

Remarks from Secretary General of the WMO Celeste Saulo Opening of the 60th Session of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

16 January 2024

Dear Mr. Mehmet Ozhaseki, Minister of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change,
Dear Ms. Inger Anderson, UNEP Executive Director,
Dear Mr. Simon Stiel, UNFCCC Executive Secretary,
Dear Prof. Jim Skea, Chair of the IPCC,
Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I address the first Plenary meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in this new, IPCC's seventh assessment cycle. This marks a significant moment for me both personally and professionally, having assumed the office of the WMO Secretary-General just two weeks ago. I am delighted to address this distinguished gathering for the first time in my new capacity!

Regrettably, due to my demanding schedule, I am unable to join you in person. However, I am eagerly looking forward to our excellent and fruitful cooperation in the coming years.

First and foremost, I extend my congratulations to the newly elected Chair, Prof. Jim Skea, and all newly elected Bureau members. I wish you all the best on your crucial mission of leading the Seventh Assessment report of the IPCC.

I would like to express my admiration and congratulations to the IPCC on the successful completion of the sixth assessment cycle with the release of the Synthesis Report in March 2023. The cycle itself was the busiest in IPCC's 35 years. It produced rigorous scientific assessments with a strong focus on regional and social dimensions of climate change, its impacts, and our options and abilities to adapt and mitigate it.

I am particularly pleased to observe the continued progress the IPCC has made in improving its gender and regional balance. This trend is evident in the new Bureau, and I welcome the vision and commitments of the IPCC Chair, Prof. Jim Skea, to strengthen diversity and inclusion, enhance the IPCC's relevance for policymaking, and ensure that its outputs reflect the best available science.

With over 40% of the new IPCC Bureau being women and, for the first time, an entirely female tandem of Co-Chairs leading one of the Working Groups, I am confident that you will continue to pursue full gender and regional balance in the selection of authors for upcoming reports. This aligns with my priority of strengthening regional activities of WMO through a bottom-up approach and ensuring geographical and gender diversity.

The assessments provided by the IPCC have timely informed the First Global Stocktake deliberations and outcome decisions at COP28 in Dubai. The scientific findings from the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report directly influenced the decision text, highlighting the vital role that science plays in informing climate action, especially as the world continues to approach the 1.5-degree limit stated in the Paris Agreement.

Knowledge from IPCC reports goes hand in hand with WMO's regular monitoring and reporting on the State of Climate, where we recently announced that 2023 was the warmest year on record by a large margin, and 2024 could be even warmer.

As WMO-UNDRR and partners work towards achieving global coverage of early warning systems by 2027, the IPCC can play a crucial role in making the robust scientific case for

investments across the full value cycle. It can also highlight the global, regional, and local changes requiring enhanced observations, adaptation, and mitigation actions.

WMO and UNEP are IPCC's parent organizations, and the years ahead will be both challenging and rewarding for this critical decade of climate action. As the new WMO Secretary-General, I am determined to maintain and strengthen the partnership with UNEP, extending continued support to the IPCC community in their mission of providing policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change.

In doing so, we are keen to ensure that the IPCC can build on the achieved momentum and successfully deliver policy-relevant, timely, and actionable scientific information to decision-makers at all levels, supporting them in understanding climate change science as they shape climate policies and actions.

Last November, the WMO hosted the inaugural meeting of the new IPCC Bureau and based on its strategic guidance on a range of scientific topics, I trust that the Panel will be ambitious and comprehensive in addressing the expectations of all IPCC member countries. I hope you decide on a meaningful, substantive, and realistic program of work for the seventh assessment cycle.

I acknowledge that at this meeting in Istanbul, you have important decisions to make, including the structure and shape of the seventh assessment cycle. The relevance of this vital scientific endeavour and its policy implications for the future of our planet's climate system cannot be overstated.

I wish you an excellent, collegial, constructive, and productive discussion this week. I also extend my best wishes for success in your complex, difficult, and demanding work on the Seventh Assessment Report.

Thank you.