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Malaysia's Premier and Green Business Magazine



## OPEN DOORS

The Netherlands Ambassador to Malaysia Karin Mössenlechner says there is an abundance of avenues for Malaysian companies to collaborate with Dutch counterparts and venture into the biomass and bio-based economy sectors.

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# THE DUTCH SEEM TO BE ON THE RIGHT PATH



**T**HE Netherlands seem to have stolen a march on most of the EU partners where sustainability and Green living are concerned.

This, however, may be subject to dispute if one views the alternative facts and figures about the sustainability efforts of The Netherlands.

But to be fair, they are not the only nation to have a good framework for sustainability. There are the others like Sweden, Norway and Germany.

And this is the country where all passenger trains are powered by wind energy, groceries are delivered by all-electric vans, and people cycle over solar bike lanes.

It is also really little wonder that their global brands like Philips, Unilever, AkzoNobel, DSM

and PostNL have emerged as Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) stalwarts.

Alexander Collet D'Escury, chief executive at Dutch carpet-maker Desso, said the Dutch expect to "live with nature", given the perennial threat of the sea. One third of the country is under sea level, and it's a given that the country is very careful about ecology.

Taking climate change seriously is, therefore, marketable with the Dutch given the prospect of rising sea levels.

The good news is the Netherlands has one of the most advanced frameworks for achieving sustainability, the National Environmental Policy Plan, or NEPP, introduced in 1989.

It's a strategy for successful green planning to make environmental recovery a reality.

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**Adviser**

**DATO' DR. NADZRI YAHAYA**  
nadzri@theplus.my

**Publisher**

**DATUK FAUZI OMAR**  
fauzi@theplus.my

**Managing Editor**

**JOHNSON FERNANDEZ**  
johnson@theplus.my

**Chief Executive Officer**

**SIMON WONG**  
simon@theplus.my

**Editor**

**LIYANA FAUZI**

**Digital Editor**

**KEVIN CHAN**

**Journalists**

**NEERA KHANDPURI**  
**SHEILA NATASSHA**

**Columnists**

**ZAINI ABDUL WAHAB**  
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**KAVICKUMAR**  
**MURUGANATHAN**

**Creative Director**

**MOHD HASRUL SAID**

**Photographs**

europaen pressphoto agency

**Foreign News providers**

**EFE**  
efe\_epa asia

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# GOING GREEN

## THE DUTCH WAY

>> *Mössenlechner says Dutch government has set ambitious goals in the field of sustainability*

BY LIYANA FAUZI



**K**ARIN Mössenlechner, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Malaysia, was born in Enschede, a city in the east of The Netherlands close to the German border. After grammar school, she studied physics at the Technical University of Twente, history at the University of Leyden, and American Studies at the University of Texas in Austin. For her Master's thesis, she was accorded with the Theodore Roosevelt Award and the Robert Fruin Award.

After several positions in journalism and politics, Mössenlechner began her diplomatic career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1997. Her first post landed her in The Hague, followed by a position as the Head of Political Section in New Delhi, India. She then served as Deputy Ambassador and the Head of Economic Affairs in Bern, Switzerland. From 2010 to 2011, she went back to The Hague as the Assistant Director of European Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A transfer brought her to the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) where she worked as the Coordinator for security policy and public affairs, in addition to being the Deputy Competition Leader for the Dutch Premier League (Eredivisie). She then returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague again in 2013 until 2016, serving as the Deputy Director of Security Policy. In the latter part of the same period Mössenlechner was also a Coordinator for MH17, for which she worked closely together with Malaysia.

On August 1, 2016, she took up her posting as Ambassador-Designate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Malaysia. December 2 marked Mössenlechner's first official year as The Honourable Dutch Ambassador to Malaysia since presenting her letters of Credence to the Agong.

As Malaysia moves towards fulfilling the commitments made under the Paris Agreement while simultaneously pushing forward its own renewable energy (RE) agenda, Malaysian-Dutch relations and collaborations could prove instrumental to these efforts. The country is on the brink of an energy transition with all hands on deck to increase the RE percentage in the energy mix. Much can be learned and gained from

a country like The Netherlands which has always put Innovation & Sustainability at the forefront of their operations.

There have been several Dutch companies operating in Malaysia, and the presence of the Malaysian Dutch Business Council (MDBC) further deepening the business connection between the two countries. The Netherlands has also invited Malaysian private and public sectors for cooperation in the biobased sectors; the former has ambitions of transitioning towards a biobased economy and have been promoting the change for a decade. More recently in April, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Partners for International Business (PIB) Palmares Consortium and the Innovation Agency Malaysia (AIM) to boost the biomass sector in both countries.

but I think we have something to offer when it comes to green innovations. Our geography and demography have always forced us to be sustainable and innovative. We live in a densely populated country, with 17 million people in an area a little larger than Pahang, in a flood-prone country in the delta of the Rhine River and some of the other largest European rivers - one third of which is below sea level. So we always had to be innovative, in order to survive and manage living with the water," Mössenlechner explained.

