Dear Colleagues,

Having just attended the sixty-first session of the WMO Executive Council in Geneva and also having had an opportunity to hold side meetings, including with those Hydrological Advisors present, the Advisory Working Group (via teleconference), presidents of technical commissions and presidents of regional associations, I thought that it was an opportune time to update you on the activities of the Commission and report on items of interest from significant events.

Sixty-first session of the WMO Executive Council

The sixty-first session of the WMO Executive Council was held in Geneva from 3 to 12 June 2009. A copy of the documents for the session, including the approved documents can be found at:


From a CHy perspective, there were a number of key outcomes from this meeting. They include the following:

1. Adoption of the CHy-XIII recommendations and status of CHy publications;
2. Changes in RA WG structures;
3. Third World Climate Conference (WCC-3);
4. WIGOS/WIS contributions;
5. Coastal risk reduction;

1. Adoption of the CHy-XIII recommendations and status of CHy publications

Despite the hydrology agenda item being held on the Saturday morning, there was strong participation from the EC members who were in the main very satisfied with the work of the Commission. The full report on the presentations by the president of CHy and the Secretariat and the ensuing discussion are contained in the report on agenda Item 3.3 from EC-LXI and in the background documents including EC-LXI/Doc. 3.3.

To: Members of the Commission for Hydrology (CHy-192)
You may recall that the thirteenth session of the Commission for Hydrology (CHy-XIII) (Geneva, November 2008) had made two recommendations (Resolution 1 – CHy-XIII) to the Executive Council, namely:

“(1) That the Executive Council review the concept of mandatory publications in the light of the WMO QMF and the recent technological advances in publications and encourage each technical commission to define the required mandatory publications under this revised process;

(2) That the Executive Council, probably through the ICTT QMF, adopt a revised glossary on terminology related to the QMF including the usage of the term “standard”.

Through its Resolution 3.3/1, the Executive Council took the following action with respect to these two recommendations:

(a) Regarding Recommendation (1), the Executive Council approved the recommendation and requested the presidents of technical commissions to review the concept of mandatory publications in the light of the WMO QMF and the recent technological advances in publications and bring to EC-LXI a proposed set of criteria for defining a consolidated, revised set of mandatory publications for endorsement by CG-XVI;

(b) Regarding Recommendation (2), the Executive Council approved the recommendation and requested the ICTT-QMF to consider the development of a glossary on terminology related to QMF including the use of the term “standard”.

You will also be pleased to hear that significant progress has been made in regards to the publication of CHy documents. With the support of the government of Germany, the Manual on Low Flow Estimation and Prediction has been printed in hard copy and Volume 1 of the Guide is now also available in hard copy. Finalization of Volume 2 of the Guide, the Manual on Streamflow Gauging and the PMP Manual is progressing.

2. Changes in RA WG Structures

Recent regional association sessions, and those planned for the next twelve months, have taken or propose differing approaches to the structure of their Working Groups. In essence, there is a move away from a large number of standing Working Groups to either a smaller number of combined Working Groups or alternatively ad hoc task groups targeted at specific activities or initiatives. In most instances, the RAs have established Management Committees and the Regional Hydrological Advisor is a member of that Committee. Some RA’s have or will retain their Working Groups on Hydrology, while some have or are considering combining the hydrology group with other groups such as climate or disaster mitigation, depending on the focus of the required activities. It will be essential for the hydrology groups to be involved in the relevant discussions and ensure that the hydrological needs of the Region are considered in the development of the targeted activities, or in the development of the terms of reference of the Working Groups. CHy was specifically asked to play a technical guidance role in Severe Weather Forecasting Demonstration Projects (SWFDP) in RA I and RA V and in a flash flood guidance initiative for Central America under RA IV. The reports of the RA presidents are covered under agenda item 2.4 of EC-LXI.

3. Third World Climate Conference (WCC-3) (31 August to 4 September 2009)

The Council was informed of the preparations for WCC-3 including the development of the concept of a ‘Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS)’ as the proposed outcome of WCC-3. The Council supported the development of the proposed GFCS and noted that its successful implementation would facilitate the improvement of the existing climate services; the development of sector and user-targeted services; capacity building; and a more effective provider-user interface
in the provision and application of climate services. As such it would contribute to disaster risk reduction; adaptation to climate variability and change; and economic development, and therefore would provide both near-term and long-term economic and social benefits to society, including WMO Members and their NMHSs (see EC-LXI agenda item 3.2).

