ANNEX 2

Meeting of the CCl Task Group on a Future WMO Climate Database Management Systems (CDMS)

(Geneva, 3-5 May 2000)

Opening Remarks

The CLImate COMputing project came into being during the mid 1980s to meet the climate data management needs of a considerable number of WMO members who did not have the capability to use computers to manage their climate databases. Despite the overall success of the project, there are a significant number of developing countries who have not been successful in implementing the CLICOM climate database management software for a variety of reasons. These countries that have no operational climate database management systems (CDMSs) in place could benefit from a basic, easy-to-use CDMS that requires minimum resources to purchase, operate and maintain. There is another group of countries, which have successfully implemented CLICOM systems and most of them would benefit from a more advanced, up-to-date system. Finally, there are those WMO Members, mostly in developed countries, that do not need assistance because they already have well-developed CDMSs. A few of these countries have played a significant role in the implementation of the CLICOM project as donors. Some of them are now offering to share their systems or expertise with other Members.

In 1997, following an initial future CDMS meeting in Toulouse, France in May, CCl-XII in August requested its Working Group on Climate Data to establish a small Task Group to work with users to specify a future CDMS. The Task Group met in Ostrava, Czech Republic in November 1998 and confirmed a list of requirements for a future CDMS and proposed options to follow. At its December 1998, session, the CCl Working Group on Climate Data agreed with the preferred option of the Task Group to set up a testing mechanism to evaluate existing prototypes. A follow-up workshop in Toulouse, in March 1999, completed a specification criteria table for a future CDMS and developed a questionnaire to identify NMSs that are prepared to share their CDMSs with other WMO Members and to identify those interested in assisting with a testing phase.

Two questionnaires were sent to Members at the end of 1999 to find out what CDMS functions the Members want and which countries are prepared to offer their CDMS for sharing with other Members. The response has been most encouraging with replies from 96 Members. Most of the Members replying expressed interest in using, testing or helping to enhance future CDMSs and 14 Members offered to share their CDMSs. The first questionnaire included important questions to determine whether Members have developed or are developing CDMSs that they are prepared to make available to other Members and which are prepared to help with testing or enhancing of a new CDMS. The second questionnaire asked WMO Members to rank the CDMS functional requirements and support assistance needed. Those Members willing to contribute were asked to provide more detailed responses in order to describe their systems for evaluation purposes.

The CCl Advisory Working Group, meeting at Bracknell (UK) in April 2000, noted the high level of interest expressed by some WMO Members in up-to-date client/server climate database management systems (CDMSs). It considered that expeditious action is required to respond to the varied needs of WMO Members, especially those from developing countries. It also felt that this initiative was a good opportunity to promote the international exchange of climate data and related products. It therefore welcomed the plans to convene this meeting.

The challenge before the meeting will be to make decisions on how to best take advantage of the latest technology and existing expertise in WMO to meet the diverse needs of its Members. The meeting should decide on the strategy to use for testing and prepare an implementation plan that addresses the needs of those countries with no operational CDMS as well as those wishing to improve their existing operational system. Finally, any future WMO-co-ordinated development should facilitate both the migration of existing CLICOM data to a new system and the international exchange of digital data and related climate products.