

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
(UNESCO)**

**Closing Remarks by
Mr Walter Erdelen**

**Assistant Director-General
for Natural Sciences**

**UNESCO International Conference on
Broadcast Media and Climate Change: a Public Service Remit**

UNESCO, 5 September 2009

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to address you at the closing session of this UNESCO International Conference on Broadcast Media and Climate Change and to share with you some of the scientific and interdisciplinary aspects to which UNESCO and its partners contribute on the issue of climate change.

As we have heard over the past two days, climate change is the defining issue of our time. It is the concern of all of us and will affect every aspect of our lives and the lives of future generations. In order for world citizens to take effective action to help mitigate and to adapt to the effects of climate change, they must have a basic understanding of the science underlying the phenomena. You, the broadcasters, have the skills and techniques of how best to get the message across.

It is the duty of us in the field of science to make sure that you have high quality scientific information so that you may in turn deliver clear and meaningful messages to your viewers and audiences.

UNESCO, as the UN specialized agency for education, the sciences, culture and communication, is in a unique position to help build capacity to face the challenges of climate change in a holistic way. From building the science knowledge base fundamental to understanding the processes and consequences of climate change, through the natural and social and human sciences, and through education and raising awareness of different segments of society on climate mitigation and adaptation, UNESCO can and does use its comparative advantage to make considerable contributions.

UNESCO has a strong role to play in the international coordination and promotion of the science necessary to build the knowledge base fundamental to understanding and monitoring the changes in the Earth's climate system, particularly those related to the oceans.

This crucial role is largely invisible to the public eye. UNESCO has long sponsored the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) and the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), which are precisely what their names imply, and are fundamental to the progress made by the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Fully 91% of coordinating authors of the IPCC's *Fourth Assessment Report* were WCRP scientists, and thus had the support of UNESCO behind them.

For example, one sister observing system to GCOS is the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), which UNESCO coordinates. GOOS is a system of programmes, each of which is working on different and complementary aspects of establishing an operational ocean observation capability for all of the world's nations. GOOS is designed to monitor, understand and predict weather and climate and to describe and forecast the state of the oceans, including sea level and living resources. GOOS will be making a presentation at UNFCCC COP-15 in Copenhagen this December, to remind how important ocean observations are to climate predictions.

UNESCO also coordinates and promotes the building of the scientific knowledge base necessary to address the effects of climate change on freshwater management including programmes to study and compare water management in river basins and the flow regimes of water courses around the world. We now know that groundwater will be an essential resource for adapting to climate change, yet our knowledge of groundwater, and its incorporation into climate science, is weak. UNESCO is working to promote these two aspects of groundwater science. Of particular importance as well is UNESCO's involvement in promoting the study of glaciers, which are vital for the water resources of much of the world population, by helping to provide training in developing countries on methods of studying changes in glaciers under new climate patterns.

One approach to climate change mitigation is the wider use of renewable energy, and UNESCO is active in increasing the knowledge base for the rational use and application of renewable energy, especially in developing countries.

This is accomplished through institutional and human capacity building; sharing of scientific knowledge and best practices; and the promotion of national and regional renewable energy policies and management. UNESCO provides training on developing villages that are self-sufficient, and on the integration of energy policy into local development planning. The Organization is also looking at ways REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) can be tested and applied within biosphere reserves and natural World Heritage sites.

UNESCO fosters and provides advanced educational training for the next generation of climate scientists, particularly those from least developed countries. Training takes place on the management of freshwater resources in the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft, in the Netherlands, and in relation to Earth science and meteorological modelling in the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy.

UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) develops capacity through at-sea training for young scientists, as well as training in scientific leadership for developing country research institutions.

UNESCO also collaborates with the wider international community and in particular with UN partners to promote the advancement of climate science and to facilitate access by policy makers to the information and knowledge thus generated to inform policies and decisions on climate change. The recently concluded World Climate Conference-3 (31 August to 4 September 2009) is a major outcome of UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization's convening role in this area. It aims to build the knowledge base for science assessment, monitoring and early warning. It was instrumental in achieving UN-wide collaboration to create a Global Framework for Climate Services, as a means to systematically make the existing knowledge on climate science available, and to further improve climate forecasts at the regional and local level.

