Statement at the Twelfth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

M. Jarraud
Secretary-General

(Nairobi, 15 November 2006)

Organisation météorologique mondiale

World Meteorological Organization

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STATEMENT AT THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

by

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Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to address the twelfth session of the Conference of Parties (COP-12) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which also serves as the second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 2). On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own, I wish to express my appreciation to the government of Kenya, for hosting these important meetings in Nairobi. Moreover, I wish to convey WMO's congratulations and best wishes of success to Mr Yvo de Boer, as the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC.

More than a decade ago, on 21 March 1994, the Convention entered into force and the Parties committed themselves to the stabilization of carbon dioxide concentrations, at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Since then, scientific assessments have increasingly reaffirmed that human activities are indeed changing the natural composition of the atmosphere, in particular through the burning of fossil fuels for energy production and transportation. Comparison of past CO_2 concentrations, retrieved from air bubbles in glacial ice cores, with the current measurements of the chemical composition of the atmosphere made through WMO's Global Atmospheric Watch (GAW), shows beyond doubt that the present atmospheric concentration of CO_2 was never exceeded over the past 420,000 years. Additionally, it shows that above one half of this increase has occurred since 1950.

As the United Nations specialized agency with a mandate in weather, climate and water, WMO has a number of responsibilities that are directly relevant to the work of the Convention, such as climate observations and monitoring, studies of climate variability and climate change, natural disaster prevention and mitigation, the protection of life and property, hydrology and water resources, food security, scientific environmental research, uncertainty reduction and capacity building.

Mr Chairman,

The impacts of climate variability and change on human and natural systems pose numerous challenges to sustainable development. The role of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) is instrumental in addressing these challenges, since accurate and timely weather-, climate- and water-related products and services are prerequisites for the successful formulation and implementation of adaptive response policies and measures to climate variability and change, especially to climate extremes.

WMO's Programmes, in particular its World Climate Programme (WCP), have long provided significant contributions to the expanded use of climate information in policy making and to the work of the UNFCCC and its subsidiary bodies. In 1988 WMO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) co-established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which will soon be releasing the first volume of its Fourth Assessment Report (AR4). In this respect, the reports of the three IPCC Working Groups will be released successively during 2007, and the AR4 Synthesis Report will be finalized about this time next year, to be delivered to COP-13.

In addition, during the present session the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), which WMO co-sponsors, has submitted its report to the twenty-fifth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on the results of its recently completed Regional Workshop Programme. This programme has contributed to assist the Parties to the UNFCCC, especially the developing countries, in recognizing the importance of climate observing systems, as well as in identifying present gaps and deficiencies in their observing systems.

As an important output of the programme, in response to a frequently reiterated request by the COP, GCOS has aided developing regions in drafting Regional Action Plans, containing proposals addressing their most prioritary observing system needs. GCOS has also taken important steps to facilitate the implementation of the African Action Plan. In particular, I would like to bring to your attention the meeting it organized last April in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which brought together users and providers of climate information, as well as potential donors and African political institutions, to discuss a strategy for integrating climate information into development policies. The outcome of the meeting was an agreement to develop a multi-stakeholder programme addressing the need for climate information in development, which is to be known as Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev Africa).

In 1980, WMO established the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) in partnership with the International Council for Science (ICSU) and, since 1993, WCRP has also been sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO. The two overarching objectives of the WCRP are to determine the predictability of climate and the corresponding effects of human activities. These objectives underpin and directly address the needs of the UNFCCC, while also contributing to many other international policy instruments.

WCRP science feeds directly into the scientific assessments of the IPCC. In turn, the IPCC assessments provide the most authoritative, up-to-date scientific advice needed to inform the UNFCCC. WCRP will continue to play a vital role in supplying more and more reliable climate-change scenarios to decision makers, the media and the general public. WCRP will continue to provide the soundest possible scientific basis for the predictive capability of the total climate system, including an assessment of the inherent uncertainty in probabilistic prediction of climate on various space and time scales.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

WMO's Programmes are instrumental in facilitating and coordinating contributions, by the NMHSs and by other meteorological and hydrological institutions, to assist the UNFCCC and to contribute to the work of its subsidiary bodies. WMO believes that adaptation should be a complementary measure to mitigation and considers it is essential that all countries take part in climate monitoring and in research on global climate change. Moreover, WMO considers that all countries should systematically and carefully record climate change and its impacts, since this information will serve as the basis for formulating their respective adaptation policies, measures and implementation plans.

It is becoming essential for developing countries, countries with economies in transition and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to strengthen their involvement in climate monitoring and research. WMO's Programme for the LDCs is contributing to the long-term objective of assisting their social and economic development efforts, efficiently and in a timely manner, through the enhancement of the capabilities of their respective NMHSs. This will demand the integration of capacity building with broader policies, designed for the promotion of sustainable socioeconomic development, so it is imperative for the UN system to further strengthen its partnerships. For its part, WMO shall intensify its efforts to assist all Members in modernizing their national networks, in order to facilitate their meeting the objectives of many regional and global strategies, including the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Over the period since the eleventh session of the Conference of Parties, which was held in Montréal, Canada, in December 2005, WMO has stood steadfastly by UNFCCC in ensuring that it would indeed have all the relevant scientific information. I wish to reaffirm to you that WMO will maintain its commitment to the observation and monitoring of the global climate system, in order to improve its understanding and to better predict its evolution.

Thank you.

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