

PRESS RELEASE

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WMO OFFERS AUTHORITATIVE WEATHER FORECASTS FOR CITIES ON-LINE AT

« WWW.WORLDWEATHER.ORG »

GENEVA/HONG KONG, 9 December (WMO) – The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) today launched a new service offering access by all to the latest weather forecasts of the world's cities issued by the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs), at <www.worldweather.org>, the web site World Weather Information Service (WWIS) developed by HKO under the auspices of WMO. Worldweather.org aims at providing the media and the international community with an authoritative source of up-to-date weather data around the world and round the clock. As the primary source of weather information it offers clear and standardized information to all Internet users, currently often bewildered by the diversity of information presented by a wide array of service providers not related to the meteorological community.

The availability of weather forecasts represents the second phase of a WMO web site pilot project. The first phase was launched in December 2001 and aimed at delivering climatological information for the world's cities. Worldweather.org now offers both weather forecasts several days ahead and monthly climatological information.

All information is provided by the National Meteorological Services which operate collectively the official world-wide weather observing network coordinated by WMO. Forecasts for 680 cities of 69 Members are regularly updated while climatological data are given for 826 cities of 150 Members. Users can also follow the links to visit the web sites of national Services to search for further information.

For Prof. Godwin O.P. Obasi, Secretary-General of WMO, "building partnerships with the media and the community at large is a very important area of work of any National Meteorological Service". "Promoting the use by the media, of authoritative forecasts, warnings and information, with appropriately acknowledged sources to preserve the unique authority of National Meteorological Services has been an area which has received a great deal of attention by WMO", he says. "I am therefore especially pleased that a growing number of WMO Members are participating in both phases of the WWIS project, as international cooperation is the key for a truly global meteorological information network at the service of the international community". Prof. Obasi expresses his appreciation to all Members for providing authoritative weather information and to the authorities of Hong Kong, China, for the timely realization of the project.

For Mr. Lam Chiu-Ying, Acting Director of the Hong Kong Observatory, the key to the successful implementation of the two web sites on world weather has been the active participation of WMO Members. "We are honoured to be associated with this project and are deeply moved by the enthusiasm of WMO Members for serving the world irrespective of their means. A highly flexible technical design has been adopted in order to allow Members with greatly different technological capabilities to communicate weather information to us. This has enabled the Least Developed Countries to join the project providing the world for the first time with recognized weather forecasts of those countries." Mr. Lam adds that work will continue in

collaboration with WMO Members to expand the scope of the web sites in terms of both spatial coverage and contents. He also anticipates that the number of countries and cities in worldweather.org will grow further in the coming year.

The HKO has been invited by WMO to develop and host two pilot web sites on world weather, in collaboration with the other NMHSs. For the WWIS, the HKO serves as the data collection centre to collate weather information produced by the NMHSs. The other specialized web site <severe.worldweather.org> promulgates information on severe weather and is operated by the HKO's Severe Weather Information Centre (SWIC). The SWIC web site provides official warnings of tropical cyclones. Its initial coverage of the western North Pacific has been extended to the South-West Pacific in 2002.

For more information, please contact:

at WMO:

Ms Carine Richard-Van Maele
Chief, Information and Public Affairs
World Meteorological Organization
7 bis, avenue de la Paix
CH 1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland
Tel.+41 (0) 22 730 8314/5
Fax.+41(0) 22 730 8027
E-mail: ipa@gateway.wmo.ch
Website: <http://www.wmo.ch>

at the Hong Kong Observatory:

Mr. W. M. Ma
Senior Scientific Officer
Hong Kong Observatory
134A Nathan Road
Kowloon
Hong Kong, China
Tel.+852 2926 8355
Fax.+852 2721 5034
E-mail: wmma@hko.gov.hk