

HKO and WMO update MOU to further strengthen meteorological co-operation (with photos)

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) updated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today (March 28) to further strengthen meteorological co-operation. The updated MOU was signed by the Director of the HKO and the Permanent Representative of Hong Kong, China with the WMO, Dr Chan Pak-wai, and the Secretary-General of the WMO, Professor Celeste Saulo.

The HKO and the WMO first signed the MOU in October 2018 to support global weather information services. Under the updated MOU, the HKO will continue to develop and operate two WMO global weather information websites, namely the World Weather Information Services (WWIS) (Note 1) and the Severe Weather Information Centre (SWIC) (Note 2). Both websites are core components of the WMO Global Multi-hazard Alert System framework for increasing the availability of authoritative warnings and information related to extreme and potentially high-impact weather, water, and climate events to contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Early Warnings for All initiative (Note 3). Through the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre (RSMC) for Nowcasting, the HKO will continue to support the meteorological and hydrological services in the Asian region on nowcasting hazardous weather and capacity development activities for contributing to the Early Warnings for All initiative. Moreover, the HKO will strongly support the WMO Voluntary Cooperation Programme by providing a variety of meteorological training courses to WMO members through the Meteorological Training Centre for Belt and Road Countries to be set up by the HKO in the year.

At the signing ceremony, Dr Chan said, "The HKO and the WMO have a long history of co-operation. The update of the MOU further fortifies the connections between the two organisations. The HKO will continue to support the WMO's initiatives and foster regional and international co-operation in the implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative through operating the SWIC and WWIS websites, the RSMC for Nowcasting, and the Meteorological Training Centre for Belt and Road Countries."

Professor Saulo said, "I would like to thank the HKO for the strong support and lasting in-kind contribution to the activities of the WMO over the years. We will continue to strengthen our collaboration through this updated MOU on overall meteorological co-operation and bilateral consultation as done in the past for supporting WMO new and emerging initiatives and priorities, in particular, the implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative. The launch of the SWIC 3.0 website sets a milestone and provides a one-stop-shop platform to enable WMO members in sharing and dissemination of early warnings that are essential to protect people on earth from hazardous weather, water, climate and related environmental events."

After signing the renewed MOU, Dr Chan and Professor Saulo officiated at the launching ceremony of the SWIC 3.0 website. In contributing to the United Nations' Early Warnings for All initiative, the SWIC 3.0 website was enhanced to make available official warnings in standard protocol from more than 130 WMO members. In addition, the SWIC 3.0 website fosters the sharing of authoritative warnings among WMO members, and promotes increasing the visibility of WMO members, which is crucial for acquiring resources to strengthen and sustain their early warning services in combating hazardous weather, water, climate and related environmental events and to develop and enhance societal resilience.

Background information

The WMO is a specialised agency of the United Nations for weather, climate, water and related environmental matters. At present, the WMO has 187 member states and six member territories, including Hong Kong, China. The core functions of the WMO include promoting and fostering global and regional co-ordination in meteorological research and observations, data exchanges and technology transfers, as well as relevant training and application services etc towards the final objective to enable each WMO member, large or small, rich or poor, to have equal access to the same quality of data, observed and processed, to support each member to fulfil its mandate to protect its people and help its economic development.

The HKO and the WMO have a long history of co-operation. Hong Kong joined the WMO as one of the founding regional members in 1948. Entrusted by the WMO, the HKO developed and operated the WWIS website and the SWIC website on behalf of the WMO. In recognising the HKO's significant role in applying nowcasting techniques for predicting severe weather, the WMO designated the HKO as an RSMC for Nowcasting in 2018 to provide guidance data products and support technique developments on nowcasting of heavy rain and high-impact weather for meteorological and hydrological services in the Asian region.

Note 1: The WWIS website (worldweather.wmo.int) developed and operated by the HKO provides official weather observations, weather forecasts and climatological information from meteorological and hydrological services worldwide.

Note 2: The SWIC website (severeweather.wmo.int) is developed and operated by the HKO. It provides a centralised and authoritative source of warnings and information from alerting authorities, in particular meteorological and hydrological services, around the world.

Note 3: Early Warnings for All is a United Nations initiative to ensure everyone on Earth is protected from hazardous weather, water or climate events through life-saving early warning systems by 2027.

