WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

INTER-PROGRAMME TASK TEAM ON
FUTURE WMO INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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Executive Council Decisions Regarding The Future WMO Information System

(Submitted by the Secretariat)

The following document provides a summary of the deliberations of Executive Council concerning the Future WMO Information System.

Future WMO Information System

Executive Council (EC) considered the progress that has been made in developing a strategy for the Future WMO Information System and was pleased with the progress that has been made to date. In particular, Council noted that the interprogramme task team on FWIS had clarified and expanded the description of the vision for the Future WMO Information System. The Council agreed that a window of opportunity existed now to arrive at an agreed standard for the Future WMO Information System and that any delay in necessary coordination could result in multiple incompatible systems.

EC was pleased to note that the team had dedicated considerable discussion to the requirements and capabilities of less developed versus more developed NMHSs. The team had noted that NMHSs span a range of capabilities and developed a proposed path to improved capabilities that NMHSs could follow as WMO migrates to its future information system. The vision states that small and developing NMHSs with few resources should be able to deliver and receive all required information through inexpensive PC-based systems relying upon satellite broadcast and dial-up connections to the Internet. The Council noted that although e-mail does not guarantee timely delivery of data, the team felt it is an inexpensive solution for those NMHSs that cannot afford a full implementation of the GTS and should be recognized as an extremely useful mechanism for these NMHSs to provide data to their RTH for injection into the GTS and the Future WMO Information System.

The Council noted that the interprogramme team had reviewed current and emerging technologies and that the rapid proliferation of the Internet and its associated technology, low cost satellite communication systems and Extensible Mark-up Language (XML) could have an impact on development of the Future WMO Information System. The team had also agreed that WMO could benefit from the experience of the open-source software community in the collaborative development of software and recommended increased efforts to involve the university and research communities in collaborative software development with NMHSs.

The Council noted that the task team had agreed that development should continue through development of a catalogue of products, proof of concepts through pilot tests and upgrade of the GTS. The development of the catalogue should be the highest priority since it is essential for the implementation and maintenance of a modernized WMO communications system. The Council was pleased to note that a draft WMO directory-level metadata standard had been developed and was being circulated for review.

The Council, recognizing that the proposed system would likely require changes in operational and institutional arrangements, agreed that there were several technical and policy level issues that needed further consideration. It requested CBS to further refine the concept and to develop more detailed technical information on specific requirements for FWIS and how the proposed system would function and address these requirements. It also asked CBS to specify how the existing WWW system and centres would evolve into the new structure, ensuring a smooth transition with no interruption in essential services. The Council requested CBS to provide the outcome of this work to the EC Advisory Group on the Role and Operation of NMHSs.

The Council also recalled the policy issues raised at its fifty-third session, namely:

- The possible impact of the introduction of a future WMO information system on Members' responsibilities and resources;
- The extent to which the functions and responsibilities of existing infrastructure and centres should be used or revised.

It requested that a study be undertaken to explore these and other policy-level implications of the Future WMO Information System, based on the outcome of CBS at its extraordinary session in 2002. The Council requested the EC Advisory Group on the Role and Operation of NMHSs to consider the results of the study, analyze the relevant policy issues and report its findings to fourteenth Congress.