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U.S. Official Calls for Integrated Global Climate Observing System

Calls for open sharing of data between nations

Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), has called for a fully implemented global satellite observing system for climate that will provide the tools needed to take "the pulse of the planet."

Lautenbacher, in a June 11 address to the Executive Council of the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva, said the president's budget proposal for fiscal year 2003 calls for \$18 million in new climate research funding for NOAA, including \$8 million to improve the global observing system.

Lautenbacher said the greatest challenge is to develop one integrated observation plan for the atmosphere, ocean and land that everyone can support. He said such a plan, for example, would coordinate the work of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) – international efforts to investigate global climate change processes.

"Full and open sharing of data between nations is an essential part of this effort – including making the data available within sufficient time to be of operational use," Lautenbacher said.

President Bush's Clear Skies and Global Climate Change Initiatives announced in February call for the United States to provide funding for high-priority areas of climate change science over the next five years. The United States will also provide resources to build climate observation systems in developing countries and encourage developed countries to match the U.S. commitment.

Following is the text of Lautenbacher's address as prepared for delivery:

**Statement by Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.),
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere,
Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
to the Executive Council of the World Meteorological Organization**

Geneva, June 11, 2002

(As prepared for delivery)

President Zillman, Secretary-General Obasi, Vice Presidents Beysson, Noorian, Salahu, Distinguished members of the WMO Executive Council, Honorable representatives of other international organizations, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure for me to be invited here today to address the opening of the 54th session of the WMO Executive Council.

As Administrator of NOAA, and from my previous positions as President of the Consortium of Oceanographic and Research and Education (CORE) and in the U.S. Navy, I am keenly aware of the international nature of the oceans and atmosphere. The analysis, understanding, and forecasting of the natural environment do not respect national boundaries. We recognize the importance of working collaboratively with partners from around the world to address these issues. The World Meteorological Organization is an essential partner in facilitating and coordinating international efforts in the environmental sciences.

At NOAA we have a long history of dedication to understanding the earth's coupled oceans and atmosphere. They are inextricably linked in our earth's ever-changing climate system. In addition to our own national observing system, NOAA supports many developing country in situ observing systems as well as provides extensive regional and global images and data from our geostationary and polar-orbiting satellites.

In February, President Bush came to NOAA to announce the Clear Skies and Global Climate Change Initiatives. He directed the Secretary of Commerce, working with other U.S. agencies, to review current investments in climate change research, to prepare a comprehensive plan for the future – including the setting of priorities, and to improve coordination among the federal agencies. The United States will also provide matching resources to build climate-observing systems in

developing countries, and encourage other developed nations to match our commitment.

The President's budget proposal for our next fiscal year includes \$18 million in new climate research funding for NOAA, out of a total of \$40 million across the federal agencies. An essential element – about \$8 million, half atmospheric and half oceanic – is for NOAA to improve the global observing system. This Presidential Initiative for better science, with improved observations as a first step, will provide the information necessary to formulate sound policy decisions.

I strongly believe that NOAA is the right agency to take a leadership role within the United States, but we know full well that we cannot do this alone. The global observation effort for climate is far too enormous for one organization, or even one country, to undertake alone. We must work together.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to develop one integrated observation plan for the atmosphere, ocean, and land which everyone can support. The Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), working with the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) Partners and others, have developed international consensus on overall needs. There is, however, much work still to be done.

This challenge lies in our ability to provide one coherent plan which integrates space and in-situ observations across those three elements. I think that the IGOS Partners, of which the WMO is a member, is one body trying to meet this challenge. We need one plan which all organizations can support; this plan would set priorities, so that we can work together to secure the necessary funds and proceed with implementation. International organizations, such as the WMO and IOC, are the logical places to help facilitate this process, and their new Joint Technical Commission on Oceanography and Marine Meteorology represents a giant step forward in our potential ability to integrate plans for implementation.

A fully implemented global observing system for climate will give us the tools we need to take "the pulse of the planet." And, the full and open sharing of data between nations is an essential part of this effort – including making the data available within sufficient time to be of operational use.

Satellite observations from NOAA and other environmental and meteorological satellites provide major contributions to global modeling and studies of climate. We are pleased the WMO Executive Council has formed the High-Level Consultative Group on Satellite Matters. NOAA, NASA, and most other space agencies are finding real benefit in the Group. We are pleased to recognize WMO's active participation in the Coordination Group on Meteorological Satellites and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, and we urge your endorsement of WMO's full commitment to the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) Partners, which NOAA is poised to co-chair this Fall.

Last month, the United States released a forecast of the coming El Niño event. The fact that we can make such forecasts is a tribute to international cooperation in improving our collective understanding of the ocean and its contribution to weather and climate. Our collective ability to make such forecasts is dependent on data from an array of moored buoys spanning the Tropical Pacific, combined with those collected by satellite.

These forecasts can have significant economic benefits; for example:

- Economists estimate that improved El Niño forecasts in the U.S. are worth nearly US\$300M annually
- Worldwide, a lower bound estimate of annual economic benefits of improved forecasts for agriculture is US\$450-500M per year.
- At least half of all commercial ocean transits today take advantage of weather-based vessel routing services, saving on the order of US\$100M per year

These potential savings from timely and accurate El Niño forecasts offer examples of the economic benefits which can be derived from better understanding of climate variability and climate change.

As you probably already know, GCOS is working on its Second Report on the Adequacy of the Global Observing System. It will produce an interim report for the 8th Conference of the Parties (COP) under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change this fall and a final report at COP-9 in December next year. This is an extremely important document for us because it will be reviewed and endorsed by Environmental and Foreign Affairs Ministers around the world.

I am pleased to announce that the U.S. is designating US\$600K for GCOS, so that it can work closely with experts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to ensure that observation needs from a climate change perspective are taken into account in the Second Adequacy Report.

In the near term, GCOS will convene a workshop in Boulder, Colorado this August to bring IPCC experts from both developed and developing countries into the process. Dr. Susan Solomon, the U.S. Co-Chair of Working Group I of the IPCC, has been asked by IPCC Chair Dr. Rajendra Pachauri to attend the workshop and help oversee the effort to examine the needs for the global observing system.

Additionally, NOAA is continuing to provide \$100K for the GCOS Office to help identify near-term needs for resources. These funds will be made available to GCOS with the goal to get a headstart on determining how best to address the current shortfalls in the global observing network.

I have been talking with my counterparts in Asia and during this trip to Europe, to determine what steps we can take to achieve this objective. The WMO, along with the IOC, represent the focus for improving these global observing systems by leading the establishment of a fully integrated and comprehensive global system. I urge you all to join us in this critically important undertaking.

We are excited about the prospects to be able to make a significant impact on improving the global observing system, an impact which many of us have been dreaming about for years. On the part of the United States, we are prepared to begin immediately. Working through the GCOS Office and its many advisory bodies and through the WMO Secretariat, over the next several months, we expect to develop proposals which can identify necessary contributions and activities for everyone. Working together, I am sure we will be successful.

Thank you very much for your time. I hope to be able to meet with many of you individually today during my short stay in Geneva.

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