

Speech Van Zanen

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Beachcombers, aren't we all one at heart?

Don't we all enjoy the seaside? Simply glancing over the horizon..... or finding ourselves inadvertently exploring the sands, scanning the beach for unusual objects? Perhaps contemplating what stories lie behind a washed up piece of rope, a piece of wood or even a plastic container? The sea is what brings us together here these two days in Noordwijk.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague Jan Rijpstra for the invitation and the hospitality given.

Your themes today are sustainable coastal tourism and coastal defenses. Those themes are strongly related with the topic the organization asked me to talk about, the UN global goals for Sustainable Development.

17 Goals adopted in New York by the general assembly, to create a better world, by 2030.

Global goals, with a deadline so far away.
That's a very abstract topic for a Sunday morning.
But life on the beach is a bit more tangible.
And who knows more about life at the beach than beachcombers.
Or "strandjutters" as we say in Dutch.

They see the developments of the ocean, the beach and the communities along the shores.
Combing through the sands, making new discoveries.

Please allow me to use the metaphor of the beachcomber to link the global and the local.

The aim of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development is to have a better world for all in 2030.

The Goals range from 'the end of hunger' to 'sustainable cities' to 'fighting climate change' and 'protecting the oceans and the seas'.

There are goals regarding the economy, gender equality, peace and justice, and so on.
Maybe you find ground for scepticism.
This agenda is indeed very ambitious. So many goals, addressing so many issues... in 15 years.

There is however reason for optimism. The UN adopted the Millennium Development Goals in the year 2000.

8 Goals also to be attained in 15 years. In 2015 the results were not bad at all.

To give you only the most impressive figures:

- Over 1 billion people escaped extreme poverty.
- The child mortality rate has reduced by more than half
- And after the 15 years of the Millennium Development Goals almost twice as many people have access to reliable drinking water.

The millennium goals showed us that it works to have a shared language and ambitious goals.

To focus our efforts, to push harder and to go faster.

It is important to notice that the new goals are interconnected. We cannot achieve one goal and let another goal slide out of sight.

Poverty reduction must be realized in such a way that it does not burden the climate any further.

Fighting climate change on the other hand has become so urgent that we might lose all progress on poverty reduction unless we take serious action.

This generates interesting discussions, fired by the different interests at stake.

Moreover, each of the Global Goals has a local dimension.

That's why local authorities have a vital role to play.

Let me focus on four goals, how they interact, and what why they matter.

Let me start with goal number 11: sustainable cities and communities.

It focuses on issues municipalities deal with on a daily basis: spatial planning, transport, housing, and disaster preparedness.

The latter includes things like coastal defences and remote sensing and is very much part of this KIMO conference's programme.

Goal 6 on waste water and sewage systems is also close to municipalities' core business, and very important for global goal number 14.

And surely some of you are familiar with this goal: protecting coasts and oceans.

As an example of a target attached to this Goal, I mention just one:

by 2025 we should significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities.

Note the land-based activities in this target. It is not the sole responsibility of the coastal municipalities, but of all local governments within river basins. Nevertheless, coastal municipalities are in leading positions when it comes to this target.

I'm sure you've heard of our Dutch wonder boy.

No, he isn't a beachcomber, well perhaps in his spare time.

No ...actually; he is an ocean comber, literally!

He has dedicated his young life to combing the oceans and to clean them from plastic.

His name is Boyan Slat, and his project: the ocean clean-up is currently tested here in the North Sea.

He is preparing to scale up for massive cleanup operations in the Pacific Ocean.

He is such a promising young gentleman.

But wouldn't it be much better to let him dedicate his life to other activities?

If we can prevent marine pollution all together, he can focus his thoughts and energy on some other pressing issue. . Wouldn't that be great?

I know there may be very little need to tell you about the pollution of the seas. You, members of KIMO, are fully aware of it.

As a matter of fact, you are innovators and early adopters.

Already in 1990 KIMO was founded because local governments in coastal areas were worried about the pollution of the sea. With the Global Goals, , the world is following you, one could say...

Getting back to Global Goal 14, it is the one often summarized as “life below water”. Well, for us in the Netherlands this heading could become just a bit too relevant!

