CGMS-XXXIV
WMO WP-16
Prepared by WMO
Agenda item: E.2

WMO CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS ON HIGH-LEVEL POLICY ON SATELLITE MATTERS

(Submitted by WMO)

Summary and purpose of document

WMO WP-16 describes recent activities resulting from the sixth session of the WMO Consultative Meetings on High-level Policy on Satellite Matters.

PROGRESS/ACTIVITY REPORT

Background

1. The sixth session of the Consultative Meetings on High-level Policy on Satellite Matters (CM-6) was held at the Argentine Air Force Club in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 16 to 17 January 2006 under the chairmanship of the President of WMO, Dr A.I. Bedritsky. The National Meteorological Service of Argentina was the local host.

2. CM-6 noted with pleasure the letter sent by the Administrator of the China National Space Administration (CNSA) to the WMO Secretary General confirming its intention to contribute to the space-based component of the WMO's GOS by providing remote sensing data from HY-1A (launched in 2002) and HY-1B (to be launched in 2006) to WMO and CGMS Members. HY-1B's instruments included a 10-wave band ocean colour imager and a 4-wave band CCD camera. Data from HY-1B would be available free and unrestricted to WMO Members. The session noted that the CGMS Secretariat would be immediately informed in order that CNSA could become a full CGMS member.

3. CM-6 also noted with pleasure the plans by NOAA to move GOES-10 to enhance coverage of the Americas. By significantly improving satellite detection of such natural hazards as severe storms, floods, drought, landslides, and wildfires, the move would help protect lives and property in North, Central, the Caribbean and South America. The move would further strengthen the WMO's World Weather Watch Global Observing System. It would allow for improved prediction, response and follow-up and expanded understanding of how the Earth system works. Such initiatives were vital. Nearly half the disasters in South America, for instance, were caused by flooding. The session recalled that the request to improve the coverage over South America had originated at a High-Level Meeting of Permanent Representatives from RA III held in June 2005. The request had highlighted the need to improve the satellite coverage over the Southern Hemisphere and RA III was very appreciative of the shift in the position of GOES-10 planned by NOAA. GOES-10, once operational in its new position, would provide for imagery data as frequently as every 15 minutes. The session noted with the move of GOES-10 and its increase in temporal resolution over South America that the space-based component of the GOS would now meet the full set of WMO global requirements.

4. CM-6 discussed the Integrated Global Data Dissemination Service (IGDDS) in-depth and more details are included in WMO WP-20 and are, therefore, not repeated here.

5. CM-6 discussed the International Geostationary Laboratory concept (IGeoLab) in depth and more details are included in WMO WP-29. However, noteworthy was the declaration by the CM-6 Chairman (and WMO President) that the Russian Federation would be the host to the next G-8 meeting to be held in July in Moscow and it was the Russian Federation's intention to include GIFTS within an IGeoLab Partnership as a discussion item between Presidents Putin and Bush.

6. CM-6 discussed the Global Space-based Inter-calibration System (GSICS) in depth and more details are included in WMO WP-27.

7. CM-6 discussed the Virtual Laboratory for Satellite Data Utilization and High Profile Training Event (HPTE) in depth and more details are included in WMO WP-18.

8. CM-6 was informed of Expert Team discussions on the transition from relevant R&D instruments to operational missions and requested more detailed consideration of this issue. This was addressed in-depth at the second sessions of the Expert Team on Satellite Systems (ET-SAT) and the Expert Team on Satellite Utilization and Products (ET-SUP), and is briefly mentioned in Section 3.6 of WMO WP-37.

9. CM-6 discussed the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters. CM-6 agreed that the issue of access to the International Charter by NMHSs of WMO was complex and that more information was required before an appropriate response could be formulated by the WMO Consultative Meetings. Thus, CM-6 requested the WMO Space Programme to further research all relevant and related issues and provide the next session with a discussion paper and a proposed WMO approach with regard to the international Charter. The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters is a proposed agenda item for CM-7 to be held in February 2007.

