



WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION
Weather Climate Water

Statement of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) at the occasion of the fourth special meeting of the Group of Friends of the Chair of the Prepcom of the second phase of the WSIS (Geneva, 10 January 2005)

Background

We are all grieved by the images of despair and suffering from countries devastated by the tsunami, which hit south Asia on December 26. Before this event, 2004 had already been marked as a very severe year for natural disasters. Many countries worldwide were inflicted with considerable loss of life and socio-economic impact as a result of natural hazards. These ranged from one of the most severe tropical cyclone seasons in the Atlantic and the Pacific, to severe floods in east and south east Asia. However, the Asian tsunami disaster's impact and devastation has reached an exceptional level in terms of the scale of human loss, associated damage, number of countries affected and related response and recovery efforts.

While natural hazards may not be avoided, early warning systems, with harmonized risk assessment, prevention and mitigation measures, can prevent them from becoming natural disasters. That means that we can take action to reduce considerably the loss of life and socio-economic damage caused by these hazards. It is WMO's ambition to halve the number of deaths due to natural disasters of meteorological, hydrological and climatic origin over the next 15 years. ICTs have a crucial role to play in the development and implementation of early warning systems, to timely reach population at risk.

Suggestion for a new paragraph in the draft political chapeau

The World Meteorological Organisation suggests to reaffirm, for example in a new paragraph of the draft political chapeau, the crucial role of the ICTs in reducing the loss of lives and properties through the development and implementation of early warnings systems for disasters.

References in the Geneva Plan of Action

- To establish monitoring systems, using ICTs, to forecast and monitor the impact of natural and man-made disasters, particularly in developing countries, LDCs and small economies (see paragraph 20.(c) of the Geneva Plan of Action under E-environment)
- To promote the long-term systematic and efficient collection, dissemination and preservation of essential scientific digital data, for example meteorological data in all countries (see paragraph 22.(d) of the Geneva Plan of Action under E-science)
- To promote principles and metadata standards to facilitate cooperation and effective use of collected scientific information and data as appropriate to conduct scientific research (see paragraph 22.(e) of the Geneva Plan of Action under E-science).