

Opening Statement of the Fifth Session of the JCOMM Ship Observations Team (SOT-V)

by the representative of

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SECRETARY-GENERAL

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

(WMO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland, 18 May 2008)

Mr Graeme Ball, Mr Chairperson of the Ship Observations Team

Ms Julie Fletcher, Chairperson of the VOS Panel

Mr Rudolf Krockauer, Chairperson of the ASAP Panel

Dr Gustavo Goni, Chairperson of the SOOP Implementation Panel

Distinguished Members of the Team,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the World Meteorological Organization and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, to the WMO Headquarters and to Geneva today on the opening of the Fifth Session of the JCOMM Ship Observations Team (SOT).

The oceans cover about two-thirds of the Earth's surface and oceanic phenomena have major impacts on the marine coastal environment and socio-economic activities in these regions. Weather forecasting, climate change monitoring, climate research, marine forecasting activities in support of marine transportation, response to marine pollution require ocean observations. For decades, ships were the only means of obtaining meteorological data from them. Even though there are now several other means to obtain such information such as satellites, buoys and radars, ships still play a very important role. They provide ground truth for the validation of satellite observations, contribute substantially to the climate records, and make measurements not yet obtainable by other means.

The Ship Observations Team is now becoming a mature body since its first meeting seven years ago in Goa, India. Much progress has, been made to integrate the three Programmes under one umbrella. The efforts of SOT have resulted in a more cost-effective way of collecting observations through observing systems that are now better standardized and addressing a wide range of meteorological and oceanographic applications. Because of the ongoing commitments and the dedication from WMO Members and the IOC Member States, a number of challenges

have been successfully addressed through the SOT for example to transmit higher resolution data through new satellite data telecommunication systems, and collect climate quality data.

I am also pleased to see that the Ship Observation Team (SOT) is enhancing collaboration with other related international initiatives and exploring new frontiers for better measuring met-ocean variables such as sea surface salinity and ocean carbon, and for investigating new measurement techniques.

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the success, improving our observations, understanding, modelling and prediction of climate variability and change remain very important issues. There is growing awareness by policymakers on the key socioeconomic value of weather, climate and water information and services. Hence, to support policy formulation and decision-making, as well as to underpin capacity building in climate risk management, WMO will hold a third World Climate Conference (WCC-3) in Geneva from 31 August to 4 September 2009. Among the important themes of this Conference, there will be a discussion on the marine climate and the changes, which are occurring to it. We hope that you will be able to support this event and benefit from the exchange of ideas that takes place. One outcome we expect from the Conference is a call for a well-coordinated, globally accessible set of climate services. As potential users of such services, we would be interested in hearing your views on your particular requirements. Another event where you will have opportunity to provide input will be the OceanOBS'09 symposium in September in Venice, which will design the foundations for the global ocean observing system in the next ten years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this context, the SOT is still facing a number of challenges, and key issues are on the agenda for this year's Session. The implementation of the concept for a WMO Integrated Global Observing System (WIGOS) should offer unprecedented opportunity to include all WMO and WMO-sponsored networks and sub-systems in the integration process, thus allowing WMO to more effectively, respond to new challenges and evolving user requirements. At the same time, WMO respects the ownership of partner organization regarding appropriate observing components being addressed in the WIGOS framework as well as their data policies. Not only is the SOT contributing to WIGOS, but the overall WIGOS framework will also benefit from the SOT experience with regard to integrating different types of observing fleets addressing the requirements for a wide range of applications.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The third JCOMM Session will be held in Marrakech, Morocco from 4 to 11 November of this year. A number of the results from the SOT activities will be presented to the Session. In this respect, I am pleased to note that your meeting will address key issues relevant to the preparation of the JCOMM session, including a review of the JCOMM Observations Programme Area work

plan for the next intersessional period, in alignment with the Strategic Planning processes of both parent organizations.

Having said that I would like to thank you for being here and to thank you in advance for your contribution that will help WMO and IOC provide even a better service to their Member / Member States in order to face the challenges of improving weather forecasting, marine services, climate change detection, and disaster risk reduction.

I am pleased to officially open the meeting, and wish you a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Geneva.
