



**Global Institute for Water  
Environment and Health**

Leadership For Positive Change

## WMO Extraordinary Session

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## **WMO Extraordinary Session – Geneva 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> October 2012**

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) held an extraordinary session of its congress from the 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> of October to agree upon the implementation and governance structure of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). With the growing concern over climate change, the WMO launched the GFCS initiative in 2009 in an attempt to mainstream climate information and prediction into “planning, policy and practice on the global, regional, national and local scales”. The resulting goals are the reduced vulnerability to climate-related hazards, the advancement of global development goals, the improvement of decision-making, the strengthening of linkages between providers and users, and to maximize utility of existing climate services infrastructure.

Beginning in October 2011, an executive taskforce was established to facilitate the drafting of the GFCS implementation plan and governance structure. The taskforce met several times throughout the past year, and would routinely submit drafts to be reviewed by member governments and experts who could submit their comments to the WMO secretariat. After several cycles of drafting and review, the extraordinary WMO congress served as a venue for all parties to be able to meet and make final decisions on the implementation plan and governance structure. Following three days of discussion, where two working groups were established to focus on key issues, the WMO congress agreed upon an implementation plan and a governance structure.

The implementation plan for the GFCS outlines the key objectives and principles of the framework. The framework establishes that objectives will be set for 2, 6, and 10-year time frames which the WMO will review at their congress sessions, starting in 2015. Some of the first objectives that the framework outlines are the establishment of technical committees between the WMO and UN agencies, strengthening the capacity of countries with only basic climate services, and that all countries will be supported by regional climate centers (within 6 years). An important pillar of the implementation plan is the User Interface Platform (UIP) which will provide a structure for the providers of climate data and information, the users, and climate researchers to be able to interact at all levels.

Concerning the governance structure, an Intergovernmental Board on Climate Services was established which will oversee the development and management of the GFCS. The intergovernmental board will meet at least twice before the next congress in 2015, and their duties will include implementing decisions relating to the GFCS, develop monitoring mechanisms on the GFCS implementation, make recommendations to relevant stakeholders and the WMO, and to develop international standards and recommended practices and techniques relating to production of climate information and provision of climate services.



Diverse aspects concerning the budget allocated to the GFCS have also been discussed during this extraordinary session. Indeed, the submitted draft made mention of a budget of CHF 175 million and some countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, showed their doubts as for the necessity to have a separate budget resolution for the GFCS since a budget for the WMO activities have already been set. However, the General Secretary underlined that the mentioned amount is indicative of what is needed in order to kick-start the GFCS and that the exact budget will be discussed in the session of the 17<sup>th</sup> congress in 2015. Moreover, the representatives of India stated that, in order for the GFCS to become stable and predictive over the years, funds should not only come from voluntary contributions but from other sources as well.

An active debate also concerned the frequency of the GFCS board meetings. The proposed draft mentioned that the board would meet in a yearly basis until the session of the 17<sup>th</sup> congress in 2015 and at least once every 4 years after this event. However, representatives from Bolivia stressed the importance to meet more frequently in order to have some follow up in the implementation and coordination of the GFCS and feared that the board would not meet more than once every 4 years, which would become the rule. Nevertheless, the frequency of meetings has been accepted as it was originally in the draft by a majority who stated that increasing the frequency would increase considerably the organization costs, that less countries' representatives will be able to attend and therefore the quality of meetings would decrease.

Now that the implementation plan has been accepted, the GFCS now moves on to their organization building phase. By the end of 2013 there should be established a secretariat to support the framework, an executive committee structure, and the intergovernmental board will convene and establish their first meeting. Over the next year the final implementation plan will also be shared with all relevant stakeholders, and dialogues at regional levels will commence to organize the management of activities, with the goal of achieving the first 2-year objectives by the end of 2014.