



The Message of WMO Secretary-General

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Theme: A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

Greetings from the World Meteorological Organization, the specialized agency of the United Nations on weather, climate, and water. We are privileged to speak at the seventy-eighth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Please accept my best wishes for a **happy seventy-fifth anniversary!**

Weather, climate and water extremes are becoming more frequent and intense in many parts of the world as a result of climate change.

We are seeing more intense heatwaves and drought and forest fires. We have more water vapor in the atmosphere, which leads to extreme rainfall and deadly flooding. The warming of the ocean fuels more powerful tropical storms and rising sea levels increase the impacts. We expect this negative and disruptive trend to continue. Greenhouse gas concentrations are at record levels, locking in climate change to continue for decades to come, melting of glaciers and sea level rise that could continue for centuries. More of us are exposed than ever before to multiple hazards, which are themselves evolving as a result of population growth, urbanization and environmental degradation.

According to *WMO's Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water Extremes 1970-2019*, the number of disasters increased five-fold between 1970 and 2019. Economic losses have increased even more – by a factor of seven. We face simultaneous multiple hazards, with cascading impacts on infrastructure, agriculture, transport, energy and health systems.

The findings from the latest *WMO State of Climate Reports in Asia and the South-West Pacific*, which is a joint effort of WMO and ESCAP, support the facts presented earlier. The reports provide an overview of land and ocean temperatures, precipitation, glacier retreat, shrinking sea ice, sea-level rise and severe weather. They further examine socio-economic impacts in a year when the region was also struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn complicated disaster management.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The regional climate reports demonstrate that increasing socio-economic costs jeopardize sustainable development. The growing number of disasters due to climate change is endangering implementation of a large number of Sustainable

Development Goals. This trend is expected to continue as people, assets and infrastructure are exposed to risk in our inter-connected, urbanized world. By 2030, an estimated 50 per cent of the world's population will live in coastal areas exposed to flooding, storms and tsunamis.

Greater coordination between national meteorological and hydrological services, disaster management authorities and development agencies is fundamental to better prevention, preparedness and response. Thanks to improved early warnings and disaster risk reduction strategies, the number of deaths decreased almost three-fold since 1970.

As part of this global agenda, **WMO has been mandated by the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, to lead the action to ensure every person on Earth is protected by early warning systems within five years.**

WMO will seek to close the gaps in observation data collection and sharing, to expand the capacity of all countries to issue warnings ahead of a disaster while simultaneously also improving their capacity to act on those warnings and to respond in a manner that is people-cantered, inclusive, and accessible. Closing the early warning gap will require inputs from actors throughout the entire early warning to the early action value chain.

WMO will lead the effort to achieve universal coverage of early warning services in close collaboration with key partners as a collective contribution toward global adaptation efforts. These include:

- The WMO Global Multi-hazard Alert System (GMAS) leverages progress in early warnings against hazards such as tropical cyclones, flooding and coastal inundation.
- The Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) was established at COP26 jointly with UNEP and UNDP as a new financing mechanism. One of the highest returns of investments will be achieved by improving the weather, water and climate early warning services and related observing infrastructure and networks.
- The Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems Initiative (CREWS) bridges the capacity gap in life-saving early warning systems for vulnerable countries.

Dear participants,

WMO looks forward to continued cooperation with ESCAP and its Member States in advancing progress on the SDGs. We hope to achieve WMO's vision that, by 2030, we will see a world where all nations, especially the most vulnerable, are more resilient to the socio-economic consequences of extreme weather, climate, water and other environmental events; and underpin their sustainable development through the best possible services, whether over land, at sea or in the air.

With that, I look forward to fruitful discussions, and I wish you all happy and safe. Thank you for the opportunity to address you.