

STATEMENT AT THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE  
NINTH SESSION OF THE  
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE  
UNITED FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE

by

Professor G.O.P. Obasi  
Secretary-General  
World Meteorological Organization



(Milan, Italy, 12 December 2003)

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**His Excellency Miklós Persányi, President of the Conference of the  
Parties,**

**Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Ms Joke Waller-Hunter, Executive Secretary of the Convention,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honour and a privilege for me to address you today on the occasion of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own, I would like to thank Ms J. Waller-Hunter, the Executive Secretary of the Convention for her kind invitation and for the opportunity to address this esteemed gathering. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Government of Italy on the excellent preparations for the Conference and to the City authorities of Milan for their warm welcome and hospitality.

Mr President, allow me to congratulate you on your election and to wish you success in your very important task of guiding this Conference. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate H. E. Mr T.R. Baalu, the former President of the Conference of the Parties, for his outstanding leadership since the last session of the Conference.

**Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A little over a year ago, the Heads of State and Government at the World Summit on Sustainable Development made a commitment to achieve the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), namely, of stabilizing *"greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner, in accordance with our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities."* The challenge for this Conference is to collectively persist in taking actions aimed at achieving the objective.

Such actions are becoming increasingly urgent in view of the increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the continued rise in globally averaged surface temperatures, and a growing number of extreme weather and climate events, some of which are of unprecedented intensity.

As regards greenhouse gases, it is noted that the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) has continued to increase. At the end of the year 2002, the concentration was 373 parts per million by volume (ppmv), that is an increase of over 33 per cent over its value in 1750.

In addition, the year 2002 bore witness to the warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, which contributed to making the 2002 global mean surface temperature as the second warmest year, replacing the year 2001. In the extra-tropical regions of the northern hemisphere, 2002 was the warmest year in the 1861-to-present record. The year 2003 is already promising to rank alongside the warmest years on record. The rise in global mean surface temperature since 1900 now exceeds 0.6 deg. C.

Also, each year we continue to experience numerous weather- and climate-related disasters in different parts of the globe, some which are unprecedented in intensity. The influence of weather and climate on human well being, and the inherent impact on the environment, were

evident in several events during the year. Tropical cyclones in various parts of the world continued to destroy lives and property. For example, the Republic of Korea was affected by typhoon Maemi in September, causing over 100 deaths, 25 000 homeless and an estimated US\$ 4.1 in property damage. In Pakistan, floods in July killed 162 people, displaced 900 000 and destroyed nearly 48 000 homes. Drought affected the livelihood of about 23 million people in eastern and southern Africa. Thousands of people died in Europe (Switzerland and United Kingdom recorded their highest ever temperatures) and North America as a result of the impact of heat waves. Significant damage was caused by widespread forest fires that destroyed properties in a number of countries including France, Portugal, Spain and here in Italy.

These incidence of extreme events, as well as changes in atmospheric composition and temperature require enhanced action both at policy and scientific levels. At the policy level, a number of measures have been proposed, including the Kyoto Protocol. At the scientific level, there is the need to strengthen existing infrastructure and take new initiatives related to enhanced monitoring and research, reduction of uncertainties in climate prediction as well as the provision of climate-related services. Along with the services, adaptation measures should be undertaken to assist local communities to cope with and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

In a remarkable show of continued commitment by the global community to climate change issues, this year has witnessed important international conferences which brought together scientists and policy makers alike to enhance the effort by the international community on climate-related issues. These are among others, were the "*International Symposium on Climate Change*" which was hosted by China in April, the "*Earth Observation Summit*" held in July in Washington and the "*World Climate Change Conference*", held in Moscow Russian Federation, in September/October. As these Conferences offered further opportunities for lively dialogue among scientists and policy makers alike on new scientific findings, and policy concerns, it is expected that they will have significant impacts on advancement of climate change science and related policies and promotion of international cooperation in the context of the UNFCCC and the WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).



**Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

WMO has played a pioneering role in establishing observational and service programmes in support of weather forecasting, climate and hydrology. There is now a universal agreement on the need to reinforce networks for additional systematic and sustainable observations. In this context, WMO will continue to mobilize all possible effort to strengthen its observational networks, namely those of the World Weather Watch (WWW), the Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) and the hydrological networks including the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System (WHYCOS). I reviewed this central role at the Earth Observation Summit in Washington, DC on July 31 of this year, where high-level officials addressed the establishment of a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained Earth observation system for the full range of environmental applications. The Summit adopted a formal declaration of intent and established an ad hoc Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to advance this initiative. WMO welcomes these efforts to build close collaborative and coordinated links between its programmes and initiatives being developed within the GEO framework, and offered its enthusiastic participation with the nations and other international agencies to further explore and develop a forward looking strategy to improve global environmental observing systems. WMO is participating actively in the work of the various Sub-groups of GEO as they develop elements of the GEO strategy, a Framework Document and a 10-year Implementation Plan, which will be further developed and finalized over the next year.

**Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

In response to decision 5/CP.5 of the Conference of the Parties and with endorsement of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), as well as the WMO Executive Council and Congress, the WMO-sponsored Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) has led the development of the *Second Report on the Adequacy of the Global Observing Systems for Climate in Support of the UNFCCC*. This Report was developed on behalf of all the global observing systems, including the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS), also co-sponsored by WMO, and the WMO Global Observing System and Global Atmosphere Watch, and was

presented to Parties at the Eighteenth Session of SBSTA last June. The Report identified a number of critical requirements that need to be met in order to ensure that the systematic observations needed to meet the objectives of the UNFCCC will be taken and made available. These requirements include:

- The free and unrestricted exchange of the data needed to generate products to respond to global and regional societal issues including the objective of UNFCCC;
- Adherence to the GCOS Climate Monitoring Principles, which were adopted in June by the Fourteenth World Meteorological Congress through its Resolution 9 (Cg-XIV);
- Capacity-building and observing system improvements in developing countries;
- Improved observing standards, above all in the terrestrial domain; and
- The generation and routine distribution of integrated global climate-quality products from satellite and *in situ* observations and/or from the re-analysis of homogeneous historical data.

