

A Preliminary Prospectus for Regional Workshops on Improving Global Climate Observing Systems.

Objective To initiate a process to improve the capacity of developing countries to participate in global observing systems for climate.

Background A reliable climate observing system is essential to document climate change, evaluate its impact, assess mitigation and adaptation strategies, and realize the promise of climate predictions and their application on seasonal-to-interannual and longer timescales. Developing countries, in particular, have problems responding to the need for climate-related observations. The problems may vary from station-to-station and country-to-country but are generally known. They include inadequate equipment for measurement, data handling, or communication; lack of adequate training; and the inability to sustain long-term observations. All these ultimately stem in part from inadequate funding. Regions such as Africa, the southwest Pacific, and South America have observational deficiencies that are especially serious, but observation networks in other regions also need to be strengthened.

Approach The Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) Secretariat proposes to organize regional workshops in areas of the world where observational networks are inadequate for global climate-related purposes. The purpose of the workshops would be to initiate a process that would lead to the preparation of proposals to overcome observational deficiencies on a regional basis. The workshops would provide information to assist developing country Parties identify regional needs (such as training and development), priorities among these needs and approaches to addressing these needs. With this information in hand, these Parties would be able to prepare regional proposals to "build capacity for participation in systematic observational networks" for funding by multilateral agreements or international funding agencies, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This information would serve a secondary purpose of providing a core element for national plans and communications on systematic observations. It is important to provide a global framework for regional plans to balance national and international perspectives.

Regional workshops could address specific problems related to meteorological networks, where the deficiencies are better known, with subsequent workshops addressing oceanographic and terrestrial networks. Alternatively, they could address the broader issues of terrestrial and oceanographic, as well as meteorological and atmospheric, observing system needs.

An initial decision would be to select one or more organizations in each region with which to work. Choosing the right partner(s) is important because a regional partner could provide the coordination of individual needs and proposals from Parties. For example, WMO and a number of Parties have worked on a range of regional climate issues with the African Center for Meteorological Applications and Development (ACMAD). We would welcome your assistance in helping us identify appropriate regions and regional partners.

Funding from Parties or multilateral organizations is not guaranteed, but the interest of the UNFCCC makes it probable that well-conceived proposals will receive serious consideration. The workshops we propose are an important first step toward developing successful proposals for making major improvements in observing systems in regions where observations are currently inadequate. The GCOS Secretariat has no preference on where to begin, but suggests it may be wise to hold the first workshop in a region in which local expertise can be most easily mobilized. Future workshops might then benefit from experience gained during the first workshop.

The GCOS Secretariat seeks comments on this proposal by 17 December 1999.

The GCOS Secretariat is ready to initiate a planning process, if it can get the participation and financial support of the Parties. Funding may be available for an initial workshop, but future workshops will require funding from individual Parties, bilateral agreements or international financial organizations, such as the GEF. GCOS also is aware that a single workshop per region may only be the starting point for building the necessary capacity within any one region and that funding for regional activities may be required over several years to develop adequate proposal for the upgrading of observing networks in developing countries.

1 FCCC/SBSTA/1999/10

2 Decision 2/CP.4

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seeking comments!