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Speech

by

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On the occasion of the

Post-2015 Development Agenda Consultation on Water:
Water Resources Management and Waste Water Management & Water Quality.

February 27th and 28th, Geneva, Switzerland.

Your excellencies, Dear Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honoured to be here with you today and speak on behalf of the Dutch government. Together with Switzerland, Liberia, Jordan and Mozambique (in process), The Netherlands co-host these thematic consultations on water for the post 2015 development agenda.

Water is one of four priorities in Dutch international cooperation. And on March 21st and 22nd in The Hague, we will host a sequel to today's and tomorrow's meeting. There, the three water consultation streams will merge. Moreover we will merge two UN processes: the post 2015 consultations and the international celebration of World Water Day; with water cooperation as this year's central theme. Quite a challenge, such a merger.

The Millennium Development Goals and targets have inspired politicians, investors and societies at large. They guide sector policies. They influence funding priorities. Most importantly, they add up to a development vision for the world.

From the MDG *process*, we have learned that a top-down UN and donor-led process should be avoided. Listening to local voices and narratives, amplifying them and facilitating that these inspire a shared global development agenda from the bottom up, is a more effective strategy.

Narratives from areas such as the Inner Delta of the Niger River in Mali, where one million people, their economy and a complex ecosystem thrive as a result of annual floods. Climate change will require this economy to adapt. Upstream dam construction will require further adaptation. Losses for certain groups, gains for others. Water managers can make such trade-offs transparent and inform decision making.

Voices from the floodplains of the Limpopo in Mozambique. There, frequent floods damage the economy and livelihoods. Most recently last month.

Narratives from textile workers in Bangladesh whose livelihoods depend on an industry that pollutes their living environment and threatens their health.

Voices from the Sana'a basin in Yemen, where groundwater tables have been falling steadily for decades. Only the deepest wells and the most powerful pumps can secure access to water. Inequalities in an explicit form.

And narratives from entrepreneurs who adapt to change, turn risk into opportunity and innovate when water stress rises. Such as the farmers in the Mekong delta who shift from rice to shrimp farming as salinity increases.

Today's and tomorrow's meeting are a platform to capture such narratives in a framework. A *compelling* framework that does justice to local complexities, and to inevitable trade-offs that water resources management implies. *Compelling* by demonstrating how water cuts through other thematic areas such as health, inequalities, growth and employment, environmental sustainability, governance, conflict and fragility, food security, and energy. Compelling as well as well for those who are not well-versed in water management jargon.

Excellencies, distinguished guests,

The Future We Want, adopted at Rio+20, underscored the pivotal role of water for sustainable development. The 'world we want post 2015' is a 'water secure' world, in which our fresh water resources are managed in a sustainable manner, securing access to water for people, food production, eco-systems, energy and industry. And protecting from water hazards.

We have been successful in achieving the MDG target for **drinking water** worldwide. It was met in 2010, five years ahead of the target date. And even though **sanitation** continues to be severely off track, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, we can be proud of this important water milestone. Universal access to water and sanitation, founded on the human right to water and sanitation would be a *bold next goal* in the post 2015 agenda.

The assessment of global risks at the World Economic Forum in January, lists water security as second only to stability of the financial system. That constitutes strong support for water security in the post 2015 agenda. Let us capitalise on that.

Excellencies, distinguished participants.

The 'Africa Water Vision 2025', developed by the African Ministers Council of Water (AMCOW) and endorsed by the African Union ought to be our common guiding document and reference framework for development of water resources in Africa. This vision resonated in the '*AMCOW Monrovia Declaration on Water*' presented to the High Level Panel Co-Chair, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, exactly four weeks ago in Monrovia.

May this vision inspire our work in the coming two days. And may the Geneva results inspire the High Level Panel and the other actors who will take our outputs further in the 2015 process.

Thank you.