

**Statement by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Regional Office for
Asia and the South-West Pacific (RAP)**

8th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

23 March 2021

Mr. Ben Churchill, Head of the WMO RAP

Agenda Item 2: Regional perspectives on accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development

Your Excellency, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP,

Honorable Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Greetings on behalf of the World Meteorological Organization's Secretary-General Prof. Petteri Taalas. I am here today in my capacity as Head of WMO's Regional Office for Asia and the South-West Pacific based in Singapore. It is incidental but fortuitous that the APFSD opens today, as it coincides with World Meteorological Day – a day marking the establishment of WMO in 1950 and an opportunity to highlight the importance of weather, climate and water services in the safety and wellbeing of citizens across the globe.

I think we can all agree that 2020 was a challenging year indeed – in many ways and on many levels. On top of the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the Asia-Pacific region was particularly hard hit by successive weather and climate-related hazards, including tropical cyclones, floods, droughts, sand and dust storms and heatwaves. Twenty three named tropical cyclones of tropical storm intensity or above formed over the western North Pacific and the South China Sea. The WMO's annual state of the Global Climate Report also showed that 2020 was one of the three warmest years on record, despite La Niña cooling in the Pacific Ocean.

Although countries across the region have committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 — to ensure that 'no one is left behind' – this will remain a challenge if their populations remain susceptible to disasters that threaten to hinder, or indeed set back, progress. Building more resilient societies to weather and climate extremes remains an imperative and a necessary condition to progress towards sustainable development.

The role of national meteorological and hydrological services (NMHSs) and other institutions constituting the WMO community is therefore critical. Their weather forecasts and warnings

enable countries to anticipate and mitigate the damage from extreme events. Their climate predictions and services guide public-sector policies for promoting sustainable development and private-sector decisions that enhance economic progress. Hydrological information also makes it possible to secure water supplies and manage floods and droughts. To put it another way, services provided by the WMO community enable decision-makers to minimize risks and exploit opportunities in agriculture, public health, water resources, energy production and other important sectors.

In 2021, WMO is driving several important initiatives in collaboration with our partners, to better support our Members in these efforts:

- (1) We are putting in place the **Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF)**, which will support the generation and exchange of basic surface-weather and climate observations for improved weather forecasts, climate information and early warnings globally, regionally, nationally and locally.
- (2) Secondly, we are creating a **Climate and Water Coalition** for accelerating action on SDG 6 to strengthen water and climate action at the country-level. This Coalition targets investment in water data infrastructure and services to reduce impacts from water-related disasters.
- (3) Third, WMO will continue its support for the **Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative**, which enhances the development of early warning system in LDCs and SIDS to minimize loss of life and economic impacts from climate and weather-related events.

These capacity-development initiatives complement existing WMO technical activities aimed at enhancing regional capabilities in weather and climate-related areas. For instance, WMO collaborates with regional partners in organizing Regional Climate Outlook Fora in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, which produce user-relevant climate outlook products to reduce climate-related risks. WMO believes these efforts will better support countries in their transition to impact-based services. This will see a fundamental shift from focusing on “what the weather will *be*” to “what the weather will *do*”. The aim is to ensure that end-users of these services are more prepared for, and less vulnerable to, hydro-meteorological hazards than ever before.

WMO looks forward to continued cooperation with its Members and Partners in advancing progress on the SDGs. We hope to achieve WMO’s vision that by 2030, we will see a world where all nations, especially the most vulnerable, are more resilient to the socio-economic consequences of extreme weather, climate, water and other environmental events; and underpin their sustainable development through the best possible services, whether over land, at sea or in the air.

With that, I look forward to fruitful and action-focused discussions during the forum, and I wish you all a happy and safe World Meteorological Day. Thank you.