

World Meteorological Organization
REGIONAL ASSOCIATION IV
(NORTH AMERICA, CENTRAL AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN)

FIFTEENTH SESSION

Nassau, Bahamas
24 April to 01 May 2008

XV-RA IV/Doc. 3

Submitted by: President of RA IV

Date: 19.II.2009

Original Language: English

Agenda Item: 3

REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

SUMMARY

ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED:

1. Implementation of activities of the Association
2. Future activities of RA IV

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL IMPLICATION:

None

DECISIONS/ACTIONS REQUIRED:

To approve the draft text in the Appendix for inclusion in the general summary of XV-RA IV.

REFERENCES:

1. *Abridged Final Report of the Fourteenth Session of Regional Association IV (North America, Central America and the Caribbean)* (WMO-No. 987)
2. *Abridged Final Report with Resolutions of the Fifteenth World Meteorological Congress* (WMO-No. 1026)

CONTENT OF DOCUMENT:

Appendix for inclusion in the final report:

Draft text for inclusion in the general summary of XV-RA IV

Appendix for information:

XV-RA IV/Rep. 3: Progress/Activity Report

DRAFT TEXT FOR INCLUSION IN THE GENERAL SUMMARY OF XV-RA IV

3. REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION (*agenda item 3*)

3.1 The Association noted with appreciation the report of the president of RA IV which provided an overall review and assessment of the major activities of the Association since its fourteenth session and expressed satisfaction at the effective manner in which the activities of the Association were being undertaken. The president also highlighted the issues that the Association would have to address, such as the development of the Strategic Plan for the Enhancement of NMHSs in North America, Central America and the Caribbean; the future working mechanism of the Association; and other priority activities, including the formal establishment of the Regional Climate Center (RCC) network in North America, Central America and the Caribbean.

3.2 The Association commended its president, Mr C. Fuller (Belize), for the dedication, enthusiasm and initiative with which he had conducted the affairs of the Association, thus contributing to the further development of weather, climate and water services in the Region. The Association also commended the vice-president, Mrs Luz Graciela de Calzadilla (Panama), for her valuable contribution to the work of the Association. It also expressed its appreciation to the chairpersons and members of the working groups and rapporteurs, who had effectively collaborated in carrying out the activities of the Association.

3.3 The Association extended its appreciation to Members who hosted various regional events during the intersessional period and encouraged them to continue to provide the necessary support to the activities of the Association.

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CONTENT OF DOCUMENT:

Appendix:

- Summary of the report by the president of RA IV

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Introduction

1. This report covers the period from the fourteenth session of the Association (San José, Costa Rica, 5-15 April 2005) until September 2008. An addendum will be submitted to cover the period up to the fifteenth session, if necessary.

Members of the Association

2. During the period under review the Regional Association IV (Central America, North America and the Caribbean) was constituted by twenty-six Members.

Officers of the Association

3. During the period under consideration, Mr Carlos Fuller (Belize) served as president and Mr Paulo Manso (Costa Rica) and Mrs Luz Graciela Calzadilla (Panama) served as vice-presidents of the Association respectively.

Regional working groups and rapporteurs

4. The working groups and individual rapporteurs of the Association satisfactorily performed their duties in accordance with the established terms of reference as explained in the reports submitted by the chairmen of the working groups and rapporteurs under relevant agenda items. All working groups held their sessions during the intersessional period.

RA IV Strategic Plan

5. During 2007, a meeting of the Management Group of RA IV was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in June, and one of the main items of the agenda was the review of the Regional Strategic Plan, adopted by RA IV in 2006 in Puerto Rico, USA.

Regional events

6. During the period of the report, a large number of seminars, workshops and other events were organized or sponsored by WMO.

7. The Hurricane Committee Meetings successfully coordinated activities and evaluated the hurricane season every year. Also, the Technical and Operational Plans of the Committee were reviewed. Hurricane activity and its impacts in the Region highlighted the important role played by NMHSs in weather observations, data exchange and the preparation and distribution of warnings. The president recognized the support for the Hurricane Committee's annual meetings and hopes that this support will continue in the future.

8. During this period, meetings of Directors of NMHSs of Ibero-American countries were held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia in November 2005, Buenos Aires, Argentina in November 2006, Asuncion, Paraguay in November 2007 and Panama City, Panama in November 2008. The meetings were organized by the National Meteorological Institute of Spain and co-sponsored by WMO. As a result of these meetings, the Conference of Directors of Ibero-American NMHSs was created and a Cooperation Programme for meteorology and hydrology for NMHSs of Ibero-American countries was established for RA III and RA IV. The regional programme of cooperation includes assistance on training, operational meteorology, formulation of projects for development of NMHSs and strengthening the NMHSs.

