1 June 2009

ENGLISH ONLY

VERSION 01

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Thirtieth session
Bonn, 1-12 June 2009
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Research and systematic observations

Statement by Mr John Latham, Programme Director, Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).

FRAMEWORK MECHANISM AND OBSERVATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE TERRESTRIAL ESSENTIAL CLIMATE VARIABLES (ECVs) FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT, MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates of member countries,
Distinguished delegates of participating international organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you Mr Chairman for allowing me the opportunity to make this statement on behalf of the Global Terrestrial Observing System and its Sponsors.

GTOS would like to reaffirm its commitment to assisting the UNFCCC in meeting its objectives and to assist member countries in meeting their obligations while confronting the effects of climate change.

The observations, data and information that GTOS assists in providing to stakeholders, including the information related to the terrestrial Essential Climate Variables, continue to be required to assess the causes of climate change; to analyse the potential impacts and evaluate the adaptation options; and to enable the characterization of extreme events such as floods, droughts and heat waves.

It is now accepted that the Earth's climate is changing more rapidly than anticipated, and that mitigation and adaptation strategies specific to local and regional needs are fundamental in dealing with the challenges of climate change.

To deal effectively with climate change impacts, systematic and comprehensive observations are increasingly important. This is needed to better understand climate conditions (including determining the effects of feedback or amplification mechanisms and extreme events), to model future scenarios, and to assess risk and vulnerability for planning activities. Such undertakings are not only essential to meet the challenges of climate change; they are also required for sustainable development, other conventions (such as the Biodiversity Convention) and for meeting the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

Increasing significance is now being placed on the terrestrial domain in regards to impact, adaptation and mitigation activities, and the observing system for land is responding appropriately with significant improvements in the monitoring of key variables, however more is still needed. In addition, the capacity in developing countries is still lacking for undertaking the needed observations and generating the needed products. This is unfortunate as many of these countries are likely to be the most affected by climate change and therefore have the highest need for such information and data.

The creation of an effective and supported intergovernmental technical framework for terrestrial observations, similar to those that exist for the atmospheric and oceanic domains, would greatly assist in overcoming the above difficulties. It would also facilitate the generation of essential standards and common protocols for data and information products required by the UNFCCC but also by other stakeholders, including the CBD and the CCD.

The guidance provided by SBSTA's 27th session in reaction to previous progress reports permitted us to develop an implementation proposal based on a joint effort of the UN organizations (who are also GTOS Sponsors) and the International Organization for Standardization. Following the submission of our report to SBSTA 29 further consultations among the GTOS Sponsors and with ISO and GTOS have been undertaken, we therefore submit to this session (SBSTA 30) an updated more comprehensive report.

The proposed framework builds on existing bodies and mechanisms to the maximum extent possible, while taking into consideration the special characteristics of the terrestrial ECV standardization issues. As documented in the updated report submitted for your consideration, the proposed framework meets the guidance provided by SBSTA 27, and requires minimal additional organizational structures. GTOS and its Sponsors await SBSTA's response to the recommendations made in our report, and any further guidance that would help advance the standardization issue.

Mr Chairman, GTOS and its collaborators have also made considerable efforts to prepare an overview of the standards, guidelines and measurement protocols which have already been developed and are being used for the terrestrial Essential Climate Variables. Since our last report to SBSTA 27, detailed reports on the status of individual terrestrial variables have been completed, peer- reviewed, and published through the GTOS Web site. In addition, a special report was completed on the status of standardization for the terrestrial ECVs, taking into consideration observation standards, guidelines and guides within ISO, other international organizations, scientific programmes or projects, and in some cases by national entities. This report was also peer reviewed and is included in Part D of the updated report submitted to this session. Of interest is a conclusion that the UN-ISO standardization framework should initially focus on *in situ* methodologies, while the satellite-based methodologies continue to be developed through product validation and intercomparisons – both underpinned by *in situ* data. As documented in the report submitted to you, results of the review provide a basis for defining the initial workplan to be followed once the framework for standardization is established.

Mr Chairman, although climate change issues and the need for systematic observations have gained increasing recognition and media as well as political attention we have to report continuing difficulties with the actual financial support for terrestrial observations. It should therefore be considered a matter of priority that the governments and international agencies concerned with climate change identify the funds required for the continuing operation of these and other relevant activities as well as for addressing the observational requirements needed to achieve the Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change. GTOS and its partners are keen to support this Programme, especially under the "data and observations" area of work.

I would like to mention that some of the above issue will be reviewed and discussed at the side event "Meeting the needs of the UNFCCC through improved climate observations" on Tuesday 2 June 2009, room TRAM in the Ministry of Transport Building, between 18:00 and 19:30.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for your guidance during the previous period and for the opportunity to report on the results of our work. We look forward to SBSTA decisions regarding the recommendations for both the proposed framework and the ECV report, and for GTOS with its Sponsors continuing its support to the UNFCCC.

Thank you Mr Chairman

John S.Latham, Programme Director, GTOS