

## **Welcome speech by Connie Hedegaard**

Minister for Climate and Energy

Host for COP 15

### **Focus on mitigation**

With the focus on climate change and mitigation in the water sector you have chosen a highly relevant conference theme.

If we don't act now, we risk catastrophic changes to our climate causing destabilizing conflicts and massive migration of refugees due to water shortages or flooding in many parts of the World.

We therefore simply have to invest in a greener future. And we have to rethink the way we shape our societies and economies.

### **We need your expertise**

And you - experts and decision makers in the water and energy sectors - play a key role in this process of change. In order to achieve a carbon neutral future and cope with the global challenges of flooding and drought.

We need your innovative solutions to a low carbon water sector of tomorrow. And we also need your ideas and proposals on how to exploit the synergies between the water &

energy sectors in order to reach a sustainable future.

Therefore I look forward to receiving your recommendations for COP15 later this year in Copenhagen.

### **Conference will promote solutions**

I sincerely hope that this conference will bring forward all those positive examples, where water use efficiency and energy efficiency go hand in hand.

### **Problem: water shortage**

On a global scale many regions already face severe water shortages. Taking into account the projected changes in runoff, these same regions, may become even drier in the future. This calls for completely new solutions in providing enough drinking water for a growing population. Some of these techniques – such as desalination plants – may come with a heavy energy burden. It is of utmost importance that the water and energy sectors get together to solve these

challenges. A number of regions throughout the world will face a number of tough decisions in coming years. Should they build a pipeline or should they find a local solution? In many places, agriculture is already consuming vast amounts of water. Thus decisions in the water sector may have profound impacts on other sectors.

### **Problem: melting glaciers**

I would like to raise one important issue that has been on my mind for a while.

The essence of my dilemma is the rapidly melting glaciers. Scientists can tell us, that with global warming, we should expect these glaciers to provide plenty of meltwater in the rivers over the next 20-30 years. However, once the glaciers are gone, all those communities who have exploited this excess water may suddenly face the risk of sudden water shortages. Going from a situation with plenty of meltwater, energy production and water for irrigation to dry-land farming based on a rainfed economy will provide a huge challenge for these communities. How

do we make sure that water under these circumstances is used in a sustainable manner throughout the rest of this century.

### **Fair regulation**

Up to COP15 we will work hard – very hard – to obtain an ambitious that can reduce emissions of greenhouse gases at a very quick pace. Thus also the water and energy sectors may face external regulation, which will change your way of doing business. We as politicians will do our utmost to reach a fair and transparent deal, which will provide a level playing field for you to operate in. However, there is no doubt in my mind, that stakeholders like yourselves - who are already foreseeing change - will have a competitive edge.

### **All the best**

I wish you all the best with your conference.