

Statement on the occasion of the

**Thirteenth session of the
Commission on Sustainable Development**

***M. Jarraud
Secretary-General***

(New York, 20 April 2005)

***Organisation
météorologique
mondiale***

***World
Meteorological
Organization***

***Temps
Climat***

1h

by

M. Jarraud
Secretary-General
World Meteorological Organization
(New York, 20 April 2005)

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and my own, it is an honour to address the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13). I am pleased to have the opportunity of presenting to you some issues of importance in relation to water, which is this year's theme on the programme cycle for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Several of the MDGs are linked to the management of freshwater resources and sustainable development and, additionally, it is estimated that about 90 per cent of all natural disasters are of hydrometeorological origin. As you are aware, the less developed countries are most vulnerable to such disasters and their limited resources, rather than invested in development, must often be diverted to relief and recovery efforts. I will therefore try to illustrate some of WMO's contributions in turning political commitments into action.

WMO's contributions follow two complementary paths. On one hand, it is a top priority for WMO to take part in preventive action for natural hazards and in the corresponding recovery activities whenever hazards, including the ones that are due to too much water or too little, go on to become natural disasters. Even before the great tsunami devastated the Indian Ocean littoral countries on 26 December 2004, the year 2004 had already been marked by natural disasters of hydrometeorological origin, with considerable loss of life and socio-economic impacts. Such disasters ranged from one of the most severe tropical cyclone seasons in the Pacific and the Caribbean to severe flooding in several parts of Asia.

However, it should be stressed that without WMO's global system of warnings, the loss in life and property would have been even higher. In particular, as regards tsunamis, WMO's Global Telecommunication System (GTS), interconnecting all the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of the world, can permit timely and reliable exchange of warnings and messages among the relevant organizations. WMO is joining forces with other UN agencies and in particular with UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), in ensuring that a Tsunami

Early Warning System (TEWS) may soon become a reality, in the Indian Ocean and other regions at risk.

Hydrometeorological hazard risk reduction, vulnerability assessment and disaster prevention are among the very important contributions of WMO in securing development and in supporting the achievement of the MDGs. Coordinated international efforts in disaster risk reduction, which were accelerated with the launching of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), were reaffirmed at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe (Japan) early this year. WMO has adopted as a major objective to work towards reducing by 50%, over the next 15 years, the ten-year average fatality of 1994 - 2003 associated to natural disasters of meteorological, hydrological and climatological origin.

On the other hand, risk management principles based on preparedness, prevention, response and recovery are also fully incorporated in sound water resources management practices. Less than one percent of all water on Earth is, in fact, fresh water readily accessible for direct human uses. As was highlighted by the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto (Japan), in March 2003, fresh water is a precious and finite resource that is central to sustainable development, economic growth, social stability and poverty alleviation. If it were to be distributed in harmony with human necessity, it should be sufficient to support the needs of sustainable development. However, ever-expanding developmental activities, unsustainable water consumption, and the growth of population, have turned water into a limited resource as well as a limiting factor in the achievement of the MDGs.

This situation calls for an integrated approach to water, land and ecosystems management, to ensure that future generations may be able to meet their water needs in a sustainable manner. Integrated water resources management can help reconcile conflicting uses of water and provide communities with the opportunity to utilize optimally their limited water resources. All national and regional assessments on water, sanitation and human settlements issues should be carried out in a participatory and integrated manner, and vulnerable regions clearly identified. Monitoring is the information backbone and knowledge base for integrated water resources management and for building resilience in society against water-related hazards.

Although many countries still lack reliable water monitoring programmes and possess very limited information on water quantity and its quality, at the monitoring stage, WMO's National Meteorological Services (NMSs) and National Hydrological Services (NHSs) play primordial roles. WMO is actively supporting countries in improving data availability and reliability through its World Hydrological Cycle Observing System (WHYCOS), which uses up to date technology including satellites, automatic weather systems and advanced computing facilities. As weather, climate and the global water cycle do not recognize any political boundaries, cooperation in these fields is natural.

As a specialized agency of the UN System and in collaboration with its partner organizations within the framework of UN-Water, WMO and the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of its Members have seized the opportunity of providing enhanced diversified services in order to anticipate, avert and minimize adverse impacts as a result of changes in water availability, extreme events, desertification and other threats to man and the environment. Two things are quite clear:

- Firstly, that if surface and groundwater are not managed wisely, water will become an even more limiting and fragile resource than it is today;
- Secondly, that integrated water resources management is indeed the key to securing access to safe water, sanitation and protection of the environment.

Recognizing these facts, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August to 4 September 2002)- in its Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, set the year 2005 as the target for the preparation of national integrated water resources management and efficiency plans. I therefore urge all countries to use the special opportunity provided by the standing commitment to prepare plans for integrated water resources management by 2005.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Deliberations during the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development provide an outstanding opportunity to foster partnerships and to join resources and concert efforts to reduce the impact of disasters, assess water resources and improve access to water and sanitation, under the paradigm of integrated water resources management. Please allow me to underscore that, as a crosscutting issue, water should remain at the top of the international agenda. I therefore submit for your consideration the need for a continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanism of progress that we are making on this vital issue,

As a result of the tragic tsunami of 26 December 2004, the world community has demonstrated its ability to act swiftly and effectively. This should set an example on how the world could also deal decisively in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, unless the MDGs are in fact achieved, the cumulative results may be comparable to those of many such tsunamis.

Thank you.
