I am often asked what other countries do toward flood risk management that we in the United States have not done already. Since the U.S. is very large and has such geographic diversity, it may be difficult to compare and apply the same approach in managing flood risks as is used in other countries. But many benefits to be gained from partnerships with our counterparts around the world include learning innovative ideas in policies and projects on the ground and having a forum that helps elevate our flood risk management role.

This October I had the opportunity to join 10 global delta cities at the Connecting Delta Cities network workshop in Venice, Italy. I represented Washington, D.C. at the workshop, hosted by the city of Venice and C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. C40 is an international organization focused on tackling climate change and driving urban actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks. Connecting Delta Cities is a C40 network, which I became a member of in 2016, which seeks to adopt urban water management and climate change adaptation best practices, particularly on coastal flooding, through knowledge exchange and collaborations.
During the 3.5-day workshop, cities shared their flood risk management activities, learned from one another ways to improve their work, and experienced firsthand how Venice was preparing for sea level rise impacts. On the first day, cities discussed their most ambitious actions in flood risk management. I shared my ambition to develop integrated flood modeling to consolidate existing models for all types of flooding, including urban flooding, in a single tool for planning and operations throughout D.C. In a group exercise, cities discussed challenges, where each identified the lack of necessary data, what kind of modeling each currently has, and other elements to consider for flood modeling (e.g., active rivers underneath the city). On the last day, each city developed its action plan documenting ideas learned and specific items to follow up on.

Being in Venice and engaging with other cities on increased coastal flood risk due to rising sea levels brought home to me the very real threats and challenges my counterparts and I face. Since 2014, I have formed partnerships on behalf of D.C. with cities worldwide to explore and implement the most efficient and effective flood risk management solutions.

The DC Silver Jackets governance structure highlights the value of sharing our flood resilience knowledge. These continued collaborations are invaluable to helping this vulnerable area adapt to climate change in innovative and vital ways.

I look forward to sharing more on what I have learned and to receiving new ideas on how to enhance my global city collaborations under the Connecting Delta Cities network at the International Committee meeting during ASFPM’s annual national conference next year in Cleveland, Ohio. I’ll see you there!

To read the full article in a LinkedIn blog by Phannavong, follow this link.