10. CM-6 discussed the concept for Regional Specialized Satellite Centres. CM-6 was informed on a proposal to identify specific centres of excellence in thematic areas that could be designated Regional/Specialized Meteorological Centres for Satellite Products (Regional Specialized Satellite Centres). CM-6 recalled that Chapter 5 in "The Role of Satellites in WMO Programmes in the 2010s, 2003", Technical Document WMO/TD No. 1177 (SP-1) contained a "Vision for the Future: A 2020 Perspective". Several challenges were outlined for WMO including an initiative that would provide the basis for a global approach to product development. It should be based on emerging technologies such as being demonstrated by the Virtual Laboratory for Education and Training in Satellite Meteorology. WMO should embrace the development of institutionalized programmes dedicated to producing specific and globally accepted products needed by NMHSs, and national and international decision makers for all appropriate application areas. The goal would be universally accepted products that can be prepared at designated processing centres. This development initiative would be the research component of another initiative, a system of global processing centres for satellite products.

11. CM-6 noted that the concept for Regional/Specialized Meteorological Centres evolved in the 1980s with the procedure for the designation of Regional/Specialized Meteorological Centres (RSMC) being approved by the Commission for Basic Systems in Recommendation 1 (CBS-IX) in 1988. At that time, RSMCs were mostly involved as Global Data Processing Centres although the concept has been extended to centres with tropical forecasting responsibilities. Subsequently, the procedure was formalized in the Manual on the Global Data Processing and Forecast System, WMO No. 485, Part I, Appendix I-2. In order to be designated as a RSMC, certain criteria must be met: (1) there must be a statement of requirements for product and services initiated and endorsed by a WMO constituent body; (2) identification of a centre capable to meet the requirements; (3) determination of the need to establish the centre; (4) a formal commitment by a Member or a group of cooperating Members to fulfil the required function; (5) demonstration of the capabilities; (6) recommendation by CBS; and (7) acceptance by either Congress or Executive Council. Thus, if there was a satellite data and/or product processing centre with a capability to produce a product or service required by a WMO constituent body, such as a Regional Association or Technical Commission, it could be designated a Regional/Specialized Meteorological Centre for Satellite Products within the framework of WMO (or Regional/Specialized Satellite Centre (RSSC)).

12. CM-6 agreed that the initial description of the possibility to establish Regional/Specialized Centre on Satellite Products had the potential to be of value to WMO Members. The concept provided for the establishment of centres in developing countries and not necessarily in a space agency.

13. CM-6 agreed that the proposal offered many appealing benefits and suggested that the proposal should be further elaborated to identify in more detail its components and structure including responsibilities, financial implications and value-added. The session requested the WMO Space Programme Office to prepare a more detailed description for Regional/Specialized Centres on Satellite Products through a Task Force with participation by interested CM space agencies and WMO Members. In developing the proposal, the session also felt confident that many issues would be clarified including the need for approval by governing bodies responsible for existing centres, the role of R&D space agencies with regard to operational products, product standardization, and data sharing. CM-6 agreed to review the proposal at CM-7.

14. Following this CM-6 discussion, the 58th session of the WMO Executive Council underlined the importance of processing satellite data into high-level derived products with consistent and high quality, and of ensuring wide availability of such products, in particular in less advanced countries. The Council agreed that the proposal for RSSC offered appealing benefits and suggested that the proposal should be further elaborated to identify in more detail its components and structure including responsibilities, financial implications and value-added. At its second meeting, ET-SUP was informed on these developments and noted the potential impact that such RSSCs could have on improving the quality and quantity of additional high-level products available to WMO Members, particularly in the area of climate products, and the potential for capacity building especially in developing countries. It agreed that the concept should be further developed in the future ET-SUP work plan.

15. The concept for Regional Specialized Satellite Centres is an agenda item for CM-7 to be held in February 2007.

16. Finally, CM-6 was briefed on the status and plans for the Global Precipitation Measurement mission (GPM). The session agreed GPM offered tremendous new capabilities of benefit to WMO Members in several vital application areas, and that WMO should act as a catalyst to encourage GPM implementation and to support user interaction with a view to ensuring a wide awareness of the user community, with the expectation that GPM will become part of the WMO's Global Observing System and that suitable means will be identified to allow near-real time data availability for operational applications. International cooperation should be encouraged to allow the timely implementation of a robust GPM constellation.