

Introduction, and Scene Setting Remarks

HE Guido Landheer

**Deputy Vice Minister for Foreign Economic Relations, the Netherlands,
Dutch delegation leader**

Welcome

- Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,
- Honored to welcome you on behalf of the Dutch government to today's conference on the water-food-energy nexus.
- Like to thank the International Energy Forum for hosting us here today, and all representatives and speakers present for taking time out your busy schedules.
- Your presence here affirms the strong ties between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the NL that date back 145 years. We value this relationship and want to invest in it in the future, both politically and economically.
- Many of the Dutch companies and knowledge institutes present have long been active on the Saudi market, including Shell and TNO. At the same time, we appreciate that Saudi companies like Aramco and SABIC call the NL their home.

Nexus

- The fact that today's conference is attended by representatives from the Dutch government, private sector and knowledge institutes highlights that tackling the challenges presented by water scarcity, climate change, declining energy reserves and the need for sufficient food production to support a growing world population requires commitment and a comprehensive approach.
- Let me give you an example on the nexus between food and water.
- First, commitment. Some twenty years ago, our country committed itself to sustainable agriculture using the rallying cry "Twice as much food using half as many resources."

- To prevent this from becoming a hollow phrase, the government enacted a comprehensive approach that centers on institutionalized cooperation between government, the private sector and knowledge institutes. The need for cooperation stems from the basic premise that ‘no one knows all the answers on their own’.
- At a macro level, this has produced impressive results. The NL are the second largest exporter of agricultural products globally. Last year the total value of agricultural exports reached 85 billion euros, €1.4 billion of which went to the GCC.
- Key to this success is a relentless focus on innovation and sustainability from companies and knowledge institutes like Wageningen University & Research, the top agricultural university in the world and active in this region, including the Kingdom.
- In the area of agriculture and horticulture, innovation has led to a 90 percent decline in farmers’ use of water for key crops and the near-eradication of chemical pesticides’ use in greenhouses.
- Collaboration and a focus on innovation and technology is part of the reason why the NL was voted the most competitive country in the EU in 2016, and nr. 4 globally, according to the Global Competitiveness Index.

Dubai Expo 2020

- The importance we attach to an integrated approach to the interdependencies between food, water and energy is why our government has selected the nexus as the main theme for our participation in Dubai Expo 2020.

Conclusion

- Ladies and gentlemen, moving away from an oil-based economy will not be easy. It will require commitment, determination and innovation.
- That said, I am confident that the Kingdom will successfully navigate this transition. Not only because to the commitment and vision of

the government's Vision 2030 agenda but also because of this country's human capital.

- Following this meeting, I will have a meeting with the rector and students of Princess Noura University where tens of thousands of ambitious Saudi women are prepared to enter the workforce and contribute to their country's progress.
- Yesterday on my way to Aramco I passed by King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals where the next generation of petroleum and mechanical engineers are trained to meet the challenges of the 21st century.
- Their commitment to this country, their willingness to cooperate with international partners and their determination to secure an inclusive and sustainable future is how we will jointly tackle the challenges that brought us together today.
- Please know that the Netherlands is committed to being a partner of the Kingdom in this process, now and in the future. _
- I hope today's presentations and panel discussions will result in new commercial partnerships between Dutch and Saudi counterparts.
- I wish you all a productive and inspiring day and I look forward to hearing the outcomes at the network reception later this afternoon. Shukran.