9. WMO and NOAA-NESDIS developed a regional project on Satellite Meteorological Applications through CIRA and the RMTCs of Barbados and Costa Rica using RAMSDIS and Internet to access and display satellite imagery and products. In the first stage of the Project, seven countries, of Central America, have RAMSDIS systems which are receiving digital imagery and products, and are using this capability for weather analysis and forecasting updated every 30 minutes. The RMTC of Barbados used a similar RAMSDIS system receiving digital imagery and products for the Caribbean region. A RAMSDIS system (Regional and Mesoscale Meteorology Advanced Meteorological Satellite Demonstration and Interpretation System) involves the hardware and software required for automatic ingest of multispectral satellite imagery, products (e.g. wind speed, rainfall, fog, fire estimates) and grid data from observations or forecasts to display as plots or analyses over the imagery.

10. The radar networking system project supported by the European Union was implemented through the Caribbean Meteorological Organization (CMO). The project will benefit the Caribbean region providing early warnings on hurricanes and severe weather.

11. The WMO, through its Space Programme Office, and the RA IV-RMTC at the University of Costa Rica, operated a Centre of Excellence in meteorological satellites at the University of Costa Rica, and its main activities included: organize training seminars, update and disseminate satellite methods for image reception, promote the use of satellite information in the NMSs, disseminate training material and also promote the participation of the focal points of the WMO Virtual Laboratory, in weather discussions in real time.

12. In 2002, in order to support the acquisition of climate information, the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) assisted the Central America and Caribbean countries in developing a Regional Action Plan. Since implementation of the projects in the Plan is far from complete but remains important to the Region, a strategy meeting was held in Belize City, Belize from 28-30 January 2008, to consider how the projects in this Action Plan, as well as newer priorities not contained in the original Plan, could be funded and implemented.

13. In cooperation with UNESCO through its Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROSTLAC), two Workshops on the Application of the UNESCO/WMO Publication "Water Resources Assessment – Handbook for review of national Capabilities" were organized. One of the Workshops was held in Bogota, Colombia, for Spanish-speaking countries of RA IV. As a result of this Workshop Colombia prepared a national report, which could be used in future as an example for other countries of the Region. The second Workshop was organized in Havana, Cuba, for English-speaking countries of RA IV and UNESCO's region "Latin America and the Caribbean".

Other regional activities

14. Maintenance and further development of the existing basic observing networks, meteorological telecommunications and data-processing facilities in the Region were given the highest priority. The USA provided exceptional support to the Regional Maintenance Centre, which in turn successfully supported the regional upper-air network.

15. The social and economical benefits of meteorological and hydrological services continued to be of great interest and concern to Members of RA IV. This area must be considered a priority in the work of the Secretariat and the Members of the Region.

16. The president informed the Association of WMO RMTC Costa Rica continued support for multimedia and computer aided learning by translating COMET's modules on Ensemble Forecasting, Aviation Weather, Climate Change, Hurricane Strike, Hydrology, Satellite

Meteorology, and Numerical Weather Prediction into Spanish. The Association noted the support from the United States and encouraged other countries to consider funding this important activity.

17. WMO continued its Project Office in Mexico to support Mexico's National Water Commission in achieving integrated, sustainable management of water under the PREMIA project. During this period, in the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between the Mexican Water Commission and WMO, the working plan of the project was implemented through a number of consultancy missions, including technical rules and engineering in the water resources sector, Technology Transfer for Water Resources Management, the Management Plan of the Lerma-Chapala Basin, Daim Safety and Climate Change adaptation in the water sector of Mexico, climate variability and their effects on water availability, in particular ground water reserves and prevention of floods.

18. Under the approved plan of action by the Conference of Directors of Ibero-american NMHSs, several activities were carried out in RA IV: these include training on operation and maintenance of AWS in Panama and El Salvador as well as the installation of EUMETCast Reception Stations given to NMHSs of Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. Also, missions have been organized to Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Panama for the preparation of development projects in the framework of the Programme of Cooperation for Ibero-american NMHSs.

19. WMO, through the DRA Department and the Representative of the WMO Office in Costa Rica, assisted Guatemala reformulate its NMHSs modernization project. Also WMO, with the assistance of Spain, worked to rehabilitate the meteorological and hydrological observing network in Guatemala and El Salvador following Hurricane Stan.