4. **WIGOS/WIS contributions**

The Executive Council was supportive of CHy development of a WMO Integrated Global Observing System/WMO Information System (WIGOS/WIS) proposal targeted at improving hydrological forecasting, through close coordination of the implementation of the Flash Flood Guidance System with the SWFDP implemented in southern Africa. Linkages will also be made with the SADC HYCOS project.

CHy will also contribute to the RA IV Hydrology - Disaster Risk Reduction Project (with the World Bank) that illustrates how to integrate data from different domains.

As regards hydrological data under WIS, the Executive Council noted that CHy-XIII recommended that the Global Runoff Data Centre (GRDC) should undertake the development of the metadata profile, in collaboration with interested parties, and the Council invited the GRDC to contribute to the Commission for Basic Systems/Inter-Programme Expert Team on Metadata and Data Interoperability (CBS/IPET-MDI).

5. **Coastal risk reduction**

The Council reinforced the importance of an integrated effort for developing and improving forecasting capabilities and service delivery in coastal risk reduction by strengthening the existing cooperation between JCOMM, CHy, CAS and UNESCO.

A JCOMM/CHy coastal inundation forecasting demonstration project for building improved operational forecasts and warnings capability for coastal inundation was initiated and a kick-off meeting would be convened in late June 2009. The major outcome of this project would be the development of an effective software package involving both ocean and hydrological models to enable an assessment and a forecast of total coastal inundation from the combined extreme events. It also intends to improve interaction of the NMHSs with Disaster Management and Civil Protection Agencies (DMCPA), by developing scenarios, which are particularly important for hazard mapping. These scenarios will be the basis for emergency preparedness, and will provide valuable assistance to national partners involved in recovery and reconstruction activities.

6. **Standards – WMO/ISO, GTOS**

The current draft version of Volume IV of the Technical Regulations (Quality Management) was considered by the Executive Council and it was recommended that a consultation of WMO Members be carried out with a view of adopting the draft as an integral part of WMO Technical Regulations at EC-LXII. The Executive Council requested that the Secretary-General provide further guidance and clarification on the intended use and applications of this proposed Volume IV as soon as practical, and prior to the consultation process.

With respect to the working arrangements between ISO and WMO, the Council noted that the Inter-Commission Task team on QMF (ICTT-QMF) meeting had reviewed and developed a procedure to be adopted in the preparation of ISO/WMO common standards. The Council requested the Secretary-General to provide further, concise explanatory material and guidance on the way existing WMO Regulations could become common standards, and how they could be used beneficially by Members, taking into account the difference between the levels of stringency between WMO Regulations and ISO standards. (Refer also to EC-LXI Resolution 3.3/1)
The Council noted with appreciation the GTOS report to the UNFCCC, “Progress in Assessing the Status of the Development of Standards for Essential Climate Variables (ECVs) in the Terrestrial Domain,” submitted in November 2008. It endorsed the proposed development of a UN/ISO framework dealing with observations of terrestrial ECVs and stressed the need for appropriate representation by WMO in such a framework through its ICTT on the Quality Management Framework. It also requested that the GCOS/GTOS Terrestrial Observation Panel for Climate be involved. Thus our representatives on the ICTT on the QMF will have the opportunity to input to the development of hydrology related standards for GTOS.

7. Associated Programme on Flood Management - HelpDesk

The Advisory Committee for the Associated Programme on Flood Management was held at the WMO Headquarters from 15-16 June and then on 17 June. The launch of the APFM HelpDesk was held in association with the Global Platform for Natural Disaster Reduction at the Geneva Conference Centre.

The APFM AC was very successful with all of the donors expressing a high degree of satisfaction with the achievements of the WMO Secretariat over the past twelve months. The external use of the Internet site was evidence of the value of products and services being developed by the APFM Technical Support Unit and these will make a sound foundation for the HelpDesk. An encouraging sign was the return of the Global Water Partnership back onto the Advisory Committee and their involvement in the HelpDesk and its launch.

The launch of the HelpDesk on 17 June attracted over 50 delegates including representatives from donor organizations.

Yours sincerely,

(Bruce Stewart)
President
Commission for Hydrology