

**STATEMENT INTRODUCING THE “EL NIÑO 2015 CONFERENCE:  
SHARED EXPERIENCES - 20 YEARS OF CLIMATE SERVICES AND FRAMING NEXT  
STEPS IN THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE”**

**November 17 – 18, 2015**

**by**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

It is a great pleasure to open El Niño 2015 Conference on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Research Institute for Climate and Society — a key institution that I would like to thank for making climate science and information available for the benefit of society, and for being such an important collaborator with WMO in many areas.

I would like to thank all the other partners of WMO and the co-sponsors that made this conference possible: NOAA and USAID, Columbia University and the Reinsurance Association of America. Thanks also to the other members of the organizing committee – the representatives from the Centro Internacional para la Investigación del Fenómeno de El Niño (CIIFEN), the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

I am confident that the Conference will share lessons learned from managing El Niño impacts, develop key messages about this event for policy makers, practitioners and the public, and identify directions for future work in climate services for El Niño. For this reason, participants include not only climate scientists but also experts engaged in translating climate information into action for societal benefit.

This meeting coincides with one of the strongest El Niño events since 1950. It is a timely opportunity to reflect on what has been learned since the last major event in 1997-98 and to identify additional needs for improving climate services going forward. In the intervening nearly two decades since the 1997-1998 event, an enormous effort has been made to improve El Niño modeling, develop enhanced seasonal climate predictions, and to establish systems for making

that information available in useable form.

WMO has contributed to this effort through its network of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, its support for National Climate Forums and National Climate Outlook Forums, its Regional Climate Centres and support for Regional Climate Outlook Forums, and its Global Producing Centres for Long-range Forecasts. The RCOFs, started in advance of the 1997-98 event, have become a global institution, with on-going forums covering most of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central America and the Caribbean, South America, and the Greater Mediterranean Region.

This El Niño will be an important test of the efficacy of those measures. Clearly the world is more informed about El Niño and its impacts than it was 20 years ago. Information about this event and measures that can be taken to improve related socio-economic outcomes are also considerably more accessible than previously.

The Conference is an opportunity to identify specific priority actions that can be taken to help society prepare and to develop shared recommendations on El Niño messaging for development and practitioner communities as well as the public. The Conference can also enrich the discussion about long-term needs for improving climate services, in which El Niño and seasonal climate forecasts play an important role.

A principal vehicle for this is the Global Framework for Climate Services, which many of you have contributed to conceiving and launching and some are now working to implement. The GFCS provides a structure for systematic delivery of climate information and therefore has the potential to benefit from and assimilate the findings from the Conference. Your ideas as to how the GFCS can support the delivery of information about El Niño, its climate effects, impacts, and guidance on managing them will be directly relevant to its future implementation.

I am confident that the wealth of knowledge and experience represented at the Conference will generate new ideas and directions that will assist in managing the impacts of this event and those in the future. With the UNFCCC COP21 only weeks away, I assure you that WMO will do everything possible to take the climate services agenda, including the results of this meeting, forward during the UNFCCC negotiations and thereafter.

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