



STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD  
SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SOCIETY

by

Mr M. Jarraud  
Deputy Secretary-General

(Geneva, Switzerland, 12 December 2003)

World Meteorological Organization

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Excellencies Heads of State and Government,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Distinguished Representatives of International Organizations,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege for me to address you today on the occasion of the World Summit on Information Society. On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own, I wish to thank Mr Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for inviting WMO to address this Summit.

As we are all aware, weather, climate and water resources are essential for socio-economic development and well being of humankind. Weather- and climate-related extreme events including tornadoes, thunderstorms, storms, cyclones, floods and drought, which account for nearly 75 per cent of all disasters, have led to an enormous toll of human suffering, loss of lives and economic damage. Monitoring of these events, prediction of their movement and the timely issuance of warnings are essential for mitigating the disastrous impact of such events on population and economy.

WMO gives utmost priority to the production, provision, exchange and delivery of accurate and reliable warnings and information for mitigating the impact of natural disasters and environmental emergencies. This is possible today thanks to advances in the sciences of meteorology and hydrology and in the making of observations, use of computing facilities and exchange capabilities that depend on a reliable communication system.

Indeed, information and communication technologies have played a key role in meteorology since the 19th century with the advent of the telegraph. Today, WMO coordinates the making and exchange of data from a global network of over 10 000 surface stations, 1 000 upper air stations, 7 000 ships, buoys, aircrafts, weather radars and 16 satellites. Linking the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services of all its 187 Members throughout the world, this large operational network forms a live web that fosters the quasi-instantaneous exchange, at the global level, of information, analyses, forecasts and warnings. In this regard, it should be realised that some radio frequency bands are essential in monitoring the composition and structure of the atmosphere. Their allocation to different users could have a critical impact on our ability to warn against extreme events and therefore lead to a heavier human and economic toll.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The information society therefore needs to further the capabilities of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in producing and delivering information, warnings and comprehensive and effective services to population in support of safety of life and property and the general welfare of the people in a wide range of weather-sensitive

economic sectors. For this purpose, access to information provided by National Meteorological and Hydrological Services is of crucial importance for the sustainable development of all countries.

An ongoing challenge for WMO and its Member countries lies in the fact that the developing countries, which are among the most exposed to natural disasters and least able to benefit from the advances in the application of weather, climate and hydrological information, have limited access to information and communication techniques, as services continue to be unavailable or too expensive. As regards information and early warning services for the protection of life and property, WMO has developed strategies so that all countries can take full advantage of the rapid progress in ICTs.

In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize that the availability of information technology has a key role to play in enabling and fostering access to weather, water and climate information and services. The information technology should help to pave the way for sustainable development in developing and least developed countries, enabling populations and various economic sectors to benefit from comprehensive and effective information and warnings in support of safety of life and property and of economic and social development.

Through many of its programmes, WMO is highly committed to the coordination and promotion of implementation of ICTs, for improving the global, regional and national production, exchange and distribution of information and warnings on weather, water and climate. In this way, we can contribute with all our development partners to sustainable development for the benefit of humanity. I therefore hope that these will be reflected in the Summit Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action.

Thank you.