Driven by the basic need to feed its population, The Netherlands had to become sustainable to also ensure that the country remained livable for all its people. The Dutch government has, for a long time, strived to transform the country into a green and sustainable urban delta.



The observable high demand for Dutch solutions in the region covering technologies related to water efficiency, energy efficiency, waste, material/resource selection, sustainable built environments, innovative building technologies and design (including RE sources), and environmental protection can be accredited to The Netherlands' experiences in the aforementioned sectors.

"I am a bit hesitant to say that ours are the preferred solutions in this region,

Many of the lessons that stemmed from that transformational process are very relevant to this region as well, given the similar challenges many countries are facing due to pollution, urbanisation, an ageing population, and others.

Even though The Netherlands is not unique for doing so, its strong belief in the importance of close cooperation between governments, businesses, and knowledge institutes is one of its main strengths. It has





PIB Palmares Booth at IBCM 2017 in Kuching, Sarawak.



The Holland Booth at IGEN 2017.

certainly brought the so-called Triple Helix model furthest.

Minister of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed along with a Malaysian delegation recently visited Brainport Eindhoven, a leading technology region in Europe located in Southeast Netherlands with Eindhoven at its heart. Brainport creates solutions for the challenges facing society both today and tomorrow, regarded worldwide as a center for innovation and high-tech.

"They were interested to see how this model can be translated to the Malaysian context. In Eindhoven, high-tech multinationals like Philips and ASML work together with SMEs, startups, and the Technical University. Talents from the high-tech sector, design and creative minds, and entrepreneurs work side by side. The focus is on solving the problems faced by society in our rapidly changing world. How can we ensure that our people stay healthy? How do we make our mobility more sustainable and efficient? How do we meet the growing demand for clean energy and healthy food?"

Brainport functions as an accelerator for the fast translation of creative solutions to these questions into action, thus contributing to a more sustainable, healthy, and secure society.

She continued: "And it works - Brainport has registered a major 44% share of Dutch patents, more than any other region in The Netherlands and other top European regions such as Stockholm and Munich. Another great example of sustainable

innovation is Smart City Amsterdam that uses the Triple Helix model, or rather the Quadruple Helix, because the people themselves - civil society - are closely involved as well, to make our capital city green and livable."

Regarding collaboration with ASEAN countries, Mössenlechner stated that The Netherlands has many visitors from the region and Malaysia. At the G2G level, there are numerous contacts and exchanges on a variety of issues. There is interest in all kinds of sectors, such as The Netherlands' green innovation approach in general, waste management, water management, agriculture, biomass, and urban mobility.

***"Our geography and demography have always forced us to be sustainable and innovative."***

"There is also much interest in our cycling infrastructure and in the way our big cities have reshaped themselves to give space to pedestrians and cyclists. I am glad with the recent announcement by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) that more bike lanes will be introduced in the city shortly. And will definitely make use of it!" Mössenlechner enthused.

Additionally, an increasing number of exchanges between Dutch universities and research institutes in the ASEAN region are leading to a lot of private initiatives in the fields of smart mobility, sustainable building, water management, waste management, biomass, and RE.

The sustainability efforts of the Dutch companies operating in Malaysia are obvious benchmarks to similar operations for other European companies here. These standards are a combination of those that the Dutch government imposes on their companies with facilities abroad and initiatives propelled by the individual companies themselves. The Netherlands has ecolabels, government procurement standards, environmental standards, health and safety standards, as well as anti-corruption standards.

"The Dutch government has set ambitious goals in the field of sustainability, but our companies are also proactive themselves in taking their own responsibility. We believe more can be attained if we leave it to the market to come up with ideas on how to achieve the sustainability goals. Many of the over 200 Dutch companies in Malaysia have much to offer in the field of sustainable growth. We saw good examples of that at the recent MDBC Innovation and Sustainability Awards (MISA) in October.

"Almost all of our companies have their own sustainability policies and many have set ambitious targets of their own. Unilever is a great example. The company is very committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and wants to be a driver of positive



change and sustainable growth. It does that on all levels: through its brands - for example by building better self-esteem for girls and young women with the Dove brand; through the partners in its supply chain - thus contributing to carbon emission reduction and improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers; and through its working standards - aimed at diversity and equal opportunities for all," the Ambassador shared.

The Nutrient Platform also involved the financial sector which was needed to overcome the barrier of the high price volatility in the secondary phosphate market, discouraging investment. The Dutch government also set new rules for the use of recovered phosphates as fertilizer in The Netherlands in an effort to overcome legislative barriers hindering the use of recovered materials.



Dutch researchers and engineers receiving oil palm education.

