

**STATEMENT AT THE OPENING PLENARY OF  
THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE IPCC**

by

M. Jarraud  
Secretary-General  
World Meteorological Organization  
(Geneva, 31 August 2008)

***Excellency Mr Moritz Leuenberger, Federal Councilor and Former President of the Swiss Confederation, representing the Swiss Federal Government,  
Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Excellency Mr Laurent Moutinot, President of the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva,  
Dr Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the IPCC,  
Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP,  
Mr Roberto Acosta, representing the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),  
Distinguished National IPCC Representatives,  
Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations System and Partner Organizations,***

**Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and on my own behalf, it is a pleasure to address the twenty-ninth session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was co-established in 1988 by WMO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At the same time, we are pleased to celebrate today the IPCC twentieth anniversary.

I wish to express WMO's appreciation to the Federal Government of Switzerland and to the Republic and Canton of Geneva, through Your Excellencies, for your distinguished presence and for hosting the IPCC twenty-ninth session at this exceptional venue, thereby reiterating your vital commitment to collaborate with the efforts being undertaken by the international community to address the challenge of climate change and its impacts, and to contribute to the implementation of the necessary measures that society is demanding in urgency.

WMO wishes to further acknowledge Switzerland's historic efforts to contribute to observations in weather and climate by recalling the brilliant figure of alpine scientist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, who in the eighteenth century designed instruments and escalated the summits of the highest mountains to perform pioneering measurements of meteorological parameters. Likewise, I can mention that, between 1879 and 1896, Professor Heinrich Wild presided over WMO's predecessor, the International Meteorological Organization (IMO), and that Dr G. Swoboda was the first WMO Secretary-General between 1951 and 1955.

I would also like to thank UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his repeated personal involvement in supporting WMO's long-date efforts to address the climate change issue, in particular in his stressing that the challenge of climate change, and what we do about it, will define us, our era and, ultimately, our global legacy. The UN is indeed the natural forum to deal with this vital issue and the September 2007 high-level event in the UN General

Assembly has reinforced his message that it is no longer business as usual.

I especially wish to thank Dr Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the IPCC, for leading the Panel so successfully since April 2002 and for adding a number of key highlights to the IPCC accomplishments over the past twenty years. Under his direction and through the efforts of all involved, the IPCC concluded last year its Fourth Assessment Report (IPCC 4 AR), which has aroused unprecedented interest worldwide and increased awareness of the anthropogenic factor in climate change.

I am also pleased to note the presence of Dr Robert Watson, who chaired the Panel successfully through its Third Assessment Report. Indeed, the present success of the IPCC could not have been achieved without the dedication of all IPCC actors who contributed their efforts over the past twenty years, in particular those who today are no longer with us. I would therefore wish to honour them gratefully, present and past, by recalling that the first IPCC Chairman and IPCC helmsman for almost ten years, Professor Emeritus Bert Bolin, passed away on 30 December 2007, a few days after the IPCC received the prestigious 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for its "*efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change*". It is almost impossible to mention the IPCC's achievements without a special reference to Professor Bolin's life-long commitment to the climate change issue.

## **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At this propitious ceremony it is opportune to recall that, while it is widely recognized today that human activities are modifying climate at an increasingly alarming rate, such was not the case in 1976 when WMO issued the first authoritative statement on the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the potential impacts on the Earth's climate. In February 1979 WMO organized the First World Climate Conference as a result of which, only a few weeks later, the Eighth World Meteorological Congress (Geneva, May 1979) launched WMO's World Climate Programme (WCP). The conference also led to the establishing in 1980 of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) by WMO and the International Council for Science (ICSU) and, subsequently, also with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

Very intensive scientific work followed, which ultimately led to the milestone Villach Conference in October 1985, organized by WMO, UNEP and ICSU, which produced a consensus statement on the probable magnitude of climate warming and its implications. Thereafter, in 1987, the Tenth World Meteorological Congress formally recognized through its Resolution 9 (Cg-X), *that national and international studies had led to the conclusion that a global climate change would ensue from increases in the concentrations of greenhouse gases and that this climate change could have potentially serious consequences on society*. At the same time, the Congress requested the WMO Executive Council to keep under review existing coordinating mechanisms for addressing greenhouse gases. The WMO Executive Council therefore furthered WMO's already excellent collaboration with UNEP, which led to the co-establishing of the IPCC one year later.

The IPCC First Assessment Report was released in 1990, providing guidance for the considerations and conclusions of the Second World Climate Conference, which was held in the same year, as well as for the negotiations of a climate convention, which ultimately resulted in the development of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The new conference also contributed to the establishment, in 1992, of the Global

Climate Observing System (GCOS) by WMO, UNEP, IOC-UNESCO and ICSU, to facilitate the availability of systematic observations needed for authoritative climate change studies. Today, after warning the global community for years about the dangers posed by anthropogenic release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, WMO is supporting the needs of climate prediction for societal benefits. To set the stage for a new era in forecasting as well as to generate the awareness of users and commitment by governments, WMO is organizing with partners the World Climate Conference-3 (WCC-3), which will be held almost exactly one year from now in Geneva, from 31 August to 4 September 2009. As decided by the Fifteenth World Meteorological Congress (Geneva, May 2007), the main theme of the WCC-3 will be "*climate prediction for decision-making*". We are confident that it will be as successful as the two previous conferences.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The key IPCC 4AR messages have by now been widely publicized with the support of several nations and that of the United Nations, and they have served as the basis for an international mobilization in the domain of climate change which culminated last December at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali. WMO supports ongoing efforts in the context of the UNFCCC to achieve appropriate agreements extending beyond the Kyoto protocol and to define the relevant long-term strategies. I therefore wish to underscore the importance of the recent consensus achieved on the climate change issue at the UN General Assembly and, more recently, at the G8 Summit, while assuring you that WMO's expertise will continue to be available.

Indeed, as the specialized agency of the United Nations System with a mandate in weather, climate and water, and as IPCC co-founder and co-sponsor, WMO has been the principal provider of the scientific and technical information underpinning IPCC assessments, through the long-term and user-driven operational systems developed by the Organization and the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of its 188 Members. Essentially all WMO programmes provide support to the IPCC assessments, while making extensive use of IPCC findings in their respective activities.

The impacts of climate change are being perceived daily in a number of domains, including water resources management, food security and health. These effects are especially detrimental to development and security in the poorest countries, which are often the most vulnerable to climate change-related natural hazards and have very limited capabilities to adapt to a fast-changing environment. The Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other vulnerable nations will be among those hit earliest and hardest, in particular in Africa. While they are clearly among those least responsible for generating the climate change issue, these countries have insufficient resources to prepare accordingly. They should therefore be empowered appropriately for climate change adaptation through capacity building, in particular in the use of early warning systems within their natural disaster risk reduction activities, as a key contribution to their sustainable development.

The IPCC has a very vital task ahead and I wish to underscore that the Fifteenth World Meteorological Congress decided last year to encourage the IPCC to continue its activities under its existing terms of reference and to encourage the Panel to continue to work closely with the UNFCCC and respond to the needs of the Convention for scientific, technical and socio-economic assessments. WMO is therefore ready to actively continue supporting the

Panel as it has during these 20 years, in particular by facilitating the increasing involvement of scientists from both developed and developing countries in all domains where the best expertise will be required to meet the challenges of global climate change.

WMO has been pleased and proud to co-sponsor the IPCC with UNEP over this period and so I wish the IPCC much success for years to come.

In closing, I would like again to congratulate Switzerland and the Republic and Canton of Geneva for hosting this historic session and I thank you for your attention.