20. A joint WMO/AEMET mission to the Dominican Republic and Haiti (31 March-4 April 2008) focused on an Early Warning System Project Proposal, prepared under the Programme of Cooperation for Ibero-American NMHSs. Participants included national authorities and funding agencies based in the Dominican Republic and Haiti (AECID, IDB and UNDP). The Project received support by national institutions and funding agencies in both countries. The representative of AECID in the Dominican Republic expressed interest in providing financial support for the implementation of the project, included in the priority areas by AECID and the Governments concerned. The Project components include the establishment of a EWS to be shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the development of a common hydrometeorological database, improvement of telecommunications and observing meteorological networks, as well as training of professional and technical staff.

21. As a follow up of the activities of WMO and IOCARIBE, the Representative of the WMO Office in Costa Rica participated in the First, Second and Third Sessions of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions .

Priorities for the Region

22. Capacity building continued to be a high priority for the Region in light of staff turnover and the impending implementation of an ICAO certification requirement. The president requested that adequate financial and technical resources be provided to ensure that the appropriate training events be organized and funded and fellowships be provided to meet these needs.

23. The president requested that WMO continue to collaborate with the various economic and technical organizations in RA IV for the development and implementation of meteorology

programmes and projects. These included the ACS, CARICOM, SICA, CRRH, CMO and CEPREDENAC.

Regional Office for America and the WMO Office for North, Central America and the Caribbean

24. Upon a request by the Fourteenth WMO Congress for a more efficient role of the field offices, the Secretary-General has taken initiatives and actions towards a restructuring of the tasks of these field offices in order to serve the Regions in technical cooperation and resource mobilization. This presidency is pleased with this development and continues to strive towards an even more productive role of these field offices. In particular he thanked the staff of the RA IV WMO Office in San José for the support provided to him during the past four years and expressed his appreciation to the Government of Costa Rica for hosting the Office.

Tropical Cyclone Programme (TCP)

25. TCP, in collaboration with the Public Weather Services Programme, organized the RA IV Workshop on Hurricane Forecasting and Warning and Public Weather Services in Miami (16-28 April 2007) with the support of WMO and the USA. This workshop covered a wide spectrum of topics relating to tropical cyclone forecasting and warning services. It also intended to provide training of media skills to the forecasters from the Hurricane Committee members. All members of RA IV strongly endorsed the need for continued support for these workshops.

Climate Coordination Activities (CCA)

26. WMO co-sponsored a UNFCCC expert meeting in Mexico (4-7 March 2008). The meeting discussed the ways data and observation as well as methods and tools can contribute to adaptation practices, most especially, the implementation of the Nairobi Work Programme on vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. The president of RA IV attended this workshop in a personal capacity.

27. The Implementation/Coordination Team of the Commission for Climatology (CCI-ICT) met in Geneva, (9-11 October 2007). RA IV was represented by Dr Patricia Ramirez, Chair of the RA IV Working Group on Climate Related Matters (WGCRM).

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

28. Several projects related to Disaster Risk Reduction were initiated in 2007 with the various regional economic and technical organizations (ACS, CARICOM, SICA, CRRH, CMO and CEPREDENAC). The First Planning Meeting for the Central American Project on Multi-Hazard Early Warning System was held in New Orleans, United States of America, on 18 January 2008, organized by WMO and with the participation of different regional and funding agencies. This is the first step to develop an end-to-end early warning system for Central America. The Second Planning Meeting for the Central American Project on Multi-Hazard Early Warning System was held in Orlando, United States of America, on 22 April 2008. The concept of the project was presented during a session of the Hurricane Committee XXX (HC-30), that preceded the Planning Meeting, during which the project concept and planning process received endorsement and the HC-30 agreed to serve as the regional mechanism to monitor the progress with the project, evaluate lessons learnt and provide recommendations for project to expand to other countries in RA IV, particularly considering the need of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean.

Acknowledgements

29. The presidency expressed its appreciation and gratitude to all those governments, organizations and persons who have provided support to the NMHSs of the Region. In particular we wish to mention the exceptional support of the USA regarding the training, telecommunications and support for recovery of the meteorological and hydrological infrastructure in the countries affected by hurricanes and several regional projects, executed under coordination of the president. The provision of hydrological equipment by Canada to members of Central America and the Caribbean merits also a special remark.

30. The presidency expressed its gratitude to Canada, Finland, France, Japan, Spain and the USA as well as to other Members of WMO, who provided fellowships and arranged for study programmes for several Members of the Region and provided support to a wide range of areas beneficial to the Region and to individual Members. In particular to those Members who have acted as hosts to the organization of the many events in the Region.

31. Finally, the president expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General of WMO, to the Secretariat, to the Regional Office for the Americas and the WMO Office for North America, Central America and the Caribbean for their valuable support and advice in the work of the regional president.