On the topic of circular economy innovations, many of them face non-financial barriers that limit their expansion or restrict their development pace. Hypotheticals to contemplate is of difficult and unclear procedures for obtaining relevant permits, complications in finding a way through a labyrinth of regulations, or a lack of market incentives to innovate. These could prevent sustainable opportunities from materialising.

The Dutch government's Green Deal Programme, launched in 2011, aims to break these barriers and to help promote green growth. The steering board comprises of businesses, non-governmental organisations, and is government represented.

One example of a successful Green Deal is the Dutch 'Phosphate Value Chain Agreement.' The government brought together 20 stakeholders in the fields of water, food, agriculture, and the chemical industry in a 'Nutrient Platform' to sign the Agreement. It was to turn The Netherlands into a net exporter of secondary phosphate by bringing together parties in the value chain that do not normally work together.

From 2011 to 2016, a total of 201 Green Deals were signed in the fields of the biobased economy, being biodiversity, construction, energy, climate, mobility, water, and food. These Green Deals have seen through contributions from more than 1,300 parties towards green growth. Some concrete results include the actualisation of 15,000 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and 8,100 homes that were made

energy efficient. The programme was positively evaluated in 2016.

"Without the Green Deals, fewer innovative initiatives that contribute to sustainable economic growth would have been generated and executed. Success factors are the removal of structural barriers, the exchange of knowledge, the creation of networks, and the acceleration of innovation processes. Because of the importance of initiatives such as these to meet the Paris Climate Agreement commitments, the programme has been extended," said Mössenlechner.

Further into the future, The Netherlands has set ambitious goals while having been closely involved in promoting the biobased economy for approximately 10 years. It intends to become a completely biobased, circular economy by 2050.

According to the Population Research Institute, with a projected global population of 8.3 billion by 2030 we will need 50% more energy, 40% more water, and 35% more food. Rising global demands for food, agricultural products, and water will only feed competition for the limited natural resources.

"We believe that it is necessary to change our economy and the way we produce and consume in order to meet the challenges of this growing global population, and to meet the Paris Climate Goals of keeping the rise in global temperature well below 2°C.



Mössenlechner, Dr Pieter Claassen of Wageningen University, and PIB Palmares Liaison Officer Bregje Drion at the Holland Booth, PIPOC 2017.





***We believe more can be attained if we leave it to the market to come up with ideas on how to achieve the sustainability goals.***

The newly formed Dutch government has announced a target of 49% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in 2030 and a further reduction of 80% in the year 2050. This can only be achieved if we invest more in sustainable innovation and development and accelerate the transition to a biobased economy, which we intend to do in the years to come," she pointed out.

The profitability of a biobased economy adds to its investment value, apart from serving the preservation of the people and the planet. The added value of the biobased economy in The Netherlands has been estimated at EUR 2.6-3 billion in 2011 including the materials, chemicals, and energy sectors. Biomass is already utilised on a large scale in the energy sector, with a recent surge in emphasis on the importance of sustainably producing biomass. The Ambassador said that the Dutch government will continue to press for sustainability and will seek international cooperation to achieve it.

On the cooperation invitation The Netherlands extended to Malaysian private and public sectors, Mössenlechner commented: "It is difficult to quantify the multi-level, ongoing activities in both the public and private sectors, but there is a lot going on. In both sectors, we actively engage with our Malaysian counterparts."

"At the G2G level, we recently had

our Vice Minister for Agriculture and our Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visiting Malaysia. As mentioned before, Minister Mustapa just returned from a visit to The Netherlands. These reciprocal visits brought constructive dialogues on a number of topics, of which the biobased economy is an important one. We are also closely in touch with AIM and the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA)," she continued.

In the private sector, there is an active network of Dutch companies in Malaysia in the fields of biomass technology, engineering consultancy, waste management, and wastewater management. The Netherlands Embassy facilitates collaboration between Dutch and Malaysian parties. A number of biomass companies that have joined PIB Palmares receive support from the Embassy in their efforts to find viable and sustainable solutions for Malaysian palm oil biomass.

The MoU that was signed in April between PIB Palmares and AIM had further amplified an already productive working relationship between AIM and the Embassy. Since its signing, tangible results of the MoU are visible in the Embassy assuming the roles of co-organiser and sponsor for this year's International Biomass Conference Malaysia (IBCM) which took place on October 19-20 in Kuching, Sarawak.

PIB Palmares was well-represented at the Conference with a large delegation, large booth, panellists in four out of six panel discussions, it hosted a regional workshop on biomass solutions, and saw a well-visited networking reception.

"We are now working with AIM on the follow-up of IBCM and the mission of PIB Palmares to Sarawak.

"But there is definitely potential to do more in other areas as well. The young people in Malaysia especially really care about sustainability, about the future of their country and the planet, and are eager to go Green. I am sure this will be reflected in Transformasi Nasional 2050 (TN50) as well. The Netherlands stands ready to cooperate with Malaysia and to offer innovative and sustainable solutions in many areas," Mössenlechner concluded.