

## **STATEMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE WORLD CLIMATE BROADCASTS FORUM**

by

**M. Jarraud**

**Secretary-General**

**World Meteorological Organization**

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**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The World Meteorological Organization is pleased to co-organize today's World Climate Broadcasts Forum, during this landmark week for climate science. The world's attention is right now on Geneva as scientists and policy-makers meet at World Climate Conference-3 to take actions that will enable all people in all communities to adapt to a changing climate.

As weather broadcasters, you are situated at the intersections between science and society. You have established yourselves as emissaries of weather information to the public. Most people do not pass a day without tuning into their local television or radio for a weather forecast. They rely on you to give them the information they need to plan their day.

The need for and use of climate information is not yet as mainstream. Seasonal climate predictions are available in many locations to inform people about the weather conditions for weeks to three months out, for example to predict higher or lower temperature or rainfall amounts than the average for the season. But many people do not recognize these outlooks as climate information. Moreover, although these seasonal predictions are essential for planning in the agricultural, water and energy sectors, for instance, they are not widely accepted as decision-making tools.

A key purpose of World Climate Conference-3 is to formalize and mainstream the process of using climate information and predictions in decision-making. The mechanism for accomplishing this will be the Global Framework for Climate Services. This Framework has three main pillars: building and strengthening climate observations and monitoring, transforming that information into sector-specific products and applications, and disseminating those products widely to encourage their optimal use.

As weather broadcasters, you are pivotal participants in implementing the last two pillars of the Framework – providing input to those developing the climate products about what information people need and then, very importantly, providing the information in a timely, easy-to-understand format for the public.

Of course, this task, though seemingly simple, is actually quite complex because of the intrinsic nature of climate variability and change. The media are constantly required to sift through scientific announcements and advancements to extract the information most relevant to public understanding of and response to changing climate conditions. For example, when last year ranked cooler than 2007 but was nonetheless the 10<sup>th</sup> warmest on record, scientists and media alike had to explain that the temporary cooling was a result of climate variability caused by La Niña, but that the temperature data still fit a trend of global warming over the past 150 years.

Delivering such information reduces loss of lives and property at the hands of weather and climate extremes. The better the public understands climate variability and change, their differences and their impacts, the better it can prepare and protect itself.

### **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

The World Meteorological Organization has a long history of facilitating interactions between meteorologists and weather presenters in developing and developed countries so as to build capacity globally for public weather services. We now need to expand these interactions, to work toward public climate services.

Now that the scientific community is striving to mainstream climate information, it is a natural next step for you to become emissaries of climate information. Many of you have already been addressing this challenge, and will be sharing your experiences and insights so that weather presenters in all regions can embrace climate outlooks as part of their regular reporting.

It is my hope that this meeting, along with round table on communicating climate later today, will produce recommendations and best practices from which weather presenters worldwide can draw to expand their activities into the climate realm. In addition, your inputs are invaluable for helping to develop the Global Framework for Climate Services, as you are the ultimate link between those provide and use the information.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a successful Forum.

I would now like to introduce your chair for this morning, Mr Michael Zammit Cutajar, who is malta's ambassador for climate change. He has broad experience with the climate change issue, as he was the former and first Executive Secretary for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change from 1991 to 2003, and will be leading a section of negotiations for the upcoming COP-15 in Copenhagen. Thank you for accepting to chair this important Forum, Mr Cutajar.