

ECOSOC Special Meeting
Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon:
Reducing risks and capturing opportunities

ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters
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Opening Remarks by
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WMO as the authoritative scientific voice of the United Nations System on weather, climate and water

- Since its establishment in 1950, WMO has been central in facilitating international collaboration and cooperation for observations, data, information and knowledge exchange, setting standards, coordinating scientific and technical methods and capacity development for the benefit of its Members and their National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs).
- Through the National Meteorological or Hydrometeorological Services (NMHSs) of our Members, WMO has developed, put in place and continuously supporting the growth and sustained operation of WMO-certified centres of excellence such as Global Producing Centres for Long-range Forecasts (GPCLRFs), Regional Climate Centres (RCCs), the International Research Centre on El Niño/Southern Oscillation (CIIFEN), Drought Monitoring Centres (DMCs) and many others that assist WMO Members by providing operational climate forecasts on the regional and global scales as input for regional and national climate services.
- Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs), established and sustained over the past two decades with support from WMO and its partners, are widely recognized to be key mechanisms for developing consensus-based regional climate outlooks, which were successful in various regions in attracting the interest and support of sectoral user groups and in developing and disseminating seasonal climate predictions and related products.
- These WMO centres and mechanisms along with National Climate Outlook Forums (NCOFs) are considered to be important operational elements for the implementation of the Global Framework of Climate Services (GFCS) providing reliable climate information through all the scales from global to national.

El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and WMO Update

- The ENSO, a coupled ocean-atmosphere phenomenon, is widely known to be one of the most prominent planetary-scale circulation features, which have significant regional climatic impacts across the world.
- We face a constant demand for information on a variety of aspects related to the ENSO phenomenon, impacts and future outlooks, to be conveyed in non-technical terms. In response to the unprecedented global interest on the El Niño on 1997/98, at that time strongest in recorded history, WMO started issuing regularly "WMO El Niño/La Niña Update", which provide a consensus assessment of the current situation, and an outlook for the coming months on the El Niño and La Niña. This Update is developed in collaboration with a key agencies and experts across the world dealing with ENSO and climate prediction.

- The WMO Update has received wide attention, it is an authentic source of information used by NMHSs to determine the associated national implications.
- Our scientific understanding of El Niño has increased greatly in recent years. However, the current 2015/16 unprecedented El Niño and future events are entering uncharted territories. Our planet has altered dramatically because of climate change, the general trend towards a warmer global ocean, the loss of Arctic sea ice and of over a million square km of summer snow cover in the northern hemisphere. This naturally occurring El Niño event and human induced climate change may interact and modify each other in ways, which we have never before experienced.
- Our current vast and growing body of knowledge on ENSO, that provides policy makers with the earliest warning they can get of potential climate, water and weather risks in their country/region; this is not just about probability of occurrence of El Niño but 'foreseeability' impacts.
- We also face maturing interest in the regionalization of the impacts of the ENSO extremes, because each region around the globe has its own quasi autonomous regional atmospheric and oceanic processes that can weaken, avert or strengthen the expected impacts of the ENSO extreme.
- This underscores the importance of the ability of national forecasters to adjust the global WMO El Niño/La Niña Update to regional and local conditions and issue tailored products of local relevance.
- The next issue of WMO El Niño/La Niña Update is in final forms of preparation, and is expected to be released in the week of 9 May 2016.

Global Seasonal Climate Update

- Building upon the success of the WMO El Niño/La Niña Updates, WMO has taken up a new initiative to develop a much broader Global Seasonal Climate Update (GSCU), for consensus-based real time monitoring and prediction of seasonal climate that includes other large-scale climate indices having important regional impacts on seasonal climate.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Climate services as well as DRR and capacity development are among top WMO strategic priorities. The WMO Strategic Plan 2016-2019 sets the directions and priorities to guide the activities of Members and all WMO constituent bodies to enable all Members to improve their core information, products and services, maintain necessary infrastructure, and to directly benefit from advancements in science and technology, and to help Members in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in implementing Paris Climate Agreement, and especially in adaptation to climate change, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.
- WMO calls on government and development partners to support and invest resources to the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, especially in LDCs and SIDS to enhance and sustain their contribution to climate- and disaster resilient sustainable development.