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NOAA HEAD TO PROMOTE CLIMATE SCIENCE, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DURING EUROPEAN TOUR

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ([NOAA](#)) today announced that Vice Admiral [Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr.](#) USN (ret.), undersecretary of Commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator will meet with senior leaders from European and international ocean, climate and space organizations during a week long trip (June 7-13) to Germany, France, Switzerland and England. The Vice Admiral's main focus will be promoting international cooperation and support for expanding the present global climate observation system.

"Global climate change is a pressing international issue," Lautenbacher said. "An expanded global observation system will enable us to collectively assess global climate conditions and provide an important baseline for critical climate policy decisions. These talks will play an important role in securing international consensus and support for building an observing network to meet these goals."

Lautenbacher's European trip will first take him to Darmstadt, Germany on June 7 where he will visit EUMETSAT, the European Meteorological Satellite Organization that establishes and maintains operational meteorological satellites for 17 European States and four cooperating states. Lautenbacher will tour the facility and meet with EUMETSAT Director-General Dr. Tillmann Mohr to discuss continued collaboration and cooperation with NOAA's environmental space operations and global climate monitoring. EUMETSAT is responsible for the launch and operation of meteorological satellites that contribute to the operational monitoring of climate and the detection of global climate changes.

In Paris, Lautenbacher will meet with heads of the European Space Agency (ESA) and the French Space Agency (CNES). He also will give remarks to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), an international body comprised of 129 nations including the United States, which serves as a coordinating mechanism for ocean science and service. In addition, Lautenbacher will meet with other senior French officials responsible for ocean science and climate observations.

During his visit to Geneva, Lautenbacher will address the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Executive Council a U.N. organization with 185 member states including the United States. Within the United Nations, it serves as the authoritative scientific voice on the state and behavior of the earth's atmosphere and climate. Lautenbacher will meet with WMO Secretary-General Obasi and heads of Meteorological Services from other nations.

The trip will conclude with a stop in England to meet with ocean and climate officials and tour facilities. The trip will include a visit to The European Center for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), an international organization supported by 22 European States that provides medium-range weather forecasts for its member states as well as scientific support and analysis. He will also meet with British environmental and defense officials.

The global climate observing system is currently a loose configuration of ocean-based data buoys and space-based environmental satellites that monitor the atmosphere and collect climate prediction data. The existing system has predicted such climate events as El Niño and the Indian Ocean Dipole and will allow for greater understanding of the Pacific Decade Oscillation and the North Atlantic Oscillation.

A more comprehensive observation network will improve basic understanding of climate change and generate operational forecasts that will allow the world's nations to set science-based policies that will ensure their future health, safety and economic stability.

- Admiral Lautenbacher has stressed that this is an economic as well as an environmental issue.
- Weather and climate-sensitive industries, both directly and indirectly, account for about 25

percent of U.S. GDP or \$2.7 trillion.

- Economists estimate that improved [El Niño](#) forecasts in the U.S. are worth nearly \$300 million annually and \$450-550 million per year worldwide.
- Losses in U.S. agricultural output from El Niño events alone range from \$1.5 to over \$6 billion, impacting international pricing and supplies.
- In the U.S., the 1997-98 El Niño had economic impacts of \$25 billion.

"Climate cannot be effectively investigated on a piecemeal basis," Lautenbacher said. "With the support of our international partners, we will be able for the first time in history to take the pulse of Mother Earth and build the detailed science base necessary to develop sound and cost effective public policy on climate change."

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.