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## **GCOS STEERING COMMITTEE**

23 January 2024

Virtual Session

## **GCOS National Coordinators**

### **Decision 2 - GCOS National Coordinators**

1. The GCOS Steering Committee approves the Terms of Reference for the GCOS National Coordinators for climate observations given in the Annex to this document.
2. The GCOS Steering Committee asks the GCOS Secretariat to:
  1. engage with countries to update the list of GCOS National Coordinators (this needs to be done taking into account the newly appointed National Focal Points for GCOS networks);
  2. explore cost-effective ways of meeting with GCOS National Coordinators to discuss feedback from them on their climate monitoring and any problems they have identified;
  3. work with GCOS National Coordinators to explore the potential of national support for the GCOS programme.

### **Background**

While GCOS supports a global observing system for climate, many of the observations are managed at a national level. The situation is complex and includes:

- Meteorological observations coordinated by WMO and managed nationally by NMHS.
- Hydrological Observations again coordinated internationally through WMO sometimes managed through the NMHS sometimes a separate body.
- Ocean observations are coordinated internationally through IOC and WMO (for meteorology). Different countries have different ways of managing this and some countries make observations over a wide area of the oceans.
- Terrestrial observations are managed by many different bodies and sometimes are based in academia.
- Cryospheric observations are made by many different bodies but WMO's GCW is starting to coordinate these observations.
- Satellite observations are made by many different space agencies and the results typically cover many countries (see WGClimate).

Thus, GCOS activities and interests in any nation normally cut across many departments and agencies in that nation, rather than being limited to one agency, such as a meteorological service<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore desirable and efficient for GCOS to have, if possible, a single contact in each nation who can coordinate amongst the relevant agencies and represent the views of all, or at least most, of them on a regular basis. This is the role of the GCOS National Coordinators<sup>2</sup>.

Some countries have central bodies to coordinate GCOS activities and to ensure a full suite of climate observations are performed. Some (e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Ireland) specifically call these national GCOS, others do not but they perform the same functions. However, other countries have little coordination and many with fewer resources struggle to make the required meteorological observations let alone the full set of climate observations.

For many years GCOS has asked countries to appoint National Coordinators, with the role to:

- Communicate with GCOS and represent their countries at GCOS events, reporting user needs and difficulties;
- Advocate for climate observations that can meet GCOS ECV requirements and GCOS guidance;
- Facilitate exchange of data;
- Promote and support the reporting of systematic observations to the UNFCCC (i.e. the use of the 'Revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines on global climate change observing systems' (FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.2) and support the SBSTA on systematic observations.

The list of coordinators is now outdated. However, the national coordinators have played an important role in the past, not only by coordinating climate activities in their countries, but also providing support to GCOS for the organization of GCOS regional workshops.

The GCOS National Coordinators potentially have several other benefits, both for GCOS and the countries themselves. They would ensure that GCOS was aware of national actions and could help with the next GCOS status and implementation reports. They

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<sup>1</sup> These may include national hydrological services, ocean observing systems, academia and space agencies.

<sup>2</sup> GCOS National Coordinators should not be confused with GCOS National Focal Points who are technical contacts for GUAN and GSN.

would provide a focus for GCOS to meet to discuss and understand local issues. For countries with few resources, they could publicise area where support is needed to potential donors. Finally, they would provide a strong link to the UNFCCC.

## **Proposal**

It is proposed that countries be asked to reappoint National Coordinators with the revised Terms of Reference given in the Annex. The main role of the coordinators is to promote communication between national systems and global bodies to ensure the best climate data is available at national level for science and adaptation. More specifically, their role will be to:

- Provide a national focus to coordinate communication with the GCOS Secretariat, including updates on national GCOS activities, and, where appropriate, to participate in international GCOS-related meetings and conferences;
- Advocate for high-quality, sustained, long-term national climate observation of climate data following GCOS ECV requirements and guidance;
- Promote the reporting and use of climate data within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

It should be noted that this role could be combined with other related roles (e.g. as a focal point to WMO or the UNFCCC).

A mechanism for regularly communicating with National Coordinators is needed. In the past this was through regional workshops. While regional workshops were very useful, these are relatively expensive and can only address a few countries at one time. They were, however, appreciated by the UNFCCC and supported by SBSTA. An alternative would be to work alongside other regional meetings (e.g. WMO regional meetings, RBON, SBSTA etc.). This would allow a session to allow delegates to discuss issues and needs around their climate observations. It is therefore proposed that the GCOS secretariat should explore possibilities of holding such climate sessions making use of any opportunities that arise. If a specific area of concern is identified a regional meeting may be indicated.

Another possibility to foster communication with National Coordinators would be for the GCOS Secretariat to regularly organize teleconferences for groups of coordinators to discuss issues they have in common (e.g. funding, data policy).

## Annex A

### GCOS NATIONAL COORDINATORS - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Most of the climate observations that contribute to the global observing system for climate are performed under national auspices. The role of the GCOS National Coordinator is to promote communication between national systems and global bodies to ensure the best climate data is available at national level for science and adaptation.

The GCOS National Coordinator will:

- Provide a national focus to coordinate communication with the GCOS Secretariat, including updates on national GCOS activities, and, where appropriate, to participate in international GCOS-related meetings and conferences:
  - Provide the GCOS secretariat copies of any national climate observation report so they are aware of the overall status of the observing system;
  - Assist where possible in the exchange of information on the composition and performance of national components of GCOS networks with a view to enhancing the overall performance of the networks;
  - Work within an informal network of GCOS National Coordinators on priority GCOS issues common to all nations (e.g., funding, communications, training, data exchange, etc.);
  - Contribute to effective national coordination, amongst those responsible for the component systems of GCOS, including especially the WMO Integrated Global Observing Systems (WIGOS), the IOC-led Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS);
  - Ensure that important issues (e.g. funding, sustainability) are made known to the GCOS Secretariat for dissemination more widely as appropriate.
- Advocate for high-quality, sustained, long-term national climate observation of climate data, in particular:
  - Promote the adoption of the GCOS Essential Climate Variables (ECVs) for climate monitoring;
  - Promote adherence to the GCOS Climate Monitoring Principles and 'best practices' for climate observations;
  - Encourage the free and open exchange of all climate data;
  - Advocate for data rescue and the open and free exchange of digitised historic records.
- Promote the reporting and use of climate data within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):
  - Promote the use of the 'Revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines on global climate change observing systems' (FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.2) for facilitating reporting on the status of national components of GCOS;
  - Develop a close connection between climate monitoring, GCOS and national representatives to the UNFCCC, including the national delegations to its Conference of the Parties (COP) and Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

It is intended that the GCOS National Coordinators will cooperate collectively in an informal network and that groups of National Coordinators will endeavour to meet from time to time, e.g., at SBSTA sessions, to discuss issues related to GCOS and provide advice to the GCOS Steering Committee and GCOS Secretariat.

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