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**JOINT WMO/IOC TECHNICAL COMMISSION FOR OCEANOGRAPHY  
AND MARINE METEOROLOGY (JCOMM)**

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**JCOMM Circular Letter No. I-2**

GENEVA, 2 October 2002

Subject: Activities since JCOMM-I

Action required: (i) Submit ideas for the JCOMM logo  
(ii) Assist in establishing national focal points for JCOMM  
(iii) Make use of the JCOMM web site

To: Members of the Joint WMO/IOC Technical Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology (JCOMM-431)

Dear Colleagues,

It is now just over a year since the very successful and enjoyable session of our Commission in Akureyri, Iceland. As you know, the session agreed a comprehensive and ambitious work plan, and also appointed teams of highly competent and enthusiastic experts to implement this plan. Much has happened in this regard during the past twelve months, and we would now like to bring you up to date on some of these activities. Of course, we realize that all of you, as JCOMM members, regularly receive copies of the WMO Bulletin, which contains summaries of the various meetings that have taken place, within the "Programme Notes" section. So in this letter we will try to give you more of a personal reflection on how things are proceeding.

As you know, the technical work of the Commission is undertaken largely by the various Expert Teams, Task Teams and specialist rapporteurs within the four Programme Areas. Within each Programme Area, this work is coordinated by a small Coordination Group, chaired by the respective PA Coordinators, while strategic guidance and oversight for the overall work of JCOMM is provided by the Management Committee, chaired by the co-presidents. In this context, it was clearly important for at least the Management Committee and the four PA Coordination Groups to meet as early as possible in the intersessional period, in order to agree on strategies to address their work plans and properly activate the respective subsidiary teams and rapporteurs. This has been successfully

achieved, with all five groups meeting in the first six months of 2002. In preparation for these meetings, the JCOMM Secretariat sought nominations for the one expert team not finalized in Akureyri (the ET on Data Management Practices), while each PA Coordinator prepared draft work strategies for their respective Programme Areas.

Unfortunately, because of changing job responsibilities in their home institutions, the Programme Area Coordinators for Data Management and Capacity Building appointed in Akureyri (respectively Dr Wang Hong and Admiral Hector Soldi) had to step down from their JCOMM positions. One of the first tasks for the Management Committee at its session in Geneva in February 2002 was therefore to arrange for the appointment of two new coordinators. These coordinators are Professor Lin Shaohua (China) and Ms Miriam Andrioli (Argentina), and both have subsequently been very active in guiding the work of their respective PAs. With regard to other JCOMM appointments, the Management Committee supported the nomination of Dr Hiroshi Kawamura (Japan) as satellite rapporteur within the Observations PA, appointed Dr Tony Knap (USA) as rapporteur on non-physical variables, agreed on the membership of the Expert Team on Data Management Practices, and identified potential members of the Task Team on Resources. With these final appointments, we are convinced that we have an excellent overall team for implementing the wide-ranging work plan of the Commission.

In addition to these appointments, and to a thorough review of the programme area work strategies, the Management Committee addressed a number of major cross-cutting issues affecting the Commission as a whole. These included relations with external bodies and programmes; identifying adequate resources to support the work of JCOMM, including for capacity building; technical subjects covering more than one programme area (such as waves); integration in general, including in observing systems and data management; and preparation of a small booklet or brochure to describe JCOMM, its objectives and work. With regard to the latter, it is expected that the booklet will shortly be ready for publication, but before this can happen, we need to agree on an appropriate logo for JCOMM. We therefore take this opportunity to invite all of you to submit ideas for such a logo, which should in some simple way express the basic concept of JCOMM as embracing observations, data management and services for the marine atmosphere and the ocean beneath. Please provide your suggestions to either of us or to the Secretariat (attention: Peter Dexter in WMO or Colin Summerhayes in IOC). Finally, acting on a decision of the Management Committee, a JCOMM joint circular letter has recently been issued, inviting Members/Member States to identify a single national focal point for JCOMM, preferably from among yourselves as members of the Commission. We urge you to assist your national agencies in this process as much as possible.

As with the Management Committee, the sessions of the four PA Coordination Groups were primarily concerned with ensuring that the work strategies were appropriate to the tasks and that the component expert teams, task teams and rapporteurs were activated. In addition, however, they also began to address more general issues relating to the respective programme areas and JCOMM as a whole. These included:

- (i) Ensuring the future long-term maintenance and management of the JCOMM Electronic Products Bulletin;
- (ii) Establishing a variety of ad hoc task teams, on issues such as new ocean products, instrument intercomparisons, JCOMMOPS, MPERSS, etc.;
- (iii) Initial planning for major workshops to take place in 2004, on MPERSS and new ocean products;
- (iv) Devising consolidated metrics for assessing overall observing system performance against requirements;

- (v) Dealing with non-physical variables under JCOMM;
- (vi) Initiating a number of pilot projects on integrated ocean data management and new technologies;
- (vii) Initiating planning for a second workshop on the applications of marine climatology (CLIMAR-II), to take place in late 2003 and to include an historical section to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous Brussels conference of 1853;
- (viii) Establishing priorities for JCOMM Capacity Building, based on the results of regional surveys of capacity building requirements.

