**WMO OPAG-PWSD Task Team on Public Private Partnerships**

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**On ‘The Authoritative Voice’**

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**INTRODUCTION**

This paper presents the initial discussions of this small, informal TT around possible ‘rules of engagement’ for public-private engagement in Public Weather Services. The discussions aim for consistency with WMO Service Delivery Strategy and the WMO aspiration that ‘no country is left behind’ in capability to warn its citizens, plan for, and manage the risks severe weather (in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction). There is also consideration of the vital role of the private sector in the Global Weather Enterprise, in which socio-economic benefit of weather and climate information may be maximized through public-private engagement. Perhaps most fundamentally it asserts that responsibility for protecting citizens lies with a nation’s government, which will usually delegate this responsibility – ‘the Authoritative Voice’ - to its NMHS. This privilege should be earned, however, through demonstration of an effective, credible warnings capability designed around user needs in line with Service Delivery Principles.

**Being ‘the Authoritative Voice’ for Weather, Hydrometeorology and Climate**

An NHMS can attain Authoritative Voice (AV) status through two means:

1. By being the official authoritative voice, as nominated by the NHMS country’s Government
2. Be recognized as the authoritative voice by the NHMS users/customers/partners.

However if an NMHS fails to deliver its service in line with customer expectations, then the ‘official authority’ designated by government will not necessarily enable the NHMS to retain its authoritative status. Members of the public will look elsewhere and the NMHS will no longer be recognized as the authoritative voice, even if officially it remains the AV. Thus *perception* of authority is as important as government-mandated authority.

**To be the ‘authoritative voice for weather, hydrometeorology and/or climate’, an NWS or NHMS will:**

1. be the principal source (determined by user feedback) of all meteorological, hydrological and/or climatological warnings, advice, guidance and/or science
2. be endorsed by government to provide services which enables its government and citizens to minimize weather-related risks and impacts thereby protecting property, infrastructure and economy
3. be the provider of credible advice, through proven and relevant scientific expertise, effective communication channels, and understanding of user needs
4. be subject to quality standards, such as suggested by WMO Service Delivery Strategy
5. have the reach and credibility required to influence decisions and trigger actions to minimize risks
6. work with or in partnership with other organizations to ensure the authoritative voice for weather/hydrometeorology/climate is represented alongside other expert fields
7. play a pivotal role in managing and coordinating the Authoritative Voice around weather, but also sometimes for climate and some other natural hazards

**The role of government in setting the authoritative voice**

1. As the principal funder for NMHSs, government should have the right to define how its Authoritative Voice is employed and delegated, and ensuring that it works in the national benefit.
2. A government should be proactive in ensuring its Authoritative Voice is used effectively, but only when necessary, based on possible impacts. Hence the concept is intimately related to strategy for Impact Based Forecasting and Warning.

**Challenges to the Authoritative Voice**

* Other weather providers may have a greater market share than the NMS/NMHS
* Other weather providers may be perceived to be more accurate and therefore users consider them to be the authoritative voice.
* Even if use and management of the Authoritative Voice lies primarily with a single organization, such as the NMHS, its use is a privilege which carries responsibility and has to be earned through demonstration of meeting the required standards.
* Alongside the NMHS, other authoritative organizations may need to be worked with, to ensure the core mission of the NMHS is delivered. These organizations may include the following: civil protection and emergency services, other natural hazards organizations, media, research institutes and the private sector. What matters is that, between them, these organizations can work together to represent a common, agreed view which reaches the required standards.

**ET/SPII and ET/IMPACT are asked to support these definitions and pass to CBS MG and beyond for use in the wider discussions around public-private engagement. Subsequent discussions should consider the following:**

1. Should the concept of authoritative voice be actively encouraged across NMHSs?
2. Should a government be able to elect **not** to have an AV?
3. Should there be a minimum standard for an NMHS to act as the the AV? E.g. an NHMS which has poor forecast accuracy, no reach and no influence when others might be able to do much better?
4. If so, who should define those standards? E.g. WMO or users of the NHMS services. Is, for example, WMO Service Delivery Strategy, sufficient to help define these standards in each nation.
5. Should the government recognize the importance of the AV being the NHMS, rather than another provider, and therefore support it accordingly? Or should it be allowed to be employed by any organization(s) recognized by the government who can meet the required quality standards?