



Our ref.: C/GCOS

Members of GCOS Steering Committee

25 October 2019

Subject: Plans of Co-Sponsors regarding GCOS

Dear members of the GCOS Steering Committee,

We would like to first acknowledge the contributions to date of GCOS to advancing climate science by assessing the status of global climate observations and producing guidance for their improvement. This valuable work would not be possible without the expertise and dedication of the members of the GCOS Steering Committee and its panels and the investment of your time, energy and professionalism.

In the face of a worsening climate crisis, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on all leaders to boost ambition and accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement. The challenge of mitigation and adaptation to climate change demands vigorous action, including climate service capabilities that are highly dependent on climate data. Recent IPCC special reports identified a number of observation gaps. Therefore, we, as GCOS co-sponsors, are convinced of the urgent need to strengthen, operationalize and sustain the GCOS through institutional mechanisms that will secure robust requirement setting, routine monitoring and reporting, and clear accountability for delivery.

A major WMO constituent body reform, adopted by the eighteenth World Meteorological Congress in June 2019, will consolidate WMO technical commissions and other technical bodies under the umbrella of a holistic Earth System approach. Consolidating climate actions – from observation to research and services – into a strong, seamless and coherent programme, is a critical strategic priority arising from this reform. As a result, all WMO observing activities will in future be dealt with by a single intergovernmental technical commission, the Commission for Observation, Infrastructure and Information Systems. This includes all observational networks delivering Essential Climate Variables (ECVs) in the atmosphere, hydrosphere and cryosphere, which are operated by WMO Members. The requirements determined through such intergovernmental processes will become international standards and will be governed by the WMO data policy. Strong collaboration of WMO with the Global Ocean Observing System, operated by IOC Members and delivering Ocean ECVs, will be through the dedicated WMO/IOC Joint Collaborative Board. The WMO Research Board, established to foster integrated and multi-disciplinary research in the context of Earth System science, will consolidate research requirements of the WCRP, WWRP and GAW, and address gaps and needs assessed by the IPCC. Moreover, the Climate Coordination Panel has been established to serve as an interface with the IPCC, UNFCCC and external partners of the GFCS for coordination of WMO contributions to the provision of policy- and decision-supporting climate information and services.

On the initiative of the WMO Secretary General, the Co-Sponsors of GCOS have agreed to initiate a process of realigning GCOS with the WMO Commission for Observation, Infrastructure and Information Systems. As GCOS is an intergovernmental programme, a formal process will be proposed for consideration during the next session of the WMO Executive Council. This will be done in coordination with all other GCOS Co-Sponsors so as to

ensure that decisions, including on the future governance of GCOS, are both compatible with the WMO constituent body reforms and acceptable to the corresponding Governing Bodies of the IOC, ISC and UNEP. GOOS, governed by the IOC, will continue to provide Ocean ECVs and serve as the Ocean component of GCOS. Necessary coordination mechanisms may be proposed.

As we prepare decisions related to the processes described above, and to ensure orderly transition of core GCOS activities into the new structures, the GCOS Co-Sponsors would welcome and appreciate inputs and advice from the GCOS Steering Committee. The forthcoming meeting of the Committee will provide an opportunity for discussion on this issue.

The intention is for Co-Sponsors to present new emerging arrangements for GCOS to our respective policy, strategy and governing bodies, as appropriate, in the coming year and to seek endorsement for renewed commitment of our organisations to strengthening and sustaining the effective delivery of GCOS.

WMO will ensure continued and increasingly comprehensive annual reporting on climate systematic observations to the UNFCCC and we kindly request the GCOS Steering Committee for input to our reports in 2019.

With sincere thanks again to all members of the Steering Committee and its Panels for their commitment and contributions,

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