, which gave financial support to this initiative. I am convinced that the results of this mutual Czech - Dutch project will be beneficiary for the water management in both countries. Risk analyses, a method combining costs and benefits of flood preventing policies, is a rather new approach of research and decision making around the threat of floods and the choice of adequate measures. It combines data concerning the threat of water, as well as economy and policy. I hope that the results will function as a challenge towards a further improvement of this method and - being the ultimate objective of the developed tools - the implementation of it.

What I hope for as well, is that this project - actually already the second we organized together - will encourage a further mutual cooperation in water management between the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. At first glance such a successful cooperation may sound a little bit strange, as from a geographical perspective our countries may be seen as opposites. Your country is situated at the very origin of several river basins, whilst the Netherlands is formed at the very end of them, being a genuine delta area. But as so often, extremes may meet and join fruitfully. As modern river basin management should include integrated policies for complete river basins, there is only logic in combining the experiences and policies of partners that cover the complete course of rivers and all problems, challenges and solutions to be taken. By cooperation we may learn from each other, and the risk analyses project has proven the truth of this. Cooperation inspires learning. Your risk situation and approaches inspired us.

About this inspiration another interesting point of attention. It may sound a little bit strange as we, from the Dutch side, specifically Arcadis, offered you well developed principles for a risk analyses approach. This might generate suggestions from your side that the Dutch have already far-reaching practical experiences with these tools. This however, is not the case. I remember mister Puncochar being very astonished when he heard this. Until now we use the standard of what we call exceeding frequencies of water from the sea- and river side. Dikes and dams should be high, massive and sustainable enough to prevent the exceeding of water flows, this based on legal norms. Since our Delta Plans the strength of our dikes protect us against exceeding situations that - roughly spoken - may occur once in 1.250 - 10.000 years. Nowadays the Dutch government and water-boards are investigating a more adequate safety approach, which includes risk analyses as well. So we need experiences, which means, that we might learn from your results and your efforts to implement these tools. You may understand, this proves to be a real mutual cooperation.

A few more words about the situation concerning the threat of floods in my country and about our policies. We often noticed your conviction that we in the Netherlands offer an example of a high developed water management in general, specifically a readiness for accuracy concerning defence measures. Of course this image is correct, but it is not all the truth. In many respects we are not better than all the world proves to be. During history we many times showed the same attitude as elsewhere: a reactive one. First we let the trouble arise - wait and see - and after that, often too late, we reacted. The many, many still visible bursts in our dikes form an open demonstration of this attitude. Recently we have been surprised by major disasters, from the sea side in 1953, from the river side in 1995 and by superfluous rainfalls in 1998. We proved to be too late, discussed too long, did not want to believe that these threats were real. However, when we react, we show our technical and political readiness, as may be proved by our huge delta works at the sea side, built after 1953, and all dike and dam improvements after 1995. A reactive attitude may work, but has dangerous implications.

Nowadays we try to change this attitude, convert it into a pro active way of decision making and planning. And here you might give attention to new policies we developed and which are already in the stage of implementation. One of these policies, developed together with our neighbour countries - as it is river basin policy - is called Space for the River. After 1995 the flood situation convinced us that defence works alone are not enough to protect against the growing risk of floods. So we decided to protect our main rivers against the ongoing attack of spatial claims from all sides. We try to reshape the capacity of the rivers to absorb substantial higher amounts of water and guide it to the sea. A safe river contains enough retention capacity.

But the concentration on such a capacity of rivers alone is not sufficient. After the heavy rainfall of 1998 we discovered a risky situation from the land side as well. Also there spatial reconstructions - for agriculture, infrastructure and urban activities - threatens to claim too much space for water, which causes the risk of floods by rainfall. So we launched a revised policy, Water policy for the 21th century, aiming at combining spatial planning with the conditions set by water management, especially a higher regional capacity to absorb rainwater. This higher capacity for storage and retention concerns rural and urban areas. It forces municipalities and provinces, as well as water-boards, to cooperate and make our country a safe area to live and work. In order to attune water management and spatial planning, the regional authorities should cooperate. Only this type of integrated management may be accomplished by technical defence measures. Nowadays we speak about the threat of climate change and the effects on floods. Probably more important is the necessity to correct all direct implications of human activities on the threat of water. These corrections, that have to be developed within the overall river basins as well as in its smaller sub areas, are a major challenge of these days. The policy that replies to this challenge, fits perfectly within the European Water Framework Directive. I hope our countries may cooperate intensively to meet these challenges.