COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Convention of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

SUBJECT CATEGORY:
Meteorology

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:
Multilateral

FORM:
Legally binding treaty

STATUS:
- In force internationally since March 23, 1950
- Ratified and signed by Canada July 28, 1950 and in force since then

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:
Lead Department: Environment and Climate Change Canada
Partner Departments: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canadian Space Agency, Natural Resources Canada

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

***Web Links*:**
- WMO
- Text of WMO Convention
- Government of Canada Weather

Contacts:
ECCC Inquiry Centre

COMPENDIUM EDITION:
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PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

This legally binding agreement governs Canada's membership in the UN Agency with the mandate to facilitate cooperation in matters related to weather, water, climate, and air quality. Signed by Canada in 1950, this agreement enables Canada to access and share critical information and research needed to provide weather, water and climate information to Canadians to support safety, social and economic well-being and health. Further, this agreement allows Canada to access global data, which improves the accuracy of its weather predictions, and provides Canadians with up-to-date weather, water and climate information.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this agreement is to coordinate global activities related to meteorology including weather, air quality, climate and water considerations. These domains do not respect political boundaries and are global in nature requiring seamless real-time sharing of earth observation data to ensure governments have the information they need to make decisions in the face of changing environmental conditions.

KEY ELEMENTS

The agreement requires that Governments develop and implement standards for data, data-sharing principles and put in place mechanisms to ensure global coordination of the daily exchange of information. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) also contributes to marshalling efforts and mobilizing resources to build global capacity in the domains of weather, air quality, climate and water.

EXPECTED RESULTS

This agreement is expected to achieve measurable increases in the quality, accuracy and timeliness of meteorological information that is available to policy and decision makers, and the reduction of disasters related to weather, air quality, climate and water.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This agreement is important to Canada because without access to global data on a real-time basis we would not be able to predict the weather beyond one or two days. Additionally, participating in WMO activities gives us access to global meteorological research, the benefits of which in terms of improved meteorological services would be prohibitively expensive to achieve on our own.

The means by which this agreement is implemented in Canada is by active participation in the governance and technical activities coordinated by the WMO and cooperative engagement of interested stakeholders and partners including other departments, jurisdictions and the private sector.

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

At WMO Congress (June 2019) reforms were approved to embrace a more comprehensive Earth system approach to weather, water and climate warnings and predictions, with a stronger focus on water resources and the ocean, more coordinated climate activities and a more concerted effort to translate science into services for society.

Activities since 2019 have focused on implementing a governance reform, which has included streamlining the number of constituent bodies and meetings. This restructuring has promoted interaction across the various domains to move towards an Earth System approach.

Additionally activities have been undertaken to update major WMO policy to align direction with this more integrated approach to address challenges such as climate change, extreme weather, environmental degradation and urbanization.

Canadian senior officials and technical experts participate in all key WMO deliberations in order to share expertise, gain knowledge and influence the development of global standards.

Reports

Canada is a member of the WMO Executive Council, which meets annually and provides Reports on Executive Council outcomes.

The WMO issued a press release following the historical achievements of its extraordinary session of Congress in October 2021.

Results

In October 2021, at an extraordinary session of its Congress, WMO adopted:

(1) a new Unified Data Policy for the free and unrestricted exchange of observational, prediction and warning data - this new Policy builds on past policies and will result in more robust predictions for weather, climate, hydrology, ocean, atmospheric composition, cryosphere, and space weather;

(2) the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON), which defines minimum standards for observational data collection and exchange - GBON will help close gaps in essential observations around the world, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These gaps threaten the quality of local and global predictions and services and addressing them will help improve longer-term predictions, for example to detect precursor conditions for extremes in the seasonal time range and beyond; and

(3) a Water Declaration, as well as a Vision, Action Plan and Research Strategy with respect to hydrology - these water-related decisions recognize the central role of the water cycle in the water-climate-weather continuum and will guide the activities of WMO and its Members for years to come.

ECCC is also contributing $10M to WMO over six years to support the improvement of early warning systems in some of the world's most vulnerable communities in three geographic regions (South East Asia, South Pacific and Caribbean Small Island Developing States). This project is part of the Climate Risk Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative, to strengthen risk information and early warning systems to reduce human and economic losses associated with meteorological, hydrological and climate-related hazards and to leverage financing to protect populations exposed to extreme climate events. Canadian funds have supported numerous workshops and training sessions related to Coastal Inundation Forecasting, Severe Weather Forecasting, Flash Flood Guidance Systems, Common Alerting Protocol and Tropical Cyclones.