The Framework includes a renewed commitment to climate observations and the free and open availability of data by strengthening observing programmes, by focusing on climate modelling and prediction research, by supporting climate prediction services; and by a new Climate Services Information System. This System would be expected to develop and deliver sector- and user-targeted services, build capacity in developing countries and develop policies to support the application of climate services for economic and societal benefit. UNESCO intends to play a strong role in this new System.

UNESCO's future science activities, contributing to building the scientific knowledge base, will focus on further development of the role of the IOC as the United Nations focal point for global collaboration in the scientific observation and study of the oceans.

Future activities will also place emphasis on the following areas:

- assessing and adapting to impacts of climate change on fresh water, including water hazards such as floods and droughts;
- addressing the social consequences of climate change;
- and assessing and managing climate change in biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites, including through the use of space-based remote sensing.

These activities will give priority attention to Africa, local and indigenous communities, SIDS, and gender issues. In particular, UNESCO is working towards a more coherent approach to facing the challenges of climate change in a holistic fashion in the circumpolar Arctic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO has over 50 activities across its different areas of competence which can and do contribute to understanding, mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Further, UNESCO itself is working towards becoming a climate-neutral Organization, in order to stand as an example to the world community. Let me now highlight some other recent highlights of UNESCO's intersectoral work on climate change.

Of particular significance is UNESCO's potential role on the world stage of the ethical issues of climate change. Do we have the right to change the climate here and now? The activities of populations in a particular part of the world can critically affect the climate and the lives of other human beings in geographically distant places and at a future time. These issues need to be addressed and UNESCO has been working towards developing policies that take this dimension into account through the UNESCO World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST). I have pleasure in announcing that COMEST will launch a paper at UNFCCC COP-15 on the ethical implications of climate change.

There is also the question of the gender dimension of climate change. Presently, there are very few policy responses to climate change which take into account women's and men's distinct roles and responsibilities (such as gender-based division of labour, access and control of natural resources, knowledge and skills and participation in decision and policy-making) that expose them to different risks and opportunities. UNESCO serves, along with UNDP, as the co-convenor of the Interagency Task Force on Gender Equality and Climate Change to promote the consideration of the gender dimension when making decisions on climate change.

The recent UNESCO International Seminar on Climate Change Education (27 to 29 July 2009) held in UNESCO aimed to promote the effective integration of climate change education into educational programmes and school curricula, to mobilize support for teacher training on climate change education and to enhance exchange on climate change education among all educational stakeholders.

The Seminar also identified opportunities for using various UNESCO networks – the UNESCO Associated Schools Network, World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves and the International Hydrological Programme networks to encourage local field-based education on climate change; and to contribute to the establishment of a UNESCO clearinghouse on climate change educational materials.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Working with our colleagues in the Communication and Information Sector (CI) and with our UN partners we are ready to join with you, the world's broadcasters, in helping to bring high quality scientific content to make climate change information available to the world's television audiences. This is not the first time that we have collaborated with our colleagues in CI to bring high quality television content to audiences in the developing world. From 2006 to 2008, working together, 46 titles of the flagship BBC 'Horizon' programme were distributed in 50 developing countries. Several of these programmes dealt with the issue of global warming.

In 2010 the world will celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity. Climate change is expected to have a significant effect on the distribution of species, including those we depend on for our food, fibre, and many other services. We are ready to be a full partner in helping to develop television programmes which will raise awareness and educate the general public about the likely effects of climate change on biodiversity and the world's ecosystems.

With this thought in mind, please let me thank my friend and colleague, Mr Abdul Waheed Khan, for taking the lead in organizing this International Conference on Broadcast Media and Climate Change and you the broadcasters for being instrumental in helping to give greater access to scientific knowledge, in particular in developing countries.