

MEETING SUMMARIES

CCI/CLIVAR WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP PRIORITY CLIMATE INDICES

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This WMO-sponsored workshop on climate variability and change in Africa resulted in some of the first analyses of climate extremes for many parts of that continent.

There is general agreement within the climate community that changes in the frequency or intensity of extreme climate events would have profound impacts on nature and society. It is critical that, where possible, all parts of the world are examined for evidence of changes in extremes. One area of the world that has suffered from a relative lack of analysis is the continent of Africa. Although African climate data for longer averaging periods (monthly and longer) have been available from a variety of sources (e.g., Vose et al. 1992), long-term data suitable for examining changes in short-term extremes have not been widely available to the scientific community. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC) Third Assessment Report (TAR; Folland et al. 2001) showed that large parts of Africa have warmed considerably over the twentieth century, with the strongest warming taking place since 1975. Analysis shows that annual precipitation in most of the analyzed area in Africa decreased greatly in 1901–2000; however, parts of western Africa have seen increases since 1975. At issue though, is that large parts of the continent remain unanalyzed even with respect to annual average quantities.

A workshop to address some of the issues of data availability and data analysis in Africa was held by the Working Group on Climate Change Detection, part of the joint World Meteorological Organization Commission for Climatology/World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) project on Climate Variability and Predictability (CLIVAR). Held in Casablanca, Morocco, from 18 to 23 February 2001, the workshop aimed to fill in data “gaps” and develop climate indices for Africa. It brought together scientists (see Table 1) from 23 African countries, providing each one with assistance and guidance in analyzing changes in daily temperature and precipitation climate extremes with resulting analyses provided to the scientific community.

The workshop was composed of three parts: 1) a series of talks discussing data quality and homogeneity issues, 2) use of software specifically developed by

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