



**WMO STATEMENT AT THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDC-IV)**

by M. Jarraud

Secretary-General

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to be present at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV). On behalf of WMO, I wish to thank Ambassador Cheick Diarra for his kind invitation and to congratulate Turkey for hosting this historic event in Istanbul, a millenary city straddling the Bosphorus and merging two continents and many cultures.

On the first year of the new millennium, the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs (Brussels, May 2001) recognized that the objectives of the UN General Assembly in convening the First and Second Conferences were still far from achieved. The Brussels Declaration emphasized that the welfare of LDCs and their people remained an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, while also underscoring the need to further strive for Principle 6 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as regards combating desertification, preserving biological diversity, ensuring safe drinking water and combating climate change.

While weather and climate sciences have indeed made outstanding progress during the last decades, most LDCs cannot yet benefit from these advances for lack of the necessary capabilities. As the United Nations System Agency with a mandate in weather, climate and water, WMO immediately set out to support to the Brussels Programme of Action, in particular by organizing a number of Regional and National Climate Outlook Forums, and in 2003 the Fourteenth World Meteorological Congress launched the WMO Programme for the LDCs, to contribute in modernizing and in enhancing the capacities of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of all LDCs, so that they would contribute even more effectively to the socio-economic development of their respective countries.

Other key WMO activities included the Coordination and Capacity Building Workshop for LDCs (Entebbe, September 2007) and the First Conference of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology in Africa (Nairobi, April 2010). Moreover, in March 2010 WMO participated in Addis Ababa in the Africa Regional Review Meeting on the Brussels Programme of Action in preparation for this conference.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Instrumental observations by the NMHSs of WMO's 189 Members, often made as far back as the 1860s, underscore a rising tendency in globally averaged surface temperatures. Statistics for the last 50 years show that extreme hydrometeorological events have accounted for about 90 % of all natural disasters and that they are increasing. During the last decades, an unprecedented number of extreme events, such as floods and droughts, contributed significantly to loss of life and property and set back economic development in many regions, especially in Africa and more generally in LDCs, justifying a substantial upgrade in their basic weather and climate monitoring and warning capabilities.

The potential impacts of climate variability and change on water resources also demand a special attention, due to the potential health implications of water sanitation. Moreover, numerous LDCs depend critically on agriculture for their subsistence, so changes in the climate are likely to signify increased risks to food productivity and security in many LDCs.

Accordingly, natural hazards and climate change are recognized as mounting challenges to the sustainable development of many LDCs, particularly for those especially dependent on rain-fed agriculture, fresh water and the exploitation of natural resources. However, while natural hazards cannot be avoided, appropriate capacity building can contribute to significantly mitigate the death and destruction tolls through proactive climate variability and change adaptation.

In light of the above, the importance of meteorological and hydrological information, products and services in the implementation of the Brussels Programme and in achieving its goals and objectives cannot be overestimated. They are also especially relevant in the context of the Programme commitments 3, 4, and 6, related to capacity development, health, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, land and water management, transport and tourism, environmental protection and disaster risk reduction.

As a consequence of the 1979 (First) World Climate Conference, in 1988 WMO and UNEP jointly established the IPCC. In 1990, the Second World Climate Conference resulted in the development of the UNFCCC. WMO convened a Third World Climate Conference (WCC-3) with partners in 2009 to consider the need to establish a Global Framework of Climate Services (GFCS), which would provide benefits to all societal sectors, especially in the developing world which is also the most vulnerable. The WCC-3 unanimously embraced the GFCS concept and an independent High-level Taskforce is providing a report with recommendations to the XVIth WMO Congress in May 2011.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The integration of improved meteorological and hydrological infrastructure and services delivery capabilities in the national development strategies of LDCs, in particular through the GFCS, will be of paramount significance for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action over the next decade. To be cost-effective, it will require a multi-hazard approach in terms of early warning systems and the promotion of a culture of disaster preparedness. At the same time, I am confident that the WMO Congress will assign a very high priority next week to capacity building for NMHSs in LDCs.

WMO will continue supporting LDCs through its own programme, as well as in partnership with the UN System "*delivering as one*", in response to the pressing needs of a developing world which is already experiencing the impacts of an increasingly changing climate. In 2000, UN Members adopted the Millennium Declaration as a renewed commitment to human development, including the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the impacts of natural disasters tend to offset progress, especially in terms of food security, the sustainability of water resources and human health.

Climate change has the potential to overwhelm our adaptive capacities within the coming decades, but it is encouraging to note that key international stakeholders are now increasingly recognizing the urgency to address the climate change issue, which WMO has been announcing with mounting concern since 1976 and which the UN Secretary-General has identified as *the defining challenge of our era*.

In view of the enhanced international visibility, WMO perceives this juncture as an opportunity to advance in sustainable development and international cooperation, for which the LDCs should be considered the primary beneficiaries as well as the measure of our success. Some changes are unavoidable, but it is not too late to prevent them from becoming an even more serious threat to our common future.

Thank you.