We live above the water, but only just. Without the natural coastal defences of the dunes, sometimes enforced by human structures, keeping the sea away, we would have a serious problem.

Besides being the President of the VNG, I’m also the mayor of the city of Utrecht, some 60 kilometres to the east. Would the sea level rise 5 meters, because of a combination of a general rise and a large north-westerly storm, Utrecht would be flooded almost completely. The tower of our famous Dom Church would be spared from the flooding. And our new civic centre, 21 stories high, would be at the new shore. Admittedlymy office would have a magnificent view and Utrecht would become a coastal city for the first time in our history.

While I enjoy a sea view, the reality of such a rise of the sea level would be gruesome. Everything between here and Utrecht would be below the water surface. And thinking of the people affected is too much for my imagination.

Sea level rise and larger storms are caused by climate change. Climate change is the object of Goal 13.

Disaster preparedness, climate change, plastic soup, biodiversity in the sea. The list of Global Goals and targets relevant to coastal towns and cities goes on and on.

Conflicting Goals:

Earlier, I promised to give you an example of contradicting interests when dealing with more than one Global Goal.

I have a local example, your host knows all about it.

To stop climate change we need to reduce carbon emissions.

We should move from fossil fuelled energy to clean energy such as solar and wind energy. I can feel some of my Dutch colleagues know what issue I’m going to raise.

Regarding sustainable energy – by the way Global Goal 7 – a heated debate takes place here about offshore wind farms.

They would be positive for the reduction of carbon emission, but some argue they affect tourism in coastal areas negatively.

Global Goal 8 concerns creating decent jobs and economic opportunities for everyone. There, ladies and gentleman is an apparent conflict of interest between two goals.

And this is when democracy and decision making steps in.

When conflicting interests need to be balanced and decisions need to be made.

And in these difficult decision making processes external factors can give a positive boost.

Ambitious goals and targets can help to lift the discussion and take a broader more long-term perspective.

I’m not the person to tell you what should be done. I just want to illustrate that realizing the Global Goals is not an easy thing.

I am getting to the final part of my speech.

A year ago, VNG launched the Global Goals Municipal Campaign.

In the period of the Millennium Development Goals, a previous campaign functioned mainly as an exchange and awareness raising mechanism for Dutch municipalities and their citizens (both young and old) and firms.

With the Global Goals, the campaign provides a broader and more international outlook. It contributes to the establishment of the Global Goals as worldwide reference that everyone should help realize.

And it facilitates exchange beyond borders, collecting examples from other parts of the world for inspiration

For example, those urban areas that discharge waste water untreated into lakes, rivers and coastal waters can learn from others with more sustainable systems.

In everyone's interest, because the seas connect us all and feed us all.

Mind you, municipalities are not the sole actors in achieving the Global Goals.

Collaboration with a lot of others is needed to achieve the them. Collaboration of all levels of government (national, provincial, local). with businesses, knowledge institutions and NGO's.

And last but not least, collaboration with the inhabitants of the municipality: the volunteers, the children in the schools, their parents, the shop owners, the consumers. Citizens in all kinds of roles and capacities. Collaboration is key.

Coming almost to the end of my speech, I hope I was able to convince you that

- The Global Goals concern all local governments in the world
- Coastal municipalities have a very direct interest in achieving several Goals
- Implementation of the Global Goals is not easy
- And collaboration is key to successful implementation

Talking about collaboration, the point applies to KIMO and VNG as well. We both take part in what is called Expedition Beachcomber's Delight. This brings me back to where we started: the beachcomber.

So you see, my metaphor is not just an empty ruse to lighten up this speech.

The Global Goals provide us with a checklist of today's challenges in the world.

These goals inspire us to take responsibility, to work together, and to focus our cooperation, while leaving no one behind.

Our beachcombers embark precisely on such a joint adventure for a sustainable environment.

They know it is possible to empower other people and take care of our planet at the same time.

Everybody can participate.

The beachcombers see in real life how global issues and local experiences interact.

It's just a small example, but it carries a strong message.

I would like to invite you now to watch a video about this Beachcomber's initiative.

I'm sure you will see for yourselves that - deep inside, we are all a beachcomber.