

PRELIMINARY GCOS VIEWS ON ADAPTATION UNDER THE AWG-LCA

Submitted by the Global Climate Observing System Secretariat

23 September 2008

Adequate high-quality observations of climate and climate-related variables are essential if adaptation to climate change is to be based on deliberate planning leading to better adaptation policies. Good observations acquired over extended periods make possible an understanding of the frequency of extreme events as well as average climate conditions. They thereby contribute to better planning and decision making related to agriculture, coastal zone management, water resources management, health, tourism, and disaster risk management. Observations also play a key role in validating and initializing models to enable long range statistical predictions of seasonal, inter-annual, and decadal climate, which in turn, can be of great importance in designing effective adaptation strategies. Although not sufficient in and of themselves, adequate observations of the climate are the indispensable foundation on which many successful adaptation policies will be designed.

To assist the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action Under the Convention (AWG-LCA) to prepare a document assembling the ideas and proposals from Parties and accredited observer organizations on elements of the Bali Action Plan, the Secretariat of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) would like to propose the following:

1. National Adaptation Planning

- i. Both developing and developed countries should be encouraged to give very high priority to national needs for observations in their national adaptation planning. For example, a section on climate observing system needs should be included in National Adaptation Plans of Action when these are prepared or revised.
- ii. All countries should be encouraged to appoint GCOS National Coordinators and to establish GCOS National Committees. The importance of this need is now firmly recognized. The future effective functioning of GCOS and the value of observations for adaptation purposes will depend greatly on the degree to which efficient cross-discipline and cross-agency coordination mechanisms are put in place at national and regional levels.

2. Streamlining and Scaling Up Financial and Technological Support

- i. GCOS has supported the development of 10 Regional Action Plans that identify priority observing system needs in developing regions. Many projects proposed in the Plans have not yet been implemented due to lack of resources. SBSTA and COP have on several occasions encouraged developed Parties to assist in the implementation of these Plans. They should continue to press Parties to provide resources for the implementation of the Regional Action Plans.
- ii. The Climate for Development in Africa Programme has been officially endorsed by the Heads of State of the African Union and has attracted the interest of many potential donors, but it has still not been funded. This important programme could lead to substantial and necessary improvements in climate observing systems and climate services in support of adaptation in Africa. It is essential that Parties in a position to do so be encouraged to support this programme.

3. Enhancing Knowledge Sharing

- i. Data sharing will be increasingly important if countries are to be able to take full advantage of the opportunities that new and improved regional modeling presents. The outputs of regional models are likely to be very useful in the design of adaptation strategies, but only so if modeling results can be trusted. The GCOS Secretariat therefore encourages greater data exchange, at least among regions if not more broadly, and is persuaded that this will benefit all countries.
- ii. Likewise, the development and dissemination of tailored climate services—based on improved climate observations—will benefit sectoral users in the design of adaptation strategies. The AWG-LCA should encourage sharing of, and capacity building to use, these climate products.

4. Institutional Frameworks for Adaptation

- i. Developed countries in a position to fund improvements in climate observing systems should be encouraged to actively participate in the annual GCOS Cooperation Board (GCB) Meeting, usually held in parallel with mid-year SBSTA meetings. An engaged GCB will be one important means of facilitating the improvements in observing systems in developing countries that are so greatly needed.