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WMO-No. 669

## HONG KONG OBSERVATORY AND WMO LAUNCH TRIAL WEB SITE “[WWW.WORLDWEATHER.ORG](http://WWW.WORLDWEATHER.ORG)”

**GENEVA/HONG KONG, 14 December (WMO) – The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), the National Meteorological Service of Hong Kong, China, and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) have launched a trial web site of the HKO’s World Weather Information Service (WWIS) on weather of the world’s cities. “Worldweather.org” has been developed under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as well as the official operation of the Observatory’s special web sites “wap.hko.gov.hk” and “wap.weather.gov.hk” that provide WAP-enabled mobile phone users with weather information.**

Ready-to-use weather information is a much-sought-after commodity in an increasingly smaller world where many people travel. People are tempted to search for such information on the Internet and are often bewildered by the diversity of information presented by a wide array of service providers not related to the meteorological community. It is not unusual to find forecast temperatures from unofficial sources differing by many degrees among themselves, which reflects a strong need for an authoritative source of official weather information produced by National Meteorological Services (NMSs) that operate the WMO-regulated world-wide weather observing network.

The HKO has been tasked by the WMO to develop and host two pilot web sites on world weather in collaboration with the National Meteorological Services (NMSs). The World Weather Information Service (WWIS) web site is intended to provide official weather forecasts of cities around the world. The other specialised web site “typhoon.worldweather.org” offering severe weather information (SWI) around the world and also operated by the HKO on behalf of WMO, was launched earlier this year as a trial operation.

According to the Secretary-General of WMO, Prof. Godwin O.P. Obasi, a web site offering up-to-date weather information with exchange links to the WMO web site is of increased importance to all National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs). “A web site is the global ‘carte de visite’ of every organization without any accessibility obstacle like ‘opening hours’. When used in an appropriate way, it’s a powerful communication and information tool.” Prof. Obasi expresses his appreciation to all Member countries for providing authoritative weather information in the service of the world community and to the national authority Hong Kong, China and the HKO for the realization of the project.

At the Hong Kong inauguration of the web site Mr. Lam Chiu-Ying, Acting Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), explained that the pilot WWIS web site will be implemented in phases. “The first phase, which delivers climatological information of the world’s cities and provides links to the web sites of individual NMSs, will start to be operational as of today. The next phase will include official forecasts issued by the respective NMSs and is expected to start operational trial before the end of 2002.”

“The pilot severe weather information (SWI) web site will provide, as a first step, official forecasts and warnings of tropical cyclones in the western North Pacific issued by NMSs in the region”, Mr. Lam added. “Up-to-date information on tropical cyclones in the form of advisories and warnings from participating countries are displayed enabling visitors to the site to gain better appreciation of the potential impact of tropical cyclones that transcends national boundaries.”