Dear representatives of 20 RA VI National Meteorological and Hydrological Services

Reputable trainers and logistic supporters,

Dear colleagues from the WMO Secretariat,

Dear friends,

It is. indeed, my great honour and pleasure to express my warm welcome to all of you on the behalf of the Croatian National Meteorological and Hydrological Service and, of course, on the behalf of the Regional Association VI (Europe). It is also my privilege to welcome you on the behalf of the Croatian Government, and - in particular - Minister of Environment and Nature Protection, Mr. Mihael Zmajlović. Unluckily, he has no possibility to address to us at this event due to his last minute obligations.

I am very pleased to recall that this workshop has an excellent pedigree founded on the WMO Regional Workshop on Social and Economic Benefits of Meteorological and Related Services to Society that also took place here in Zagreb in February 2007. At that time, the workshop participated 22 RA VI Members, some of colleagues are here, who were also organized in a working groups and engaged to achieve the two main objectives:

1. to provide a forum for the promotion of interdisciplinary activities related to the evaluation component of the benefits of weather, climate and water services, involving different national stakeholders, and

2. to act as the RA VI contribution for the Madrid 2007 Conference that has become a key milestone in the development of Socioeconomic Benefit studies.

Indeed, the Madrid 2007 Conference Statement along with the Madrid Action Plan set out a comprehensive strategy for enhancement of the applications and benefits of NMHSs around the world - including a specific call for the development and application of improved methodologies for evaluating the benefits from the operation of NMHSs.

It is my pleasure to bring to our attention that recent 17th WMO Congress, under the Agenda Item 9: Future Challenges and Opportunities, decided to support holding a follow-up conference to the Madrid 2007 Conference, so called Madrid+10, which could be held in 2017, hopefully again in Madrid. I am delighted to recognize that our current Workshop, here in Zagreb, acts again as a contribution of RA VI to the Madrid+10 Conference.

I am very excited to identify this Workshop as our sharing opportunity in utilizing state of the art potentials of economic assessment of NMHSs and communication of social and economic benefits to governments and other decision makers. This is a unique opportunity to deal with the most important RA VI priority area recognized at the 16th session of RA VI in Helsinki in 2013. Therefore the Workshop is of vital importance for NMHSs in coping with issues related to the economic conditions affecting the NMHSs through constant pressure for budget and staff cuts, insufficient qualified personnel, difficulties to maintain and sustain basic functions, due to lack of resources.

I am deeply convinced that with our work together we could trigger synergetic impulse in strengthening performance our NMHSs and securing their mission to deal with the key social and economic drivers along with the demands for user-oriented services to meet the evolving needs of governments, partners and other decision-makers to achieve sustainable development, mitigate the impacts of natural hazards, and maximize the benefits from weather- and climate-related opportunities. With no doubt, this approach is essential to give governments and partners good reason and motivation to invest more in NMHSs.

In this process the WMO is supporting members to act and provide their mission through the WMO Secretariat, WMO scientific and technical programmes, Technical Commissions and Regional Associations. Recent WMO Congress recognized that the rapidly growing demand for meteorological and hydrological services around the world presents major scientific, operational and public policy challenges for the NMHSs that are maintaining and operating most of the global infrastructure on which the quality and value of these services ultimately depends. Thus 17th Congress decided that Public Weather Services Programme shall be indicated in the WMO Strategic and Operating Plan (2016-2019), as well as Regional Association Operating plan, and urged Members to participate in PWS capacity development activities, including assessment of the social and economic benefits provided to users and demonstration of such benefits to governments with the aim of securing due support for NMHSs.

I am delighted to note that the Congress recognized the book under the title: “Valuing Weather and Climate: Economic Assessment of Meteorological and Hydrological Services” as authoritative publication on methodologies for assessing the socioeconomic benefits of meteorological and hydrological services and assisting NMHSs in communicating these benefits to their governments and other decision-makers. The book is recently published by WMO in a joint effort with the World Bank and the Climate Services Partnership, and its content is expected to be familiar to all participant of this Workshop. As a matter of fact our RA VI Workshop in Zagreb is the first of the series regional seminars and training workshops for NMHSs, in all regional associations, that would help accelerate the use of the book and facilitate a new generation of SEB studies and pilot projects for testing the methodologies as requested by the Congress.

Indeed, we should be proud for this opportunity and I would like to express my compliments to all of you on this important engagement. For sure, all these would not be possible without a strong commitment and guidance of the WMO Secretariat, our world class trainers and the financial support provided by the USAID, the World Bank and the WMO. They all, have taken the toughest burden to work out and to manage successful completion of the Workshop. On top of that, the whole Workshop would be useless without high motivation and invested efforts of all of you sitting here. I thank you for that.

Dear colleagues, before starting our working programme, I would also like to take opportunity to let you know about the working arrangements. Please have in mind that we will inform you in more detail about working arrangements for each day. Today, during the coffee brake we have organized a group photo, and in the evening at 7 p.m. we will be happy to see you at the ice breaker event at the hotel Dubrovnik. Tomorrow afternoon we would like to invite you on site-seeing of Zagreb what will start at the reception of the hotel Dubrovnik and end at the Technical museum, where we will witness Tesla experiments and finally will end the day with the Workshop dinner. We also foresee a visit of the Kraš Food Industry production of chocolate and other sweet surprises most probably during the coffee break on Thursday, 2nd July. I would like to thank the Kraš Food Industry Board for this kind grant as well for the excellent long time partnership in organising numerous events, including several WMO events, in the environment with the reputable working standards. Please note that coffee brake area is next to the Workshop room and the toilets are in reachable distance.

Dear colleagues, dear friends, it is my pleasure to share with you the spirit of our collaboration and partnership under the umbrella of WMO. I am assuring you to rely with high confidence on the host organizers, logistic supporters, Workshop trainers and facilitators and wish to all of us fruitful five working days with the full success of the Workshop. We will do our best to keep good weather and leave you pleasant remembrance Zagreb and Croatia.

Thank you