FORMATION OF THE FIRST-EVER INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETIES

BY WALTER F. DABBERDT

Participants at the International Forum of Meteorological Societies planning meeting held 13 Jan 2009 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Leaders of 19 of the world's regional and national meteorological societies recently met and unanimously agreed to form a first-ever International Forum of Meteorological Societies (IFMS). The fundamental goal of the IFMS is very basic: it is to foster and encourage communication and exchange of knowledge, ideas, and resources among the world's more than 60 meteorological societies. Such exchanges occur today only on a bilateral basis or through the efforts of three regional meteorological societies: the African Meteorological Society, the European Meteorological Society (EMS), and the Latino American Federation of Meteorological Societies (FLISMET).

The IFMS is quite distinct from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Whereas the WMO is an agency of the United Nations that deals with observations, standards, data exchange, and technology transfer among its 188 member states and territories, the IFMS will focus on advancing the goals and objectives of the world's professional and scientific societies. The IFMS is intended to be an informal mechanism that facilitates interactions among societies and, as such, will not have any legal or official formalism. Specific terms of reference are being drafted by an interim steering committee and will be presented to the participating societies at the IFMS's first global meeting.

The concept of an International Forum of Meteorological Societies arose out of discussions within the AMS Council and its Executive Committee that began in 2007 and resulted in a 2008 decision to have the AMS convene a planning meeting involving a representative subset of meteorological societies from around the world to explore whether there was sufficient common interest to form an international forum. The planning meeting was held 13 January 2009 in Phoenix, Arizona, in conjunction with the 89th Annual Meeting of the AMS. Representatives from 18 societies from North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, the WMO, and the International Affairs Office of NOAA's National Weather Service participated in the planning meeting (see sidebar) where, among other things, they unanimously agreed to establish the IFMS and go

Walter F. Dabberdt, of Vaisala Corp. in Boulder, Colorado, is Past President of the AMS.

DOI:10.1175/2009BAMS2902.1

forward with an inaugural global meeting of the IFMS in connection with the 90th Annual Meeting of the AMS that will be held 17–21 January 2010 in Atlanta, Georgia. (The formal motion to form the IFMS is available as a *BAMS* online supplement at DOI:10.1175/2009BAMS2902.2.)

A few examples of topics of common concern to IFMS members that were identified at the planning meeting include:

- the role of meteorological societies in global climate change: from education and communication to policy;
- the role of meteorological societies in coping with the impacts of severe natural weather hazards: education, planning, adaptation, and response;
- coping with the rapid evolution of society publications, electronic publishing, and increasing costs of print journals;
- trends in society membership;
- sector trends: academia, government, industry;
- retention of student members after graduation;
- entraining professionals in affiliated hard and soft sciences;
- domestic outreach—the role of the meteorological society in informing and educating professionals and the general public;
- reconciling the needs of professional and scientific members;
- international outreach—missed opportunities?

The first global IFMS meeting in Atlanta will be hosted by the AMS; future meetings are expected to take place every 2 to 3 years and will be hosted by meteorological societies around the world.

PARTICIPATING METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE IFMS PLANNING MEETING

American Meteorological Society §
Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society §
Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society
Chinese Meteorological Society §
Centro Argentino de Meteorologos
Czech Meteorological Society
Ethiopian Meteorological Society (EMIBAMA) §
European Meteorological Society §
Hong Kong Meteorological Society
Indian Meteorological Society §
Korean Meteorological Society
Latino American Federation Meteorological Societies (FLISMET) §
Meteorological Society of Japan
Meteorological Society of New Zealand
Mexican Organization of Meteorologists (OMMAC)
Philippines Meteorological Society
Royal Meteorological Society
South African Society for Atmospheric Sciences
World Meteorological Organization

§ Member of the interim steering committee

CHAPTER CHANNEL

Past Civilizations and Climate Change

Lewis (Skip) Messenger, professor of anthropology at Hamline University, brought the Twin Cities chapter back in time during its April meeting. Messenger's primary areas of study include Mesoamerica and Southeast Asia, along with a strong interest in weather. His presentation was entitled "Past Civilizations and Climate Change."

Messenger has studied the Maya in the Yucatan Peninsula with a focus on what lead to their downfall. At the peak of the Mayan age, there were about 15 million people living in the Yucatan, which is roughly the size of Minnesota. Around 900–1000 A.D., major architecture stopped and the population began to decline dramatically. Messenger looked to see if there was a shift in the weather pattern that could help explain the Maya's disappearance.

In looking at tree pollen from the time period, Messenger noted it disappeared from the samples, but then returned rather quickly, pointing to a relatively dramatic weather shift. Up to this point, people had only looked at climate over large regions and did not take into account smaller-scale variations. One place showing large variation is the Yucatan. Messenger explained that under most circumstances, rainfall increases in the Yucatan when one travels south and east. The Maya built their culture in the areas receiving the large amounts of rainfall so their crops would thrive. In a short