

Statement of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Chair, Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction on behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Our vision is that by 2030, we see a world where all nations, especially the most vulnerable, are more resilient to the socioeconomic consequences of hazardous weather, climate, water and other environmental events; and underpin their sustainable development through the best possible science and services, whether over land, at sea or in the air.

The human cost of disasters, in terms of impacts on people's lives and livelihoods, is cause for urgent and collective action. People with higher levels of vulnerability, including most often the poor, women and children, are disproportionately affected. An estimated 26 million people are being pushed back into poverty each year and 25 million are displaced, with the food, water, homes, health, energy and natural resources that they rely on under threat, as well as their safety and security.

The [WMO Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2018](#) noted the striking consecutive record of warming recorded from 2015 through 2018 including the four warmest years on record. This warming trend has lasted since the start of this century and is expected to continue. It also documented that ocean heat content is at a record high and the increasing rate of sea-level rise and the loss of sea ice in both northern and southern polar regions as well as the alarming upward trend in the atmospheric concentration of the major greenhouse gases.

Last year, in the United States alone, there were 14 weather- and climate-related disasters where the devastation cost more than US\$1 billion dollars each, with a total of some US\$49 billion. Worldwide, more than 35 million people were affected by floods. This year, tropical cyclone Idai left more than 1000 people dead in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, and only a few weeks later tropical cyclone Kenneth was the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall and strike the furthest north in Mozambique since modern records began.

Between 1998–2017, 91% of the reported 7 255 disaster events recorded in the [International Disaster Database EM-DAT](#) were related to hydrometeorological hazards. Environmental risks (i.e. those posed by chemical, natural and biological hazards) continue to dominate according to the World Economic Forum's annual [global risks perception survey](#), accounting for three of the top five risks by likelihood and four by impact, where extreme weather was ranked as number one.

As the demand for assistance disaster preparedness and response continues to increase year after year, the international system is increasingly under strain with unprecedented levels of humanitarian needs often in fragile and complex natural and socioeconomic settings.

As a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) and the UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the land and oceans, the weather and climate it produces, and the resulting distribution of water resources, WMO is dedicated to international cooperation and coordination in these areas. The National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of WMO's 192 Member States and Territories work around the clock to provide vital weather, water and climate information worldwide. Their early, authoritative, reliable and actionable warnings of for example severe weather, fluctuations in air quality or climate variability and change allow decision-makers, communities

and individuals to be better prepared for hazardous weather, water and climate events and eventually help save life and property, protect resources and the environment and support socio-economic growth.

WMO continuously supports its Members and their NMHSs to meet their international commitments in the areas of disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable development. Over decades, WMO has developed frameworks through which advanced Members are committed to support other Members both in development and operational activities so as to leave no one behind. In 2017, WMO adopted a [Disaster Risk Reduction Roadmap](#) resulting in a WMO strategy for its contribution to the Sendai Framework, and disaster risk reduction remains a key priority in WMO's new strategic plan and organizational structures.

As such, WMO is making key contributions to the overall global 2030 Agenda through its Members, regional associations and technical commission with their operational networks and research communities, through partnerships, inter-agency cooperation and major capacity development projects. WMO is fully committed to the expected results of the [UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience](#).

For example, WMO is developing a [Global Multi-hazard Alert System \(GMAS\)](#) that will substantially increase the availability and access to authoritative warnings which contributes directly to Sendai Framework's global Target G. The system will provide an easy-to-use web interface where natural hazard and warning information retrieved directly from the authoritative national sources (often the NMHSs) will be aggregated and displayed. It builds on existing successful regional alert platforms of WMO Members.

WMO will also enhance its provision of authoritative information and expert advice to the UN and humanitarian agencies in anticipation of, during and after emergencies or disasters triggered by hydro-meteorological hazards through a dedicated [coordination mechanism](#) that leverages the operational capacities of WMO Members and their NMHSs.

WMO is working towards providing stakeholders involved in loss and damage accounting and reporting with new tools that will enable better and unambiguous attribution of impacts to the causal natural hazards and their physical phenomena at the national, regional and global scales. The [WMO Cataloguing of Hazardous Events Initiative](#) will facilitate a standard and authoritative reference source of hazardous weather, climate, water and even space weather events that have impacted society. At the COP 23, WMO has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNFCCC that includes this Initiative as a key component.

It is vital to address existing technical and human resources gaps, particularly in developing and least developed countries, Small Island Developing States and landlocked developing countries, to strengthen or develop capacity in multi-hazard early warning systems by increasing investments and sharing of knowledge, information and good practices.

For example, the International Network for Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (IN-MHEWS) was established in 2015 and organized the [First and Second Multi-Hazard Early Warning Conference \(MHEWC-I & II\)](#). The [Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems \(CREWS\) Initiative](#) has boosted the strengthening of observation infrastructure, impact-based forecasting and warning capabilities and service delivery in several Caribbean, African and Pacific countries. WMO's recently established [Alliance for Hydromet Development](#) with the World Bank and agreements with the Green Climate Fund are key components of WMO's new Country Support Initiative. WMO has also been building effective partnerships with the private sector through its 'Global Weather Enterprise'. In closing, I am convinced that with WMO's ongoing reform, we stand ready to support disaster risk reduction on all levels. Thank you for your attention.
