



**WMO Statement at the Sixth Ministerial Conference
"Environment for Europe"
Southeast European Capacity-Building: A WMO Perspective**

***M. Jarraud
Secretary-General***

(Belgrade, 11 October 2007)

***Organisation
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by

**M. Jarraud
Secretary-General
World Meteorological Organization¹
(Belgrade, 11 October 2007)**

**Excellency,
Distinguished Ministers, Representatives and Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own, it is a pleasure to be present at the sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", which is organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). I wish to thank H.E. Dr Saša Dragin, Minister of Environmental Protection, for the kind invitation to address you today.

WMO is very pleased to participate in this conference since most UNECE countries are also WMO Members. I wish to recall that the first "*Environment for Europe*" Ministerial Conference, the 1991 Dobris Conference, called for a comprehensive assessment of Europe's environment and envisaged the Development of an Environmental Programme for Europe (EPE). The outcome of this effort was the "*Dobris Assessment*", which recognized that environmental change occurred as a result of both natural and human processes and identified the key environmental issues facing Europe as a whole - including climate change - and providing the first attempt to set out long-term environmental policy priorities at the pan-European level.

The Environmental Programme for Europe was also based upon the principles of the historic 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the *Earth Summit*, and its Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action for the United Nations System, Governments, and stakeholders in each area where impacts on the environment were recognized. The Earth Summit was a milestone achievement since it gave birth to the Conventions on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Desertification.

¹ The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 11 October 2007 during the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007). The document has not been formally processed by the UNECE.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the United Nations System, WMO's mandate in weather, climate and water cuts across key sectors in terms of the sustainable development of nations. Following the establishment of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to oversee commitments made at UNCED and to direct the implementation of Agenda 21, WMO and UNEP shared the responsibility to act as Task Managers on the Protection of the Atmosphere and to provide a report to the UN General Assembly on a number of key global concerns, such as climate change, ozone depletion and atmospheric pollution.

A major outcome of UNCED was the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 1990 its Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was set up by WMO and UNEP. By then, scientists had observed that greenhouse gases were accumulating in the atmosphere significantly above pre-industrial values. It should be recalled that in 1976, WMO had issued the first authoritative statement on climate change and, in 1979; it convened the First World Climate Conference. Thereafter, monitoring and research earned out by WMO's World Climate Programme (WCP) led to the establishment in 1988 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), under the joint sponsorship of WMO and UNEP.

In addition, through its environmental monitoring activities, WMO played a key role in identifying and solving the issue of human-induced ozone depletion in the upper atmosphere. In 1975 WMO issued the first scientific statement on ozone and the subsequent scientific assessments made by WMO, UNEP and other partner organizations, provided the basis for the conclusion of the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, its 1987 Montreal Protocol and subsequent amendments. In coincidence with the 20th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol, nations have recently agreed to an accelerated freeze and phase out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

Another UNCED goal was the use of land for sustainable development. Recurrent droughts, the pressure of overgrazing and poor soil management often result in land degradation and contribute to desertification, particularly in the most arid and semi-arid areas. In this regard, WMO supports the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in collaboration with FAO and other agencies, and contributes to food security through the application of agrometeorological methods.

Another major concern in the follow-up to UNCED was the issue of fresh water, a most vital resource for sustainable development. WMO has intensified its efforts to assist the National Hydrological Services in addressing it through its World Hydrological Cycle Observing System (WHYCOS) initiative, thereby contributing to WMO Members' water resources assessment capabilities.

Therefore, UNCED and its Agenda 21 provided an action plan for us to achieve sustainable development in the present century. In this regard, WMO has placed especially strong emphasis on

capacity building and the transfer of appropriate and affordable technologies to developing countries, countries with economies in transition and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Extreme hydrometeorological events account for 90% of all natural disasters, but appropriate strengthening of the capacities of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) can help societies to reduce the associated death and destruction. This strengthening also enables countries to take more effective actions in adapting to climate variability and change. WMO is committed to support the work of the UNFCCC and continues to address the issue of climate change through the work of its NMHSs and by co-sponsoring international panels and programmes such as the IPCC, the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) as well as through WMO's collaboration with partner organizations both within and outside the UN System.

The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report stresses that adaptation and mitigation together will provide a pathway to secure and sustainable development in response to the threat of climate change. At the same time, WMO considers that mitigation needs to start in the short term, even if its benefits may only be visible in a few decades. WMO regards the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP-12), held in Nairobi in November 2006, as a hallmark in discussions on the adaptation process and supports the implementation of the Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change, in particular through its observation networks and its climate centres.

In this respect, WMO has noted and welcomes the Belgrade Initiative to enhance regional Southeast European cooperation in the field of climate change, including an action plan and regional actions in research and observations, education and training, public awareness and capacity building.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Among the major outcomes of the fourteenth session of the WMO Regional Association for Europe was the decision to develop a Regional Strategic Plan for the enhancement of its NMHSs. The goal was to strengthen the capabilities of all NMHSs through capacity building framework implementation. I would therefore wish to provide three key examples of capacity building that, I believe, are central to the achievement of a sound environmental policy and sustainable development in Southeast Europe.

Firstly, I wish to recall that WMO and several partners have initiated the *South Eastern Europe Disaster Risk Management Initiative* (SEEDRMI), aimed at reducing the vulnerability of SEE countries, as the basis for project-financing priorities in the areas of early warning and disaster risk reduction. Phase I includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. A project for improved weather forecasting will be

completed in 2007 and its implementation would begin next year, provided that appropriate financing can be agreed upon.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the Sava River project of cooperation in operational hydrology, involving Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. A project document proposal was drafted but afterwards it was agreed upon, at the suggestion of the World Bank, that the Sava River project and the SEE Hydromet initiative should be combined as distinct components of a single umbrella project in order to facilitate the approval and funding processes. Financial assistance for fielding a consultancy mission in the region was provided through the World Bank to formulate a full-fledged project document.

Thirdly, I shall refer to the establishment of a Drought Management Centre for South Eastern Europe (DMCSEE), to coordinate and facilitate the development, assessment, and application of drought risk management tools and policies, to improve drought preparedness and to reduce the impacts, a concept that emerged from technical workshops organized by WMO and UNCCD in 2005 and 2006. The Southeast European countries have decided that Slovenia will host this Centre.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to assure you that WMO will continue to give a very high priority to furthering the implementation of Agenda 21 and other major UNCED outcomes, especially in the areas of disaster risk reduction, water resources management and the protection of the environment, and that WMO will intensify its capacity building and international cooperation efforts at all levels. With particular reference to climate issues, I have already underscored that WMO is decisively committed to promoting a better understanding of the impacts of, and vulnerability to, climate change, as well as the appropriate implications for sustainable development. Moreover, I would like to stress that the costs of reducing and coping with a changing climate will be more manageable if appropriate actions are taken as soon as possible on the basis of adequate monitoring and authoritative scientific knowledge, which will demand sustained observations and enhanced research.

In concluding, I would again like to express WMO's gratitude and my own to Serbia for the kind invitation to be present on this auspicious occasion, and to wish all the participants an enjoyable stay in Belgrade and a most successful Conference.

Thank you.