

WMO 009

**STATEMENT AT THE FIRST CONFERENCE  
OF THE  
PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION  
ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE**

by

Professor G.O.P. Obasi  
Secretary-General

of the

**WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION  
(Geneva, Switzerland)**



(Berlin, Germany, 28 March 1995)

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Mme President, the Honourable Ms Merkel, Federal Minister  
for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety  
of the Federal Republic of Germany,  
Mr Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a  
Framework Convention on Climate Change,  
The Representative of United Nations Secretary-General,  
The Executive Director of United Nations Environmental Programme,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**INTRODUCTION**

It is an honour and a privilege for me to address the opening of this First Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN/FCCC). I wish to express the gratitude of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own to the organizers of the Conference for the kind invitation to address this session. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Government and people of Germany for hosting this Conference, in this historic city of Berlin. May I also take this opportunity, Mme President, to convey to you my warmest congratulations on your election as President of this important Conference. I am confident that under your able guidance the aims of the Conference will be realized.

The progress achieved in the negotiations of the Convention in only a few years is remarkable. This achievement has been possible due to the able leadership of Mr Jean Ripert and Ambassador M. Estrada Oyuela, the co-operation of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) Bureau and indeed of all delegations as well as the excellent support of the INC Secretariat headed by Mr Michael Zammit Cutajar. It is also opportune to recall that a decisive factor which contributed to the success was the early initiation of the negotiation process.

## **WMO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FCCC**

In preparation for the Second World Climate Conference, WMO and UNEP in 1989 established the Task Force on the Climate Convention and convened its first meeting. Subsequently they organized the Preparatory Meeting for Negotiations on a Framework Convention on Climate Change in Geneva in September 1990. These preparatory activities enabled the UN General Assembly in 1990 to establish the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC/FCCC) whose first meeting in Washington in February 1991 was also convened by WMO and UNEP.

WMO's role in initiating the negotiation process arises naturally from the Organization's involvement for many decades in the study of climate, its variability and change. In 1929, a Commission for Climatology was already established. A Panel of Experts on Climate Change which was set up in 1974, issued the first authoritative statement on climate change in 1976. In 1979, the First World Climate Conference convened by WMO led to the establishment of the World Climate Programme (WCP) by the Eighth Congress of the Organization in the same year. The Programme is currently co-sponsored by seven international organizations.

Through WMO's Programmes, a durable framework for the collection and management of climate data, development of climate research and the conduct of studies on climate impacts and assessment will continue to be provided. Today, there are some 10,000 observing stations on land and 7,000 voluntary observing ships, 1000 buoys over the oceans, several radars and meteorological and environmental satellites. These are complemented by observations from commercial aircrafts currently producing some 10,000 reports per day. In addition to these, there are also some 350 Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) stations which provide vital information on greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, CFC's, tropospheric ozone) and the regional distribution of sulphur and nitrogen compounds. A WMO Data Centre for greenhouse gases was established in Tokyo, Japan in 1989.

Furthermore, the basic scientific and technical infrastructure has contributed to the launching of a number of initiatives in the areas of climate and climate change. Following the Villach Conference on the effect of greenhouse gases in 1985 which WMO organized with UNEP and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), the WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up in 1988. The IPCC assessments dated 1990 and 1992 and the Special Report in 1994, provided basic inputs for the establishment of national policies by many countries and aided in the negotiation of the Convention. In addition, a Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) was also established as proposed by the Second World Climate Conference which WMO convened in 1990.

As a major initiative to meet the national, regional and global needs for climate information and climate applications as well as support for the INC/FCCC, the International Convention to Combat Desertification and Agenda 21 of UNCED, WMO in collaboration with other agencies, convened in April 1993, the Intergovernmental Meeting on the World Climate Programme (IGM/WCP). The outcome of this is the preparation of an Integrated Proposal entitled "The Climate Agenda - International Climate-Related Programmes". The Proposal will be submitted to governments and the UN Commission for Sustainable Development.

As a further contribution, WMO had continued to give material support to the interim Secretariat of the INC/FCCC.

### **WHY SHOULD WE HAVE RELEVANT NEGOTIATED PROTOCOLS QUICKLY?**

While considerable progress has been made in understanding climate processes, there are still some uncertainties about climate change attributable to human activities. However, there are many signals of possible climate change reflected in an increasing number of extreme weather-related natural disasters that are occurring more frequently, some with increased intensities. In the last few years, tropical cyclones have been more numerous in regions such as the South-West Indian Ocean and the Pacific (Philippines had 32 typhoons in 1993 compared with an average of 19). Even in the Atlantic, the hurricane of the century (Andrew, 1992) has been observed in the USA. Severe floods, some of which have been among the worst in this century, have occurred in parts of Asia, Africa, Western Europe (Belgium, France, Germany and Netherlands in 1994) and the United States (Mississippi in 1993 and California in 1994). In October last year, the ozone hole in the Antarctica was the severest ever recorded in the last 35 years. Some countries in the Northern Hemisphere are also now being threatened by excessive ultraviolet-B radiation. Last year, Australia experienced its worst drought this century. Southern African countries are still experiencing the drought that commenced in 1991. Indonesia and Brazil are only now recovering from the impacts of the severe droughts of 1994.

