

The Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS)

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Accurate and user-friendly climate services are vital for empowering nations, vulnerable communities and socio-economic endeavors to minimize the impacts of climate variability and climate change and optimize any opportunities.

Owing to improved scientific understanding of the planet's climate system over the past three decades increasingly credible and actionable weekly, monthly and seasonal forecasts are being offered today. However, while a few countries have already launched effective climate services, the majority of the world's governments, communities and business sectors, particularly in 70 of the most vulnerable and least-developed countries, do not yet have access to usable and scientifically credible climate information and forecasts.

Recognizing the demand for and benefits of climate services, Heads of State and Government, Ministers, and senior officials from over 150 countries and 70 organizations attended the 2009 World Climate Conference – 3, where they established the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). The GFCS seeks to identify user needs, bring the providers and users of climate services together, develop capacity for using climate services, and build operational climate services that can assist decision makers to reduce vulnerability and adapt to climate impacts in the initial priority areas of agriculture and food security, water, health and disaster risk reduction.

The GFCS is a global partnership of governments and United Nations and international agencies that produce and use climate information and services. The World Meteorological Organization is leading the initiative in collaboration with UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Development Programme, and others. These international partners are pooling their expertise and resources in order to design and produce knowledge, information and services that support effective decision-making. By combining their diverse but mutually supportive mandates and skills, the GFCS partners are playing a vital role in catalyzing international cooperation and assisting the countries to develop capacities through high-profile projects.

The GFCS has a three prong implementation approach with global, regional and national focus. The global level provides climate prediction products and maintains standards, while the regional focus is on promoting capacity development beyond single nations and the national level focuses on tailoring information products to meet user demands in support of climate-smart solutions.

To address the entire value chain for the effective production and application of climate services, five main components or pillars are to be implemented:

- The User Interface Platform — to provide ways for climate service users and providers to interact to identify needs and capacities and improve the effectiveness of the Framework and its climate services;

- The Climate Services Information System — to produce and distribute climate data, products and information according to the needs of users and to agreed standards;
- Observations and Monitoring – to generate the necessary data for climate services according to agreed standards;
- Research, Modelling and Prediction — to harness science capabilities and results and develop appropriate tools to meet the needs of climate services;
- Capacity Building — to support the systematic development of the institutions, infrastructure and human resources needed for effective climate services.

This paper will provides details of GFCS implementation and relevant activities underway aimed at enabling effective climate services.