

**STATEMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
CLIMATE BROADCASTERS NETWORK-EUROPE**

by

**M. Jarraud  
Secretary-General  
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**Mr Molina (tbc),  
Mr Nicholas Hanley,  
Mr Jean-Pascal van Ypersele,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), I am pleased to welcome the Climate Broadcasters Network-Europe to WMO at this historic moment. As you know, policy-makers, experts and business leaders are gathered this week at the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG) for the World Climate Conference-3, which is contributing to bring together developers and providers of climate information and predictions, and those responsible for applying this information to the adoption of decisions with societal significance.

WMO has long considered weather presenters a critical interface between these providers, decision-makers and the general public, and they have an increasingly vital role in safeguarding lives and property from natural hazards. It is thus not only fitting but also very gratifying for us that CBN-E has decided to hold its annual meeting on this precise occasion, to further facilitate climate change communication throughout Europe.

As you are aware, climate change is already here. Global average surface temperatures have risen by about 0.75 °C over the past century and most of this warming has occurred over the past 50 years, very likely due to the observed increase in greenhouse gases from human activities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which WMO co-sponsors with UNEP and which at the end of 2007 received the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize has anticipated, in its Fourth Assessment Report, a further global average temperature increase of 1.8 to 4 °C by the end of this century.

Even as we consider the impacts of the future climate change, society is already struggling to cope with a varying and changing climate. Floods, droughts, heatwaves, sandstorms and other weather and climate extremes have always threatened lives, livelihoods and property, but climate change is likely to increase the frequency and intensity of several of these extreme events, which will have impacts on nearly every aspect of our lives. For example, heatwaves such as the one Western Europe

experienced in 2003 will become much more frequent, thereby increasing the risks of heat stress-related mortality.

However, awed by extreme weather and climate events, many will turn to weather presenters as a trustworthy source of information and advice. As television and radio broadcasters, you are therefore in a position to make a difference in tackling this challenge, since the public trust which you have gained will enable you to take a leading role in communicating information that can save many lives and improve the wellbeing of hundreds of millions, even billions.

Never before has the need been greater for accurate and timely communication of climate information and predictions. By highlighting the important linkages between climate change and extreme weather events, while also explaining natural climate variability, you will enable communities to better understand the vulnerabilities and to take proactive steps to adapt and to cope with these threats.

Climate information communication is however no easy task, since climate predictions involve longer timescales and are less deterministic than the weather forecasts to which the public is generally accustomed. Education and capacity building will therefore be a crucial strategy to address this challenge, in particular by appropriately informing the public on the differences involved and the most appropriate responses.

Climate predictions will ultimately provide societies the necessary information for them to plan ahead. While meteorologists and broadcasters have complementary roles, broadcasters can often more effectively raise awareness on climate issues and on ways in which people can contribute to adapt to and to mitigate a changing climate. These are activities which a number of CBN-E members have already undertaken and these efforts should continue and expand.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation for your decision to convene your annual conference in conjunction with the World Climate Conference 3, which will increase positive interaction among participating weather presenters from all regions. I am also very pleased with the dynamic and fruitful collaboration between our respective communication teams.

The ideas you will share today and tomorrow, here and at the World Climate Broadcasts Forum, will contribute to strengthen climate information communication to the public. I therefore applaud the efforts of the European Commission Directorate-General for the Environment to enhance awareness on climate change and its impacts, as well as on adaptation and mitigation issues.

Thank you and I wish you a most successful meeting.