PANEL DISCUSSION:WEATHER AND CLIMATE SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN AFRICA

**Second Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET)**

**Elephant Hills Hotel**

**Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**

**15 – 19 October 2012**

The AMCOMET Panel Discussion entitled, “Weather and Climate Services in Support of Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa” aims to link weather and climate knowledge to disaster risk reduction decision making process and discuss how to improve weather and climate products and their dissemination to render them useful to end-users of all levels.

**Goals of the Session:**

The goals of this session are to: (1) identify experiences which can serve as best practices, (2) discuss ways to improve weather and climate products to support decision making, and (3) clarify the roles of relevant partners to increase synergies in complementary disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation programmes.

**Panel Discussion:** Weather and Climate Services in Support of Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa

**DRAFT Agenda**

**Panel Chair: Kadi Mohamed, SG ACMAD.**

**Panellists:**

Mr Youcef Ait Chellouche, Deputy Head, UNISDR Africa Office

Dr. Elena MANEANKOVA, Assistant Secretary-General World Meteorological Organisation

Mr Isaac TARAKIDZWA, African Risk Capacity (ARC)

Dr. Gilber OUMA, ICPAC / University of Nairobi

**Programme**

**14.30 – 14.40 Chair:** Opening Remarks and Topic Introduction

**14.40 – 14.45 ISDR:** Concrete experience on building partnerships between climate service providers and disaster risk reduction managers: Achievements and Challenges

**14.45 – 14.50 WMO:** Challenges and Opportunities with the Development of Weather and Climate Services to Support DRR in Africa

**14.50 – 14.55 ARC:** Use of climate information and risk transfer related to food insecurity risk

**14.55 – 15.00 University of Nairobi:** Use of climate information to build community resilience

**14.00 – 15.25 Discussion and Recommendations**

**15.25 – 15.30 Chair:** Summary Recommendations and Closing Remarks

**Overall Format of the Session:**

The session will be held in a flowing discussion format.

The session will be opened by the Chair, who will deliver a 5-minute statement to introduce the goal of the panel, the format and the panellists.

The Chair will then deliver a 5-minute overview of the Disaster Risk Reduction landscape in Africa, taking into consideration current challenges, existing partnerships and opportunities. In addition, provide a brief description of the relationship between weather and climate services and disaster risk reduction, as well as the latest developments in the Africa that are linking these issues.

Individual panellists will make short presentations on their areas of expertise to complement the overview provided by the Chair. The presentations will be followed by a general discussion with a view to forming statements and recommendations that would be taken into consideration on the Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services) and its subsequent implementation.

A Concept Note is provided below to guide the Chair and the panellists in developing their interventions and discussion.

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**CONCEPT NOTE**

**Background**

Much of Africa is undergoing rapid economic growth. Therefore, the need to reduce and manage the risk of natural and man-made disasters is greater than ever as one major disaster can significantly stunt a nation’s economic progress. The number of disasters reported in Africa has increased significantly (since the 1970s) and their economic impact on countries is becoming more and more apparent.

Over the last four decades, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced more than 1,000 disasters. They are a major threat to lives and sustainable development, putting recent development gains at risk. Africa’s disaster profile is characterized by extreme hydro-meteorological events which will likely increase in magnitude due to climate change and related extremes. Droughts still affect the largest number of people on the continent and floods occur frequently along the major river systems and in many urban areas. Cyclones mainly affect Madagascar, Mozambique and some of the Indian Ocean islands. Sea level increases, coastal erosion and storm surges are a very real threat for low-lying coastal areas. Other associated impacts (to climate) include food insecurity and epidemics mainly, cholera, meningitis and malaria, which all are climate related.

Sub-Saharan Africa’s disaster profile is closely linked to the vulnerability and exposure of its population and economy/community assets, and their often-low capacities to cope with natural hazards. Most African countries have limited resources to invest in disaster risk reduction and minimal fiscal space to fund relief and recovery efforts after major disaster impacts in terms of mortality, morbidity, destroyed livelihoods, infrastructures, capital and disrupted community social networks. Disasters can be a tremendous setback for economic growth and performance. Poor, small island states and land-locked countries are particularly vulnerable to the economic impact of disasters. The capacities of many national and local disaster prevention and response authorities remain limited. In many areas, the economy is based on rain-fed agriculture, which is highly susceptible to climate variability.

IPCC SREX report shows a clear link between Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and sustainable development.

**Opportunities for building climate resilient Nations**

Pre-emptive risk reduction is the key to unravelling the disaster problem, with an emphasis on resilience, disaster planning and climate change adaptation. Linking DRR and CCA has been recognized as a significant step in reducing vulnerabilities to changing risks derived from climate change. Existing knowledge, experience and capacities for reducing vulnerabilities and increasing preparedness to extreme weather and climate events must be harnessed in adapting to climate change. Long-term DRR and CCA programs will not only protect lives and livelihoods but also will protect development gains to ensure sustainable development as well as the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Remarkable progress made by climate science and technology allows us to anticipate future conditions, through early warning systems and seasonal forecasts. This information is useful for disaster risk managers, as advanced knowledge about climate hazards help to anticipate the interaction between with vulnerable groups and their environment during disasters – and thus improve mitigation, preparedness for, response and recovery programs.

Experience has shown that a key difficulty in integrating climate science into disaster risk reduction policy and operations has been the lack of organized, pro-active and sustained partnership in order to influence decision making and institutional frameworks which will enable building climate resilience of African Nations.

**Building partnerships**

Enhanced integration of climate science into Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation policies and operations in Africa can be achieved by developing appropriate partnerships. Building partnerships is fundamental in establishing a durable and action-oriented dialogue among the climate scientists, operational meteorological and climate services (information providers) at the national level , disaster risk managers and decision-makers in various socio economic sectors (e.g., energy, water resource management, agriculture, health, etc) ( which is in order to provide relevant climate services for risk reduction measures, community centered Early Warning Systems that leverage national, regional and global coordination, local preparedness, response and recovery.African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development **(**ACMAD) & UN-International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN-ISDR) Africa already signed up to such partnership. Efforts are underway with WMO and African Union for strengthening partnership with the development agencies, African socio-economic groupings, WMO regional and global operational network and Members to facilitate development and provision of meteorological and climate services in context of the Global Framework for Climate Services. The idea is to bring ‘around the table’ climate service providers, decision-makers from various sectors (e.g., energy, agriculture, water resource management and disaster managers) and private sector/(re)insurance companies, and the regional and international development agencies to engage in policy dialogue for integrated planning for CCA.

**Guidance for statements and presentations:**

1. The panellists and discussants are invited in their capacity as an expert in and NOT their institutional affiliation.
2. The statements/presentations should be focused on concepts and NOT on the institutional affiliations of the experts.
3. The panellist and discussants are encouraged to deliver their statements in a discussion format with clear messages.
4. Due to limited time of the session, all panellist and discussants are urged to remain within their allotted time.
5. PowerPoint presentation is in general discouraged due to the limited time of the session. If there is need to display figures and slides, please limit the number of slides/figures to 2-3 essential slides.