

**Message by  
Michel Jarraud  
WMO Secretary-general**

**on the occasion of the 50th anniversary  
of the signature of the Antarctic Treaty:**

As we celebrate today the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, I would like to pay tribute to the scientific community and the 12 original signatories of the Treaty for their broad vision and firm commitment to protect this unique continent from harmful human activity and exploitation. We should continue to build on their vision.

It is during the International Geophysical Year 1957-1958 that international scientists and WMO experts as well as environmentalists developed the concept of a fully protected area for the benefit of humankind. Submitted for signature on 1 December 1959, at a Conference in Washington, the Treaty officially entered into force on June 23, 1961. Since then, the signatories have established among themselves over 50 Antarctic stations for polar research which are essential to understand the history of our planet and the effects of climate change on the Earth System as a whole.

Climatic conditions which occur in the polar regions have considerable impact on all ecosystems and human societies anywhere on our planet. Better understanding of the past and current climate in the Antarctic improves our knowledge about our future climate.

WMO co-sponsored with ICSU the International Polar Year 2007-2008 which provided a critical boost to polar research at a time when climate change and climate variability are increasingly impacting on people's life.

Better climate knowledge enables us to plan ahead and develop tools for securing a safer and better future for all of us.