

Statement of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) at the occasion of the second special meeting of the Group of Friends of the Chair of the Prepcom of the second phase of the WSIS

Background

The World Meteorological Organization appreciates the draft political chapeau and the operational part of the final document prepared for the meeting, and thanks for the opportunity to comment on these documents.

Most of all weather elements of unusual severity or for abnormal duration pose a threat to life, property, human activities and the environment, including tornadoes, thunderstorms, storms, cyclones, flood-producing rain or drought. Natural disasters, which occur on timescales ranging from minutes to years, have led to an enormous toll of human suffering, loss of lives and property damage. The increasingly accurate and reliable information on weather, climate and water allows for improved decision-making, which has the potential to offset the negative impacts of weather and climate. Early warnings of weather, climate and water extremes protect life and property, provided that they can reach their target audience in a timely and suitable manner. An ongoing challenge lies in the fact that the developing countries, which are among the most exposed to natural disasters, have limited access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

At the occasion of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (18-22 January 2005, Kobe (Japan)), the World Meteorological Organisation organises a WSIS thematic meeting on ICT Applications in Natural Disaster Reduction. The meeting will consider how the Information Society should respond to the needs for the universal and equitable access to weather, climate and water warnings and information in order to reduce loss of life and property caused by disasters to a minimum.

Suggestion related to paragraph 6 of the draft political chapeau

The World Meteorological Organisation suggests to reaffirm the crucial role of the ICTs for the safety of life and property, especially for the production and delivery of early warnings and forecasts of weather, climate and water related disasters, in the paragraph 6 of the draft political chapeau.

References in the Geneva Plan of Action

- To establish monitoring systems, using ICTs, to forecast and monitor the impact of natural and man-made disasters, particularly in developing countries, LDCs and small economies (see paragraph 20.(c) of the Geneva Plan of Action under E-environment)
- To promote the long-term systematic and efficient collection, dissemination and preservation of essential scientific digital data, for example meteorological data in all countries (see paragraph 22.(c) of the Geneva Plan of Action under E-science)
- To promote principles and metadata standards to facilitate cooperation and effective use of collected scientific information and data as appropriate to conduct scientific research (see paragraph 22.(d) of the Geneva Plan of Action under E-science).