

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

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INFORMAL PLANNING MEETING  
VOLUNTARY COOPERATION PROGRAMME

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## **VOLUNTEERISM IN THE WMO COMMUNITY**

### **EXPLORATORY CONCEPT NOTE**

**January 2011**

*(Submitted by the Secretary-General)*

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#### Summary and Purpose of Document

This document provides information on Volunteerism in the WMO community as one possible solution to providing additional support to NMHSs in developing countries in particular in emergency situations

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#### ACTION PROPOSED

The meeting is invited to consider the information on this exploratory concept note on Volunteerism, aimed at progressing the plan towards utilizing Volunteer Programmes of UN Volunteers and Overseas Aid Agencies to support NMHS development projects in LDCs and SIDs during this International Year of Volunteering (IYV 11).

# **VOLUNTEERISM IN THE WMO COMMUNITY**

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **RATIONALE**

The role of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) has been changing steadily from one of basic hydromet data provision to an increased involvement in decision support – especially with regards to issues surrounding food security, disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation. In the 1990s alone, impacts of natural disasters of a meteorological or hydrologic origin cost more than US\$500 billion globally and hundreds of thousands of lives were lost. Consequently, with this expanded mandate, the roles of the NMHSs are changing significantly with additional needs, requirements, social demands, and responsibilities being levied on these services by their government agencies, the public, and the commercial sector. The NMHSs need to be able to collect more and better hydrometeorological data; improve the accuracy, timeliness and dissemination of warnings; improve early warning capabilities; undertake risk assessments and generally provide more and improved weather and climate information products and services. There is also a continuing need to improve weather, climate and hydrologic forecasting capabilities (as an important component to early warning) and build capacity at all levels.

Most NMHSs realize the need to expand or improve their services to their users but many do not have the resources or capacity to do so. In addition, some NMHSs struggle to even adequately maintain existing operations due to budgetary restrictions and human resource constraints.

One possible solution to providing additional support to NMHSs in developing countries is to provide expertise and technical support through volunteerism. Volunteerism is not a new concept within the WMO system. The work of “volunteers” within the various working groups of Constituent Bodies and the expert services provided through the Voluntary Contributions programme (VCP) is well recognised and appreciated by the WMO Community as a whole. However, it could be possible to further capitalise on this culture of volunteerism within WMO and provide direct assistance to individual countries by developing a more formalized approach for providing support through a cadre of volunteer meteorologists and hydrologists with appropriate skills. Additionally such volunteers could further support development projects and Voluntary Cooperation Programme.

This issue has been discussed at both the Commission for Basic Systems and Executive Council in 2010. This paper is aimed at progressing the discussion towards putting forward a specific recommendation to Congress regarding the establishment of the WMO Volunteer Programme and the public launch of this programme during International Year of Volunteering (IYV 11) in association with UN Volunteers.

### **WMO VOLUNTEERS**

WMO would like to utilise skilled volunteers to support initiatives in developing and least developed countries, as well as offer timely support in emergency situations. These volunteers will work with the National HydroMeteorological Services (NMHSs) to share knowledge, develop sustainable skills and build institutional capacity. The volunteer assignment can vary from a few weeks to two years depending on the needs of the host organization and the availability of the volunteers.

WMO Volunteers will contribute to enhance the technical cooperation between National HydroMeteorological Services and Disaster Management Agencies and related institutions in WMO Member countries and support development projects in the of relevance to the Hydromet sector. Actions will be closely coupled with activities of other UN organizations, international, regional and national agencies and programmes that contribute to modernization of NMHSs to improve delivery of weather and climate services that support a wide range of economic sectors (agriculture, transport, health, energy, etc), and humanitarian and civil protection processes.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. Engage WMO Members, their NMHS and related organisations and in particular their current and retired staff in meaningful volunteerism.
2. Work in close collaboration with United Nations Volunteers (UN-V).
3. Engage volunteer programmes of Overseas Development Agencies for financial support to WVI such as UK VSO, AUSAID, JICA, Peace Corp etc.
4. Improve all aspects of weather, water and climate services in developing countries.
5. Enhance information service delivery to specific sectors and in particular including Public Safety, Food, Water and Health Security, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.

## **SCOPE OF VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT**

The WMO Volunteers could be on four key types of engagement

1. In-country Post Event support to humanitarian and disaster relief activities (specifications; procurement; advice on new technology) following hydrometeorological disasters;
2. In-country short-term engagement for capacity development in NMHS in developing and least developed countries: on the job training, transfer of skills and expertise, training workshops, expert advice to development projects (proposal development, infrastructure);
3. In-country long-term placement (6 months to 2 years) to support development of institutional and human capacity of NMS and expansion of service and product delivery to key sectors;
4. Online volunteering: donating your time and skills (Advice by phone or e-mail, distance training courses, helping with writing and updating a website, etc).

Focus on the following professional areas:

- Institutional Development and Management and Political Advocacy.
- Sectoral Needs Analysis
- Weather Forecasting and Climate Prediction
- Hydrometeorological Equipment maintenance and repair
- Numerical modeling
- Met/hydro data collection and processing
- Communications/web page development
- HydroMet Early Warning Systems
- Warning product development and transmission for hydrometeorological hazards
- Radio/television broadcast
- Information and Communication Technologies

## **VOLUNTEER NETWORK & PROFILE**

Recognising the specialised and technical nature of the focus areas of the programme, the potential pool of qualified volunteers is by nature slightly restricted. Below is the list of potential volunteer profiles and organisations where they can be found:

- Retirees of the WMO Secretariat;
- Retirees and current employees<sup>1</sup> of NMHS in developed countries;
- Retirees and current employees of Regional Forecasting Centres;
- Meteorological Societies in developed countries;
- Candidates with related skills (IT, Web Page Design and Operation, Project Management).

Potential volunteers from the above organisation must also meet the following criteria:

- A university degree or higher technical diploma or equivalent work experience;
- A minimum of five years working experience in relevant field (or focus area);
- Good working knowledge in at least one of three UN working languages (English, French, Spanish). Knowledge of an additional UN language or specific local languages is considered an advantage.

In addition, volunteers must be able to demonstrate:

- A strong commitment to the values and principles of volunteerism;
- The ability to work in a multi-cultural environment;
- The ability to adjust to difficult working and living conditions;
- Strong interpersonal and organisational skills;
- Prior volunteering and / or working experience in a developing country is an asset.

## **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

The requesting country defines the need for a volunteer (specific project, training, etc) and submits a request to WMO. After the request is approved and depending on the nature of the needs, WMO will identify a suitable volunteer through the established networks. Once the volunteer has been deployed, WMO will monitor the project in various stages to ensure the success of the assignment.

## **PROPOSED PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

The proposal is to initially develop a program within the Resource Mobilization Office that would be based on MOU with the various agencies who support Volunteer placements UNV, UK VSO, AUSAID, JICA, Peace Corp and others.

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<sup>1</sup> Current employees can be seconded. A special agreement will need to be in place with the volunteer's organisation.