There is no doubt that all the programme areas have very ambitious work programmes, which will ultimately depend on input and support from all of you for their successful implementation.

In addition to the largely planning work of the Management Committee and PA Coordination Groups, a number of more specific JCOMM technical programme activities have either taken place in the past six months or will do so in the near future. Perhaps the most interesting and innovative of these was the first session of the Ship Observations Team, which was hosted by the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa, India, 25 February to 2 March 2002. You will recall that JCOMM-I established the SOT through a partial merger of the existing Voluntary Observing Ships, ASAP and Ship-of-Opportunity Panels, in an endeavour to develop synergies in and a more efficient approach to the management of ship-based observations of all types.

The first session of this team was certainly hard work, but we believe that it very much achieved these objectives. The meeting included plenary sessions addressing common issues (ship recruitment, telecommunications, new observations, etc), separate technical sessions for each of the component panels, and a one-day technical workshop. The proceedings of this workshop have recently been published on CD-ROM, and are being distributed by the Secretariat. The meeting established a very ambitious work plan, including a number of ad hoc Task Teams, to address specific issues such as enhancement of ship recruitment, telecommunications system costs, instrument intercomparisons and JCOMMOPS development. Unfortunately, the chairman of the SOT, Rick Bailey, subsequently had to resign from the post because of a change in his national position, and we are now actively and urgently seeking a replacement. The second session of the SOT is scheduled tentatively for early September 2003, in Varna, Bulgaria.

We are very pleased to note that the important VOS Climate Project (VOSCLim), to establish a high-quality subset of VOS data and metadata to support global climate studies, is now operational. Ship recruitment, metadata collection and data quality assessment are now underway, and both information on the project and also the data themselves are available through the project web site: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/VOSCLim.html>. The third project meeting took place in January this year, and a fourth is planned for mid-2003, perhaps in conjunction with a second international workshop for PMOs.

Other important JCOMM-related events planned for the next few months include:

- (i) Sessions of the Expert Teams on Maritime Safety Services (Lisbon, September) and Sea Ice (Buenos Aires, October) (see WMO Marine Programme web site for documents);
- (ii) The annual session of the DBCP and the Argos Joint Tariff Agreement meeting, Martinique, France, October (see DBCP web site for documents);

- (iii) A planning meeting for the WIOMAP Project, in conjunction with the Indian Ocean GOOS Conference, Mauritius, November (for details, see <http://moi.gov.mu>);
- (iv) The EuroGOOS Conference and GOOS Regional Forum, Athens, December (for details see the GOOS web site at IOC).

Events tentatively planned for 2003 include the second session of the Management Committee (Paris, February); sessions of the Expert Teams on Waves and Surges and Data Management Practices; training workshops on wave and surge forecasting and on GLOSS; a PMO workshop; the second session of the SOT; and the second CLIMAR workshop and Brussels 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Details of the timing and venues for these activities will be made known in due course through the JCOMM, IOC and WMO web sites. Next year will also see the 14<sup>th</sup> WMO Congress (May) and 21<sup>st</sup> IOC Assembly (June), where it is hoped that the work of JCOMM will receive a high recognition. In addition, it is expected that both Congress and the Assembly will approve the text of a Memorandum of Understanding between WMO and IOC on a common set of rules and procedures for JCOMM, which will cover in particular procedures for the conduct of JCOMM-II.

The co-presidents have contributed personally in initiating a workshops series on operational marine forecasting for countries facing the South China Sea. This initiative aims to facilitate sustained forecasting services in these countries, and it benefits from cooperation with the Tropical Cyclone Programme and IOC/GOOS secretariats in Bangkok and Perth. Opportunities to involve JCOMM in more multidisciplinary projects within Natural Disaster Reduction will also be investigated by the co-presidents.

In closing, we would like to draw your attention to two important new web sites. The first is a new dedicated JCOMM web site, which was agreed by the Management Committee and is now under development: <http://www.jcomm.net>. You are strongly encouraged to visit this web site, to input to it and interact as much as possible, and thus help to make it a focal point for JCOMM information exchange. The second is the United Nations Atlas of the Oceans: <http://www.oceansatlas.org>. This atlas, which was formally opened on 5 June 2002, is the result of a major interagency project, to which both WMO and IOC contributed substantially, and will continue to contribute in the years to come. You are again encouraged to use this atlas as a major information resource on the oceans, and also provide feedback to its editors as appropriate.

We look forward to hearing from you on the many and varied issues which fall within the responsibility of our Commission, and to a continuing successful implementation of its work plan.

Yours sincerely,



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Co-president, JCOMM



(S. Narayanan)  
Co-president, JCOMM

cc: Members of the JCOMM Management Committee )  
Presidents of WMO Regional Associations ) (for information)  
Presidents of WMO Technical Commissions )