Furthermore, recent results from the World Ocean Circulation Experiment show that the ocean temperature in parts of the Atlantic at depths between 500 m and 3 km has increased by 0.2°C in the past 65 years. As the oceans interact with the atmosphere, one cannot but conclude that some of the heating due to greenhouse gases is being partly absorbed by the ocean water layers. Whenever the oceans attain thermal equilibrium, the process might become irreversible and all signals will show up in the atmosphere. For this reason, governments should act now and quickly and not to give the excuse of waiting for further scientific progress.

## VIEWS ON THE FCCC - WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

It is an important achievement that the FCCC was successfully negotiated and ratified by several countries. However, there are several crucial issues emanating from the Convention which this Conference should address and possibly decide upon.

Firstly, there is an urgent need for this Conference to achieve consensus and to formulate concrete measures that will ensure completion of negotiations on how to stabilize CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at the 1990 levels beyond the year 2000. This will necessitate a review of the adequacy of Article 4.2(a) and (b) of the Convention. Therefore, the Conference should commit itself to the completion of negotiations on this issue before the Third Conference of the Parties in 1997. In this regard, the review of the National Communications will assist in identifying a reliable set of viable actions which will lead to further and continued reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Secondly, if we are to succeed in protecting our climate, it is essential that efforts be made by all countries to meet the targets laid down by the Convention. However, the commitments from developing and developed countries to limit emissions should be in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The industrialized countries should lead the way in meeting the challenge of climate change because of their major contribution to global emissions of greenhouse gases and their advantageous financial and technological capabilities. In this regard, the initiatives of some Annex I countries which have already adopted targets that call for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 20% of 1990 levels by the year 2005 should be supported.

Thirdly, the methodologies for estimating the sources and sinks of the greenhouse gases must be carefully mapped out and be transparent to ensure universal acceptance.

Fourthly, special consideration should be given to assist developing nations and those with economies in transition to limit their future emissions through the transfer of environmentally sound technologies in energy efficiency, renewable energy and improved land-use management. These countries should also be assured of guaranteed financial support to implement the Convention. In particular, the Small Island States and the Least Developed Countries should be given special attention to ensure their continued involvement. In this context, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) should be adequately supported to ensure that this financial mechanism can assist at the appropriate level the efforts of the developing countries.

Fifthly, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation mentioned in Articles 9 and 10 respectively, of the Convention should draw on the expertise of other relevant bodies and not duplicate their activities. As regards climate monitoring, systematic observation and research in which WMO is particularly competent, the Organization will continue to provide the necessary support to the SBSTA as required. Similarly the competence of the IPCC that has been giving scientific and technical support to the Convention should be adequately tapped.

Sixthly, the Conference should encourage the establishment of National Climate Committees as well as national and regional Action Plans for Climate Change. In this regard, local governments and civil societies have an important role to play in the mitigation of climate change.

Lastly, it is essential for governments to realise that global data will continue to be the backbone for further improvement in our understanding of the dynamics of the climate system and, consequently, climate change detection. Observing systems must be strengthened worldwide, especially in developing countries where there are major gaps. Such improved systems are needed to reduce the uncertainties in the timing, magnitude and regional patterns of climate change. Therefore, unless there is concerted support for initiatives such as the Integrated Proposal, the World Climate Programme, the Global Atmospheric Watch (GAW) and the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the implementation of any policies and actions to mitigate and/or to adapt to change would be difficult and costly. In this respect, I wish to renew my special appeal to all Governments, as signatories to this Convention, to enhance support for climate monitoring and research, for climate services and for climate impact studies as indicated in Article 4, paragraph 1(g) and Article 5 of the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

#### **WHAT WILL WMO CONTRIBUTE?**

Firstly, I should like to state that, as providers of meteorological, hydrological, climatological, oceanographic and other environmental data and services, WMO and its national Meteorological and Hydrological Services will continue with their world-wide efforts in the monitoring, understanding and predicting future climate, its variability and change for the planning and implementation of scientifically justified sustainable development programmes. In this connection, WMO will continue to strengthen and further develop the climate-related programmes such as WCP, GAW and GCOS in order to contribute effectively to the implementation of the Convention.

Secondly, if necessary, WMO will continue to provide staffing support to the permanent Secretariat of the Conference of the Parties. I would also propose that the permanent Secretariat for the Convention should be an efficient facilitator rather than an operational body. It should draw on the expertise of other relevant secretariats in the United Nations System.

Thirdly, as WMO hosts the Secretariats of climate-related programmes such as WCP and GCOS and that of IPCC, it would be prepared to host the Secretariat of the Convention in the new WMO Headquarters Building to be ready in late 1997, if requested by the Parties to the Convention.

Fourthly, the World Meteorological Organization will continue to attach primary importance to those matters within its competence which are related to the implementation of the Convention.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding, it is my firm belief that the spirit of co-operation and goodwill which has ensured the success of the negotiations so far, will continue to prevail during your deliberations and in the process of implementation of the Convention. We cannot afford to fail; we must not fail. The preservation of our planet earth which we hold in trust for future generation of humankind should be our most sacred responsibility.

I wish you a very successful outcome of this milestone event, which is so important to the environmentally sound sustainable development of all nations.

Thank you.

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