

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

by

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(New York, 10 to 12 May 2006)

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), I am pleased to present WMO's message in relation to Air Pollution and Climate Change, within CSD's thematic cluster for 2006-2007. As the UN Specialized Agency with mandate in weather, climate and water, WMO has historically provided key observations and scientific contributions in air pollution and climate change, and WMO's initiatives were instrumental in identifying, analysing and understanding critical environmental issues.

In 1957, in conjunction with the International Geophysical Year (IGY), WMO assumed the responsibility for establishing the Global Ozone Observing System (GO₃OS). Without these measurements, ozone destruction would have continued undetected and unabated. WMO thus laid the foundations to the successful Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol.

WMO's first statement on the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and its potential impact on climate was issued in 1976. Since then, WMO has adopted fundamental initiatives to provide authoritative information for the development of policy responses, such as the co-establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) with UNEP in 1988. In this context, WMO has been the principal provider of scientific and technical information that underpins the IPCC assessments.

In both instances, it has been WMO's role to draw the attention of the international community, on the basis of systematic observations by WMO's Members. WMO has also contributed to other relevant international conventions, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and to many high-level international conferences.

Today, based on the observations collected, there is scientific certainty that terrestrial globally averaged surface temperatures are rising. Over the 20th century, the increase has been about 0.6°C, with the 1990s as the warmest decade. Indeed, the late 20th century warmth was unprecedented in the entire past millennium and changes over the last 30 years have tripled those for the past 100. Moreover, the 21st century has just begun and already 2005 was one of the two warmest years on record. Additionally, the projected temperature rise by the end of this century is estimated between 1.4 and 5.8 °C.

There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities. We can indeed affirm this, based on 31 years of sustained

observations by WMO's Members. However, even if we were to stop all emissions today, a return to pre-industrial greenhouse gas levels might demand more than a century.

Moreover, air pollution generated in industrialized regions, chemical substances and radionuclides released into the atmosphere are carried by winds, only to precipitate, seep into groundwater, travel in rivers and contaminate the oceans. Freshwater ecosystems are being damaged by air pollution, setting us back in the struggle for water quality and biodiversity. Soil health is crucial to food security and poverty alleviation, but erosion, deforestation and acidification are causing catastrophic soil damage.

WMO is committed to the development a highly integrated international system of observations, as advocated under the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) initiative, as well as weather prediction tools and multi-hazard warnings to meet the challenges to sustainable development by extreme climatic and weather events, since 90 percent of natural disasters have been shown to be of hydrometeorological origin. As you are aware, the developing countries, particularly the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are most vulnerable to natural disasters and their limited resources, rather than invested in development, must often be diverted to relief and recovery efforts.

At national level, in order to continue the indispensable observations, the World Meteorological Organization wishes to stress the urgent need for all governments to provide adequate support to their National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs), to ensure that they may sustain their observations and improve the services that they offer to their communities and policy makers.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to recall that the Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000 by the world leadership with the objective to make a quantitative difference by the year 2015 with reference to the situation prevalent in 1990. For that purpose, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established to meet a variety of challenges. I have attempted to highlight WMO's efforts in meeting the challenge to ensure environmental sustainability, in the context of Air Pollution and Climate Change.

Thank you.
