

News embargo: Begin of the
speech

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Dear Madam, dear Sir,
dear colleagues,

it is my pleasure to talk to you on behalf of Minister Hay on this combined conference of the two projects “SAFECOAST” and “Chain of Safety”. Mr. Hay regrets not to be here today although his participation has been planned for a long time. But next week there will be

local elections in our State. So this means a very tight time schedule for him and sudden changes in his agenda are unavoidable.

However, Mr. Hay has asked me to send his best wishes for the conference and hopes that it will be a successful and fruitful meeting.

Schleswig-Holstein has been partner in both projects, both in "SAFECAST" and "Chain of Safety". There are good reasons for that, because it is situated between two seas, the Baltic and the North Sea and thus we call it the "country between the seas".

This geographical situation implicates a special commitment of the authorities to safeguard people's lives against coastal flooding.

About 25 % of the total area of Schleswig-Holstein are flood prone coastal lowlands. 345,000 people live here, 172,000 people are working here and the gross added value amounts up to 8.5 billion € per year!

Many people still remember the severe floods of 1962 and 1976. These floods, and the consequences of the Holland flood of 1953 were reason enough to start a dike building and reinforcement program, which is laid down in the coastal defence master plan. Due to

major investments in coastal defence during the last decades, the standard of coastal protection is very high today.

Dear colleagues,

However, it is my opinion that it is impossible to guarantee 100 % safety. My agency is in charge of disaster management in Schleswig-Holstein. Therefore it is my duty to think ahead and to describe scenarios that nobody would think about today. Bearing this in mind, it is our obligation to take precautionary measures for any kind of disaster, including coastal flooding.

The system of disaster control has a long tradition at our North Sea coast. However, global climate change and advanced sea level rise implicate new challenges for all communities along the coastline.

To face these challenges, we need new approaches and flexible solutions. But fortunately we are not alone to face these challenges. I am very grateful that my division and thus also the Ministry of the Interior had the opportunity to cooperate closely with our neighbours around the North Sea. Joining these two projects gave us many new impulses to find solutions for our common problems.

It became very clear that, in addition to maintain the current standard of coastal defence, it is essential to optimize our contingency

plans, also and especially across the borders and together with our neighbours.

Within the project „Chain of Safety“, a very valuable approach has been developed. The virtual coastal flood exercise of the last two days has shown us how cross-border cooperation in the field of disaster management can be worked out successfully. We will carefully evaluate the results of the project and transfer them into practice when revising our own contingency plans.

However, the goal of having a safe coast can only be achieved if we pay the same attention to each of the links in the safety chain. To my opinion, **risk and crisis communication** is a key element.

We as public authorities can try to do our best to ensure people's safety, but all effort can be worthless if we do not have the acceptance for our work and if people do not cooperate in crisis situations.

Thus, it is as well our duty to inform people about all hazards, to show them how the authorities are prepared, and last but not least, to show them ways of self protection.

For this reason, we have named Action 2 in SAFECOAST „The informed society“ and we have tried to tackle this issue within SAFECOAST together with the University of Lüneburg. In a desk top

study, they have showed that there are some very successful communication campaigns in the partner regions.

Based upon the recommendations by Lüneburg University, a risk communication campaign has been launched for the Schleswig-Holstein coastal lowlands.

The first main product is a brochure which has been distributed to all households in the flood prone area. An evaluation has shown that people are very satisfied with this kind of information. The second product of Action 2 is an exhibition which has also been developed in close cooperation with the University of Lüneburg. You can see it

here on this conference. Right after the conference, the exhibition will be shown in several coastal towns in Schleswig-Holstein.

So far about risk communication. Coming to the end of my presentation, I would also like to mention another important link in the safety chain: this is **prevention**.

Some people say it is one of the most important links in the safety chain because it has the long term perspective. To my opinion first of all it means a close cooperation with spatial planning in order to avoid increasing risks. For instance, new development in the flood prone lowlands should only be permitted if buildings are flood resistant. But to achieve this, a lot of work has to be done and a lot of

discussions will be held. In our country, we are still in the beginning of this discussion.

Dear colleagues,

It will be our common goal to face this and other challenges now and in the future. Schleswig-Holstein is willing to be a good and reliable partner for further cooperation with our neighbours in the North Sea Region.

Thank you very much for your attention!