

**The Global Climate Observing System
and Sustainable Development—An Action Plan for Africa**

Abstract

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The presentation will review the GCOS Regional Workshop Programme, highlight current implementation activities in Africa related to this programme, discuss the importance of climate observations for adaptation, and make several recommendations for high-priority actions.

1. One of the major thrusts of the Global Climate Observing System Secretariat (GCOS) in the last five years has been the implementation of its Regional Workshop Programme. This Programme, launched in 2000 following an invitation from the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in November 1999, had the central goal of initiating processes in developing regions that would lead to real, substantial, and lasting improvements in global climate observing systems. It comprised workshops and follow-up meetings in ten developing regions. In Africa, workshops were held for the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa in January 2002, for the countries of Western and Central Africa in September 2003, and for the North African countries (and other countries bordering the Mediterranean) in November 2005. For each of these regions, GCOS assisted regional experts in the development of Action Plans addressing the highest priority observing system needs.

2. Implementation of these Regional Action Plans is a high priority. To facilitate implementation GCOS organized a meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in April 2006. Potential donors were invited, as well as representatives of the African Union, UN Economic Commission for Africa, the meteorological community, and the various communities of users of climate information. The final report and implementation strategy, "Climate Information for Development Needs: An Action Plan for Africa" was recently endorsed by the AU and ECA. It addresses the need for climate information in an integrated programme that includes not only observations, but climate services, climate risk management, and policy—all of which are important to the issue of adaptation to climate variability and change. The programme is now undergoing further development, but significantly the United Kingdom's Department for International Development has already committed to providing startup funding and is actively helping to seek additional donor partners.

3. There is a significant link between the adequacy of climate observations and sustainable development. Moreover, properly functioning climate observing systems are as important to adaptation to climate change as they are for better understanding the climate system. As illustrated in a recent IRI report on Best Practices produced following, and in association with, the GCOS Addis Ababa meeting, better observations can contribute to a whole range of sectoral needs. Some examples from the IRI report include flood management in Mozambique, food security in Ethiopia, planning for malaria outbreaks in Southern Africa, and farm-level decision making in Mali.

4. Inadequate and/or deteriorating observing systems in Africa need to be improved. Some urgent needs for Africa include rescuing historical data, improving operational observing system networks, building awareness among different user communities of the usefulness of climate information and services, and improving collaboration between the providers of climate information and the sectoral users of this information.