

## **SECOND PHASE OF WSIS, 16-18 NOVEMBER, TUNIS**

**WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION**  
**M. JARRAUD, SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**(Tunis, Tunisia, 17 November 2005)**

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Mr President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Representatives of International Organizations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to address you on the occasion of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own, I wish to express my appreciation to Mr Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), for the invitation to address the Summit. I also wish to thank the Government of Tunisia, for hosting the second phase of WSIS in Tunis and for the excellent arrangements.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Natural disasters of unusual severity, duration or extension pose a threat to life, property, human activities and the environment. They include tornadoes, thunderstorms, hurricanes, typhoons, coastal and river flooding, and drought and desertification, as well as the tsunamis and earthquakes

that are quite fresh in our memory. Natural disasters can occur on time-scales ranging from minutes to years and impact on all countries. Over the past 20 years, more than three million people have died as a result of natural disasters, and it is estimated that 90% of these victims were from the developing countries. Indeed, the majority of developing countries are regularly exposed to a high risk of natural disaster occurrence and, in addition to the direct damages, these countries often also suffer indirect impacts on their food security, the spread of disease, and the longer-term issues of desertification, famine and mass emigration.

-2-

Enhanced planning and decision making is a fundamental capability, at all levels, for the prevention or mitigation of the negative impacts that are often associated with natural hazards. To that end, increased accuracy and reliability of information on weather, climate and water on a global scale and the free, unrestricted and timely access to that information, are some of the requisites for effective natural disaster risk assessment, vulnerability analysis, preparedness and response.

The release of hazardous materials into our atmosphere and waters, accidental or otherwise, also constitutes a major threat to life and safety that might assume regional or even global dimensions. Information and warnings on the concentration of toxic or radioactive materials in the atmosphere, as well as their predicted propagation and deposition, are essential to the mitigation of their potentially disastrous impacts on populations and economies.

Readily available information on weather, water and climate, including analyses, forecasts and early warnings, can be a fundamental contribution to sustainable development offering substantial socioeconomic benefits. —Agriculture, fisheries and forestry, energy and water-resources management, land-based, marine, and aerial transportation, banking and insurance services, construction and urban design, as well as human health, recreation and tourism, can all benefit directly from relevant meteorological and hydrological information. Additionally, major societal and economic benefits for countries can be derived from their access to climate information, particularly to climate predictions and assessments of climate change.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ever since the implementation of the earliest weather networks of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have played a key role in meteorology and its associated disciplines. Today, on a 24 hour/7 day real-time basis, WMO's 187 Members operate more than

200 meteorological centres that exchange in real-time their observations, analyses, forecasts and early warnings. WMO's observing systems include over 1000s of surface stations, upper-air stations and ships, as well as countless buoys, aircraft, weather radars and satellites. The observing network also includes stations for measuring the chemical component of the atmosphere such as greenhouse gases, ozone, toxic and radioactive substances. In addition to this, WMO coordinates hydrological observations networks. In the broader framework of its multi-hazard early warning concept, WMO manages the international coordination, generation and distribution of early warnings for weather-, climate- and water-related natural hazards. Additionally, WMO makes available its Global Telecommunication System (GTS), to be the backbone network for the exchange for early warnings and related information on many natural hazards, as will be the case with the new Tsunami Early Warning Systems of the Indian Ocean and other oceanic areas at risk.

-3-

Weather, water and climate know no borders. Effective services to users, economic sectors and the public at large depend critically on the free and timely exchange of the most relevant information. WMO is strongly committed to the promotion, coordination and support for the implementation of ICTs in the improvement of the global, regional and national generation, exchange and distribution of information and warnings on weather-, climate- and water-related hazards. This is wholly in line with the expected outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and one of WMO's contributions to the successful attainment of the UN-agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Accordingly, the development of information and communication technologies and their implementation will have a key role to play in enabling and fostering societies' access to weather, climate and water information and services, which are essential for the protection of life and property and the realization of sustainable development, for the benefit of humanity.

Thank you.