

**CEO Introductory Remarks during the  
11<sup>th</sup> EUMETSAT Users Forum in Africa  
Kopanong Conference Centre, Benoni, South Africa  
8<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

Programme Director

Honourable African Union Commissioner, Ms. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime

Honourable Ambassador of the European Union to South Africa, Mr. Roeland Van de Geer

Heads of Regional Economic Communities in Africa

Deputy Secretary General of the WMO

Director General of EUMETSAT, Mr. Alain Ratier

Heads of International Organizations and our Partners

Deputy Director General of the Department of Environmental Affairs, Ms. Judy Beaumont

SAWS Board Members

RA1 Vice President, Dr. Amos Makarau

Directors of Met Services

Distinguished Delegates

Invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to welcome you once more to this 11<sup>th</sup> Users Forum in Africa. This session was preceded this morning in the Opening Ceremony by excellent high level addresses. These have helped to set the broader context and captured the essence of making contributions to socio-economic development on our continent against the background of climate change and variability.

The EUMETSAT Users Fora in Africa have been held 10 times already since 1995 where the Forum was held in Niamey, Niger. The Forum meetings are held every two years to evaluate past progress and develop new programmes that take the emerging African Users needs into consideration. Through these years we have seen the expanding use of satellite data throughout the continent, particularly by national weather services to improve weather forecasting, climate monitoring and some socio-economic applications.

Programme Director,

There is no doubt that the use of the EUMETSAT satellite data has improved the services provided by national meteorological services. The services on the other hand have assisted with safeguarding of lives and property. It is today hard to imagine how effective the delivery of weather services would be without satellite information, especially in light of the alarmingly poor observations and meteorological equipment over our continent.

The advent of climate change with an evident increase in the frequency and intensity of severe weather, presents a new dimension. The climate change projections for the continent reveal a gloomy picture. In fact it reminds me of the difficult and sad moments in the popular Charles Dickens novel, A Tale of Two Cities such as:

“It was the worst of times”;

“It was the age of foolishness”,

“It was the epoch of incredulity”,

“It was the season of darkness”,

“It was the winter of despair”

We are in a fortunate position however as the scientific community. We know what the likely future scenario looks like. We have or can build the capacity and skills to exploit our knowledge of future weather and climate scenarios to benefit our communities and decision-making. This is what I view as a key potential outcome of this Forum and in our efforts to societal resilience to climate change. This 11<sup>th</sup> EUMETSAT Forum in Africa has a particular focus on the implementation of the Global Framework for Climate Services. It calls on each and everyone of us to think in a different and new way, with the perspective of the public and user community and with greater innovation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The GFCS has identified 4 initial and key priority areas which are: Disaster Risk Reduction, Health, Water Resources Management and Agriculture & Food Security. These are key socio-economic sectors with specialist knowledge which does not reside with meteorologists. Any improvement with climate applications to these sectors will require an integrated approach and cooperation with the specialists in these areas. This is also the approach we are taking in South Africa as we develop our National Framework for Climate Services. We need programmes and resources to work in an inter-disciplinary manner to develop superior products and services that respond to the user’s needs. We need to think differently about our training programmes in order to emerge with contemporary scientists who are familiar with other relevant disciplines and can work in an interdisciplinary framework. This is a challenge which our Regional Training Centres, Universities etc. will need to grapple with going forward.

Programme Director,

The forecasting capability in the national meteorological and hydrological services (NMHSs) relies increasingly on numerical weather prediction. We know that early warnings systems are becoming more critical with the advent of climate change. This means that we will need to put an effort to numerical weather prediction and particularly in improving data inputs. We cannot expect model outputs to improve if we do not improve the data inputs or observations. This calls for investment in meteorological infrastructure (observations equipment), data management and processing. The African Ministers Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET) also emphasizes the need for governments to invest in their meteorological infrastructure in order to improve on the service delivery. This data is still of great importance for verification and in addition to the satellite data. I am emphasizing this to dispel the myth that satellite observations can replace ground data. Let me also hasten to say that we also need data from surrounding oceans. We have seen in recent years the linkages between sea-surface temperature and rainfall patterns. This is also an area that will need to receive greater attention as we develop our mitigation strategies to manage climate risk.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I will conclude by emphasizing the need to continue with the excellent work and partnership with EUMETSAT to improve our service delivery and tools to enhance our climate change adaptation strategies. Partnerships will need to be enhanced to promote technology transfer and capacity building. Infrastructure development particularly in weather observations and data communications will need to be enhanced in order to benefit weather and climate prediction and research. Partnerships are also essential for developing climate applications that respond to the needs of the users and also build societal resilience to climate change and variability.

With this cooperation, I am certain we can overturn this situation of gloom so that we can realize what Charles Dickens described for good seasons:

“It was the best of times”

“It was the age of wisdom”

“It was the epoch of belief”

“It was the season of life”

“It was the spring of hope”.

With these few words, I thank you.