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UN celebrates contribution of climate services to human well-being on World Day



23 March 2011 – The United Nations is celebrating the contribution of national climate services to people’s daily lives as it marks World Meteorological Day, which this year focuses on the theme “Climate for You.”

Every year on 23 March, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the international meteorological community join in celebrating the [Day](#), which commemorates the coming into force of the WMO Convention in 1950.

For more than 60 years, WMO has been the UN system’s authoritative voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth’s atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces and the resulting distribution of water resources.

“WMO activities in the area of climate are widely perceived today as key contributions to human safety and well-being and the realization of economic benefits for all nations,” WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said in his [message](#) for the Day.

“Reliable and timely climate information will increasingly be required by decision-makers and by all socio-economic sectors, particularly at the regional and local levels, in view of the grave risks associated with a rapidly changing climate,” he added.

Around the clock, WMO facilitates provision and exchange of near-real-time standardized information from 189 National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and 35 Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres across the globe.

As natural hazards pose serious threats to human security, WMO has worked on operational early warning systems and effective preparedness measures, which have contributed to drastically reduce loss of lives.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, said his organization's collaboration over the years with WMO has greatly strengthened the scientific basis of its work.

“It has enabled us to close some of the obstacles to rapid information flow,” he noted in his [message](#) for the Day. “Still, a lot remains to be done, and is achievable, if each of us steps up to do whatever we can to improve the lives of the weakest among us – a forgotten billion that lives in the drylands.”

In the drylands, said Mr. Gnacadja, both rich and poor have suffered, and in many places, food insecurity, the loss of homes, livelihoods and habitats and forced rural-to-urban migration have followed.

“These impacts have hit the poorest populations, nations and regions hardest, entrenching them further into poverty and exposing many to increased political instability. Theirs is the smallest carbon footprint, but they are paying a particularly high price for it.”

The WMO is also an active partner of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), “whose critical role and work are central to reducing the impact of disasters,” Margareta Wahlström, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, said in a statement to mark the Day.

“These efforts are key contributions to human, social and economic safety,” she added. “We fully support WMO's long-term objective: that of halving by 2019, the 1994-2003 ten-year average of deaths caused by disasters of meteorological and hydrological origin.”

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