



H.E Kofi Annan | 31 August 2009 | World Meteorological Organization, Geneva

## “Climate prediction for decision-making”

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I am honoured to be with a group of people who have played such a major role in alerting our world to the catastrophic dangers of climate change.

Thanks in no small part to the efforts over the years of the WMO under the leadership of its effective Executive Director Michael Jarraud, this conference and your colleagues, climate change is now overwhelmingly accepted as our greatest environmental and humanitarian challenge.

There is, however, no room for complacency.

For this new consensus sadly has still not prompted the decisive political action – or the changes in behaviour – required.

This is why the Copenhagen Conference in December is so critical and this meeting so timely.

Your expert deliberations must provide an extra impetus for the historic agreement needed to limit climate change and help those hardest hit by its impact.

The agreement must be universal, radical and binding.

If it is to be both fair and effective, it must also have the principle of climate justice at its heart.

For it is a double tragedy that the people and countries most at risk from climate change have done least to cause it and already suffer the most disadvantage.

As the last IPCC report highlighted – and the World Bank last month confirmed - the overwhelming majority of those most threatened by climate change live in the poorest countries or small island nations.

Yet the world’s 50 poorest countries have contributed less than 2% of the polluting gases in our atmosphere.

It is why, although all countries must reduce emissions in the coming years, the most developed economies must give the lead by accepting the most dramatic cuts.

It is also essential to see a major transfer of resources and technology to developing countries to fund mitigation and adaptation measures and enable them to grow and spread prosperity in a sustainable way.



It is absolutely vital that this transfer – from international bodies, developed and emerging economies whose experience can be particularly relevant - includes your expertise and the information which you hold.

It is also necessary for the WMO, as your agenda this week explicitly recognises, to step up its own efforts.

You are concentrating rightly on how to fill the gaps in our knowledge and meeting the challenge of providing the information countries and communities require to adapt to climate change.

For climate science is not an academic exercise but of life changing – indeed life-saving - importance to hundreds of millions of people.

The focus must be relentlessly on how to help those at the front-line of climate change.

We can not hope to manage climate change unless we measure it accurately.

And this information must, much more than now, shape global, national and local policy solutions to the problems caused by changing weather patterns.

It is another sad irony that those most threatened by the increase in extreme weather events and new weather patterns are those with least access to reliable information charting these changes.

We need your leadership and urgent action to put right this information deficit.

There must, as you recognise, be a new emphasis on providing more accurate climate predictions.

Data and analysis must be shared more quickly and effectively so practical solutions can be put in place nationally and locally to protect people from the changes in weather we are seeing.

This requires you to engage widely - not just within the UN system but outside including forging a strong partnership with the private sector.

One result of this approach already has been the Weather Info for All project.

It is an imaginative initiative between the Global Humanitarian Forum, WMO and private sector to establish a network of automated weather stations across Africa through mobile phone technology.

This will allow – again through mobile phones – the sharing of data with communities on the seasonal weather patterns on which they depend and to alert them to storms which threaten crops, livestock and lives.

This partnership approach must be a model for a wide range of projects to collect and exchange information for all our benefit.

It was, of course, to share information to improve our lives which was exactly why the WMO was set up.



It was a recognition that weather ignores national borders and we need to work together to understand its complexities and challenges.

This mission is now more important than those who established the WMO sixty years ago could ever have imagined.

I wish you all the best in your important discussions this week.

**Ends**