

**Kick-off Ceremony of
Celebration of the 130th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Observatory
World Meteorological Day, 23 March 2013**

**Speech by Mr David Grimes
President of the World Meteorological Organization**

Mr Shen Xiaonong, Deputy Administrator of the China Meteorological Administration;

Mr. Wong Ho-yuen, Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development;

Other heads of partner government departments;

Dr. Shun Chi-ming, Director, Hong Kong Observatory;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here on the auspicious occasion of World Meteorological Day for not only are we celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the World Weather Watch but also the 130th anniversary of the Hong Kong Observatory, a great institution.

The World Meteorological Organization facilitates cooperation across borders and oceans in the area of climate, weather and water services. There are 191 Member States and Territories in the WMO. It is an Organization that engages communities of scientists, entrepreneurs and policy-makers and relies on an international community that is dedicated to improved predictions to mitigate the consequences of extreme events on human safety, well-being, and the economies of all nations.

Since the creation of the World Weather Watch in 1963 we have initiated global standards and procedures for the collection and exchange of weather data, as well as standards for the provision of weather warnings and advices. The World Weather Watch also effectively promoted collaboration between weather researchers and forecasters on a global scale, leading to the exchange of technological capabilities and knowledge.

I have had the privilege over the last week to witness at first hand the developments taking place and the challenges Hong Kong faces. The Hong Kong Observatory typifies that entrepreneurial spirit I felt everywhere. I note

that with over a century of activities, the Hong Kong Observatory has matured into a world class service and in recent decades as contributed greatly to the growth of the World Weather Watch system. For examples —

In the 1960's: The Hong Kong Observatory was one of the eight world centres in compiling marine climatological summaries and it started receiving satellite imageries in 1964.

In 1985 the HKO started providing dial-a-weather service; in 1987 TV weather service began and in 1996, the HKO launched its presence on the world-wide web.

In 2001 the WMO Severe Weather Information Centre (SWIC) was launched and in 2010 the deployment of aircraft for typhoon reconnaissance in South China Sea began.

Our global objectives are only achieved through cooperation and partnerships. Our successes hinge on the contributions of Members such as through the MyWorldWeather Apps initiative, an innovative service delivery mechanism. This advancement underlines the importance of national investment in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in allowing the World Weather Watch Programme to keep pace with how our clients consume information.

I want to take a moment now to highlight our challenge over the next 50 years to develop climate services for I believe the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) to be the most significant initiative of the WMO since the launch of the World Weather Watch.

Fortunately, our understanding of the climate system continues to improve, allowing us to anticipate and even project future climate. It is therefore possible now to provide information to governments, organizations and individuals on whether the next season, year or decade is likely to be warmer or colder, or drier or wetter, than average. Useful information is available at the regional and country levels.

But access to climate services is even more limited than weather and so the WMO will continue to rely on institutions like the China Meteorological Administration and the Hong Kong Observatory to assist those that are less developed ... less fortunate ... and, perhaps, even more vulnerable ... but nevertheless, need to manage climate risks and opportunities and build more resilient communities.

But let's be clear, the distinction between climate and weather services is an academic rather than "real world" distinction, and it is a distinction that is not well understood in user communities. What we must strive for is a broader range of services, delivered in a seamless fashion from minutes to weeks to seasons and even decades. These services are in fundamental ways different to those provided previously.

I trust that this great partnership amongst nations and meteorological services as illustrated by the success of the World Weather Watch will continue to thrive from the global to the national level. Together we can embrace change, take advantage of new technologies and address the emerging needs of humankind. Together we can improve the application of weather, climate and water resource information by incorporating socio-economic data, models and predictions for solving national, regional and global challenges. Together we can increase capacity around the world for producing and using such services placing the collective strength of our institutions and networks of people to help close the gap in the delivery of relevant services to all humankind. By doing so, we all become stronger and more relevant.

No doubt, the Hong Kong Observatory will serve as a model of excellence in protecting lives and building a better society through science.

Thank you!