I am pleased to note that the SBSTA has responded positively to many of the recommendations of the Report and is proposing that this Conference of the Parties adopt a decision to further their implementation, with the continued cooperation of GCOS. WMO will continue to support GCOS in assisting the Parties, both collectively and individually, to participate fully in the implementation of these recommendations. I note in particular that the decision before you would invite GCOS to coordinate the development of a phased five- to ten-year implementation plan for the integrated global observing systems for climate. I am pleased to confirm that GCOS has already begun this work with the support of the WMO and its other sponsors, and will coordinate this activity with those of GEO to ensure that the needs for climate observation are fully integrated in GEO planning.

Another GCOS response to decision 5/CP.5 has been the implementation of its Regional Workshop Programme, aimed at initiating processes in developing regions that will lead to real and substantial improvements in the global observing systems for climate. Six of the workshops in the planned 10-workshop programme have now been organized, the latest

being in October 2003 for the countries of South America. Workshops will be held for the countries of Central Asia, and for South and Southwest Asia, in 2004. Regional Action Plans that address priorities for improving observing systems for climate have been completed or initiated in all regions in which workshops have been held, and some of the priority projects identified in these Action Plans are being implemented. WMO strongly supports the Regional Workshop Programme, which is being conducted in cooperation with the National Communications Support Programme of the United Nations Development Programme and Global Environment Facility. However, the continued support of the Conference of the Parties will be required if these plans are to be fully implemented.

In the context of the above considerations, it is clear that observing the state of the climate system remains critical to the success of the Convention. I would therefore urge the Conference of the Parties to support to the degree possible the implementation of recommendations made in the Second Report on the Adequacy of the Global Observing Systems for Climate and the implementation of projects contained in GCOS Regional Action Plans.

In support of these initiatives, WMO has been playing a lead role in assisting its Member countries in the implementation of the Convention. Through its World Climate Programme (WCP), WMO is currently developing and implementing several projects in countries around the globe that will improve their capabilities to monitor, assess and predict the climate. Specifically, in the context of its WCP, WMO is implementing a data rescue project that takes data at risk of being lost due to older deteriorating media and putting these data into digital form. The Climate Database Management System will enable countries to manage and access their climate data and products in a modern digital system.

These WMO-sponsored systems will improve the historical and current databases; but we all know that these databases must be used to be beneficial. For this purpose the WCP produces annual statements on the climate and semi-annual global climate system reviews for use as monitoring tools and to encourage nations to use their climate databases as national resources. Perhaps one of the most important activities within the WMO/WCP is the Climate Outlook Forums (COFs) that have been an outgrowth of the Climate Information and Prediction Services (CLIPS). The

COF process was established to permit countries to downscale global climate predictions to reach a consensus prediction for the region. This has the additional benefit of enabling scientists within regions and sub-regions to understand and apply climate products. All of these projects provide direct benefit to the countries, sub-regions and regions, but for the UNFCCC they raise the awareness and emphasis of the necessity of observing and sharing those observations of the climate with their neighbours.

**Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

Another of the highest priorities in addressing climate change issues is for the climate science community to reduce uncertainties in climate projection. In this regard, the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), jointly sponsored by WMO, the International Council for Science, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, continues to sponsor research aimed at understanding natural climate variability and refining our ability to make climate projections. Each of the four major component projects of the WCRP, namely the Climate Variability and Predictability (CLIVAR) project, the Global Energy and Water Cycle Experiment (GEWEX), the Stratospheric Processes and their Role in Climate (SPARC), and the Climate and Cryosphere (CliC) study, carry out investigations which will lead to better understanding of the physical processes controlling climate and how to best represent them in models.

The development and application of comprehensive models of the full global climate system are the unifying and integrating themes running through the WCRP. The results achieved will be key inputs to the Fourth IPCC Assessment, which is expected to be completed in 2007. The Report will place greater emphasis on regional issues and cross cutting matters such as water, sustainable development, key vulnerabilities, risks and uncertainties. I note with satisfaction that the SBSTA has decided to regularly consider issues related to research at its future sessions, including the need to support endogenous capacity-building for research and systematic observation in developing countries.

I am also pleased to note that the Panel has recently completed two methodology reports on inventory preparation for land use, land use change and forestry sector, both of them prepared at the request of the

UNFCCC. Furthermore the Panel has agreed on the outline and work plan for the further revision of the IPCC guidelines for greenhouse gas inventories, again a task of critical importance for the UNFCCC.

**Mr President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to assure you that WMO will maintain its commitment to observing and monitoring the climate system, improving our understanding of it and the prediction of its future state. WMO will also continue to support the work of the Conference of the Parties and its Subsidiary Bodies, and the implementation of their decisions as they relate to the Organization. I hope that this ninth session of the Conference of the Parties will stand as a further landmark event in the preservation of the Earth's climate for the generations that will follow us.

Finally, as I will complete my term as Secretary-General of WMO at the end of this month after serving WMO for 35 years of which 20 years were as Secretary-General, this makes it the last Session of COP that I would address in that capacity on behalf of WMO. May I therefore seize this opportunity to thank you all for the immeasurable support that I have received in various ways during my tenure and at the same time call on you to extend the maximum possible cooperation to my successor and Deputy for eight years, Mr Michel Jarraud, who is well known to many of you.

Thank you.



