

DSD Caribbean Chief Attends GCOS Meeting in Belize

Caribbean Division Chief, Cletus I. Springer represented DSD at an Implementation Strategy Meeting for Central America and the Caribbean jointly organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC). The purpose of the meeting (which was held from January 28-30, 2008) was to further the implementation of the Global Climate Observation System (GCOS) Regional Action Plan for Central America and the Caribbean. GCOS is a program within the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) funded by WMO, the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), and the International Committee of Scientific Unions (ICSU). Its headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland.

The meeting was attended by regional and international agencies involved in the deployment and maintenance of observation systems used for monitoring climate and climate change, including the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Caribbean Meteorological Organization (CMO), the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development and the Government of Canada (Ministry of Environment).

The meeting reviewed the status of on-going climate monitoring programs, the state of implementation of the regional GCOS Action Plan, new regional priorities, and proposals for enhancing existing systems and/or implementing new programs such as surface weather and hydrological observing networks, marine monitoring programs, upper air observing systems, radar networks and data processing and archiving systems.

Data generated by these networks are used by a variety of national, regional and international agencies to monitor weather and climate; prepare weather forecasts and warnings; analyze trends in climate; detect climate change; and undertake research to get a better understanding of the processes that generate weather and climate. The research communities of other applied sciences also use the data to study the impact of the climate on sectors such as agriculture, forestry, health, and ecosystems.

The meeting discussed interventions that could build the capacity of observing networks in the Caribbean and Central America regions consistent with the Regional Action Plan. Several project ideas were discussed and were being refined at the time of my departure from the meeting.

At the invitation of the organizers, Mr. Springer delivered a 20 minute power-point presentation to the meeting on GCOS-related programs and projects being implemented by DSD. The presentation highlighted work in the areas of: (a) water resources management (in particular projects being implemented in the Pantanal, Guarani, San Francisco and other regions in Latin America); (b) biodiversity (in particular the activities of IABIN); (c) natural hazard risk reduction (in particular the INDM and IACNDR) and sustainable Land Management. The following agencies expressed a willingness to collaborate with DSD in the following areas: (a) WMO - in digitizing our 1600+ maps; (b) CIMH - with the design of a Land Degradation Assessment Methodology and System (proposed in the GEFCEHI/OAS/Sustainable Land Management Project); and from CMO with the design of an Early Land Degradation Warning System also proposed in the GEF/CEHI/OAS SLM Project. A copy of Mr. Springer's presentation will shortly be posted on this webpage.

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