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Climate and water researchers and re-insurance experts seek to quantify risks associated with severe weather and climate

Climate projections point towards more frequent and intense weather and climate extremes such as heat-waves, cold-spells, droughts and floods in a warmer Earth. These projections, together with the recent sequence of extreme events, highlight the need for improved risk assessments to help both decision makers and the public.

The WMO co-sponsored World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) in partnership with UNESCO is hosting a workshop on metrics and methodologies of estimation of extreme climate events in Paris, France, on 27-29 September 2010 (<http://www.extremeworkshop.org/>). Representatives from fields as diverse as meteorology, statistics and re-insurance will come together to review and assess the existing means of observing and defining extreme climate events and discuss how these can be strengthened. The main objective of the workshop is to develop an optimal strategy to improve our ability to estimate the risk of climate extremes occurring in a changing climate.

“We need accurate, reliable and simple measures of the probability of extreme events with an index to convey how confident we are about these measures”, says Dr Ghassem Asrar, Director of the WCRP.

The International Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO is co-sponsoring the workshop to improve understanding of how, when and where human-induced changes, together with weather and climatic extremes, will influence water resources and the sustainability of the biosphere. “These questions are extremely difficult to answer without better knowledge of the major drivers and access to improved assessment and analysis technologies, especially when we deal with hydrological extremes such as floods and droughts”, says Prof. Siegfried Demuth of IHP.

Asia’s heavy monsoon and flooding in Pakistan, the heatwave and resulting forest fires in Russia, the rain-induced mudslides in China and the severe drought in sub-Saharan Africa constitute an extraordinary sequence of extreme weather events, with devastating consequences for human life and property.

Understanding the expected distribution, frequency and intensity of extreme events is central to the financial security of re/insurance companies and the populations in developed and less developed countries. “Climate and weather modelling is the key technique to understanding these risks and we congratulate the WCRP and UNESCO for

their focus on this critical area” said Michel Gero, Managing Director of Willis Research Network.

The three-day event will focus on creating the scientific and methodological basis for assessment of risks associated with climate extremes such as floods, droughts and heat waves and developing indices for their quantification to aid in disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change. “The standards developed for assessing risks associated with climate extremes will be published openly and could be used by national weather and climate service providers worldwide to issue alerts for saving life and property”, said Asrar. For more information about this workshop consult “workshop web site or WCRP web site”

Notes to Editors:

Workshop on Metrics and Methodologies of Estimation of Extreme Climate Events.
27-29 September 2010
UNESCO Headquarters
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07
FRANCE
<http://www.extremeworkshop.org/>

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