



26/11/2018

Subject: Introduction to the Pre-Session Discussion for the Extraordinary Session of CHy

Dear colleagues,

The Commission for Hydrology will meet in Extraordinary Session from February 11-14, 2019 at WMO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. This session has been called in response to the recommendations made by the 70th Executive Council in June 2018 regarding reform of the Organization's constituent bodies, particularly the Technical Commissions. Those recommendations resulted from a two-year holistic review of the Organization, including its processes and working practices that had been requested by Congress in 2015. The review considered possible new structures for technical commissions, regional associations and the Executive Council, as well as new rules, procedures, processes, working mechanisms, and duties of constituent bodies and WMO Officers (President, Vice-Presidents, presidents of regional associations and technical commissions).

The response of Executive Council was to adopt a consolidated proposal for the reform of WMO constituent bodies, aligned with the concepts contained in the proposed WMO Strategic Plan for 2020-2023. With specific reference to technical commissions, the proposal recommends replacing the existing eight commissions with two: a Commission for Observation, Infrastructure and Information System (COIIS) and a Commission for Weather, Climate and Water Services and Applications (CSA). EC is also recommending the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Panel of independent experts under the Congress, and a Research Board to advise on those efforts required to enhance weather, climate, water and related environmental sciences. These could include, for example, guiding the scientific development of seamless systems across time and spatial scales, disciplines and programmes and activities and forward looking strategic advice on emerging challenges and opportunities.

These changes, if adopted by Congress, are far-reaching and will be challenging to implement. They present major concerns for all eight existing Technical Commissions, but particularly for the Commission for Hydrology because of its unique constituency; the National Hydrological Services (NHSs). Executive Council recognized that because the NHSs had not been part of its reform discussions, it could not make a final decision on how hydrology would be integrated into the new reform structure until after the NHSs had an opportunity to review and provide input. Therefore, EC urged "the president of the Commission for Hydrology (CHy) to convene an extraordinary session of CHy as soon as possible in Geneva to lay out the path forward with regard to the major WMO developments in hydrology and to propose the necessary organizational arrangements for the hydrological community to deliver on relevant strategic objectives defined in the WMO Strategic Plan". This, then, is the task before us.

The time available for discussion at the Session itself is quite constrained; there will be a 2½ day technical meeting to present Commission members with options on how CHy could fit into the proposed new two-Commission structure, followed by a 1½ day intergovernmental session where Commission members will adopt a single consensus recommendation for the future structure of hydrology in WMO for presentation to Congress. Thus, to ensure that Commission members are fully apprised of CHy issues associated with the reform process and are able to discuss concerns and to provide input, a pre-session online discussion will again be utilized. It will also be the way for those unable to participate in the session to contribute to shaping the future of hydrology in WMO.

During the 2nd meeting of the CHy Advisory Working Group (AWG) in September of this year, which included the six Regional Hydrological Advisors, there was a broad exchange of views on how best to organize the pre-session mechanism. The group agreed that the mechanism should be organized around three sets of questions:

1. The “grand challenges” for hydrology, i.e., enhancement of WMO critical contribution in the global water agenda (SDG, Sendai framework for DRR, Paris agreement, etc.);
2. WMO’s contribution to the broad hydrological community, i.e., how can WMO support National Hydrological Services and other partners to improve hydrological observing systems and the delivery of products and information responding to the various societal needs. This should include ways to enhance the essential role of hydrology in WMO and its further integration into the Earth system approach, and
3. Structure within a reorganized WMO, i.e., identifying the strengths and weaknesses of CHy’s current working mechanisms for supporting the hydrological community, as well as encouraging cooperation between the hydrological and meteorological operational communities.

Questions associated with these three topical areas have been posted on this [Pre-Session Discussion site \(https://www.hydroref.com/chy-ext-preession/\)](https://www.hydroref.com/chy-ext-preession/). I strongly encourage all Hydrological Advisers, CHy and OPACHE members, Regional Working Groups on hydrology members, and everyone interested in international cooperation in hydrology and water resources management, to consider these questions carefully and to submit your responses and any comments, suggestions, or concerns related to one or more of them. Given that there will be very limited opportunity to discuss these issues during the CHy-Ext session in Geneva, it is essential that members express their issues and concerns through the Pre-Session Discussion mechanism.

Your contributions will assist us in preparing the formal documents for the Extraordinary Session of CHy, which should be available by mid- December.

I look forward to seeing your comments and I thank you in advance for your understanding of and participation in this new process.

Harry Lins

President, Commission for Hydrology