

Public Weather Services Workshop and Training Seminar Pretoria, October 1997

Workshop on Public Weather Services and Tropical Cyclones

Two training events on PWS were organized for participants from Africa at the kind invitation of the Republic of South Africa. The first was a workshop held jointly with the Tropical Cyclone Programme as part of the RA I Workshop on Tropical Cyclones (Pretoria, 8-15 October 1997) for 20 participants from the RA I Tropical Cyclone Committee region. As such, special attention was given to the role of Public Weather Services in support of disaster preparedness and awareness.

The Workshop emphasized the importance of proper coordination with disaster management authorities and the partnership with the media in providing timely and accurate information to the public and other users including the weather-sensitive economic sectors. Techniques and methods for effective delivery, dissemination and presentation of PWS were also presented to the participants. Delegates from South Africa and Mauritius made detailed presentations on the arrangements for delivery of PWS in their respective countries. The Workshop made a number of recommendations for provision of more effective PWS and requested that future training workshops on PWS be held in the region.

Training Seminar on the Use of GDPS and WAFS Products and Presentation of Forecasts to the Public

The second event was a Regional Training Seminar on use of GDPS and WAFS Products and Presentation of Forecasts to the Public which was organized jointly between the DPS and PWS Programmes of the World Weather Watch Department. The seminar which took place from 20-25 October in Pretoria for participants from English-speaking countries in Region I, aimed at updating the knowledge of forecasters to ensure the optimal use of Numerical Weather Prediction products issued by GDPS centres and their presentation to the public.

The second part of the seminar dealt specifically with effective presentation of the forecasts and warnings to the public with the objective of improving public weather services of the participating Members. The purpose and scope of the WMO PWS Programme and its objectives were outlined. Applications of forecasts to weather-sensitive economic sectors and use of probabilistic forecasts for those sectors were explained using examples. The need for improved coordination with disaster management community and coordination of exchange of information on hazardous weather was explained in the context of the support that PWS can provide in mitigating meteorological disasters.

Interface with the public in presentation of forecasts, including tropical cyclone warnings, aimed at bridging the gap between technician-scientists and the public got special attention. In addition to lectures on the topic of effective

presentation of public forecasts and warnings, practical sessions allowed the participants to exercise preparation and presentation of weather forecasts through the press, radio and TV, based on case studies of the first part of the seminar, using NWP techniques. The seminar was judged a success by the participants who actively took part in the discussions and practical problem solving sessions.