

First Funders' Forum for the Systematic Observations Financing Facility

Virtual Meeting
24 March 2021

Summary of the Chairperson

Date: 19 April 2021



SOFF

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

Weather and climate information for the global public good

First Funders' Forum for the Systematic Observations Financing Facility

24 March 2021

Summary of the Chairperson

I. Introduction

1. The first meeting of the forum of potential funders for the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) was convened virtually by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on 24 March 2021, 12:00-15:00h CET.
2. Delegations from 31 potential funders attended the meeting, 28 country delegations and one delegation each from the European Commission, the Nordic Development Fund and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. 20 multilateral and partner organizations participated as observers, including all members of the Alliance for Hydromet Development (see list of participants in Annex I). 23 statements of support were delivered by representatives from beneficiary countries and international development and climate finance institutions (see Annex II). The meeting was also attended by WMO management and staff. Johannes Linn, SOFF Global Facilitator, chaired the meeting.
3. The Chairperson welcomed all participants and noted that the purpose of the meeting was fourfold: first, for the SOFF team to present key aspects of the SOFF proposal, the details of which were contained in the report distributed in advance of the meeting (see link to report in Annex III); second, to have the delegations share their comments and questions on the proposal, to allow the SOFF team to further develop the initiative for maximum effectiveness; third, for participants to hear the statements of support from a number of important stakeholder representatives, including several beneficiary country representatives, with regard to the SOFF proposal; and, finally, to consider the way forward and next steps in preparing for the launch of SOFF envisioned for COP26 in November 2021.
4. The WMO Secretary-General and the WMO President addressed the meeting during the opening segment. Both stressed the foundational importance of the SOFF initiative for the improvement of weather forecasting and climate prediction. Closing the growing gap in weather observations among Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is critical for effective early warning of extreme events, for the productivity of many economic sectors and for timely adaptation to climate change worldwide. The WMO Secretary-General noted that the SOFF concept was central to WMO's contribution to global economic and social development, but that WMO is not a development finance agency and will not be a SOFF implementing entity. Instead, it will serve as the technical and standard-setting authority, verifying the compliance with GBON commitments, and supporting the building of technical capacity in member countries. The WMO President stressed that WMO

provides clear targets for SOFF with the definition of the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) requirements and the necessary tools to monitor SOFF achievements in improved observations sharing on an hourly basis. Both, the President and the Secretary-General, urged potential donors to support SOFF.

5. These messages were echoed and further amplified throughout the meeting in six videos and two live statements of support by a wide range of high-level representatives of prospective SOFF recipient countries, regional organizations and multilateral development partners (see links to statements in Annex III).
6. The Chairperson presented the provisional agenda for the meeting (see Annex IV). It was adopted without change. Following the opening segment, the meeting was structured in three segments dealing, respectively, with the SOFF rationale, the SOFF design and implementation, and the pathway to COP26 and next steps. For each of these agenda items, after initial stakeholder statements, the SOFF team briefly introduced the topic, followed by comments and questions from the delegates and responses from WMO staff.

II. Discussion

7. 13 potential funder delegations spoke. There was a strong recognition of the importance of improved weather and climate observations and their vital role for early warnings, climate information, resilient development and adaptation. Delegates expressed their interest in SOFF and provided valuable comments, questions and suggestions to further strengthen the SOFF concept and design. In their interventions, delegates focused principally on three issues: value proposition, implementation and sustainability. WMO staff assured delegates that all comments and questions will be addressed in the reports to be prepared for future SOFF Funders' Forums as well as one-on-one engagements as part of the SOFF consultation process from now to COP26.

Value proposition

8. Delegates stressed that the specific contribution of SOFF, in terms of benefits generated and in terms of its role relative to that of other development and climate finance organizations and funding agencies, needs to be spelled out, including: (i) ensuring that SOFF maintains a clear focus on the improvement of upstream data, rather than downstream improvements in weather and climate services, early warning, etc.; (ii) clarifying how upstream investments under SOFF will contribute to downstream benefits and especially for the "last mile"; (iii) avoidance of overlap with the functions of other organizations; and (iv) maximizing synergies and ensuring coordination with other partners, including through a potential formal structure within the SOFF governance.
9. WMO staff confirmed that SOFF design will reflect these concerns and appreciated suggestions to potentially integrate a more formal coordination mechanism within the SOFF governance structure to maximize synergies with other mechanisms and initiatives and to

ensure linkages between SOFF upstream outcomes and “last mile” downstream benefits for beneficiary countries. WMO staff stressed that the returns expected from investments of many climate, development, early warning and insurance initiatives will not be fully realized without the weather and climate data that underpins them. In the past investments tended to focus on the downstream without sufficient attention to the availability of such data. The design of SOFF has been jointly developed with major climate and development finance institutions and with major initiatives like CREWS and InsuResilience. The suggestions provided by funders will be fleshed out in collaboration with these partners.

Implementation

10. Delegates asked questions and provided comments on various aspects of implementation, with suggestions to:

- clearly identify observation gaps in LDCs and SIDS;
- ensure effective integration of the WMO’s Country Support Initiative (CSI) into the SOFF;
- provide a well-articulated description how SOFF will be implemented in practice, including which implementing organizations SOFF will work with, who will be the main beneficiaries, how the flow of funds will be managed, and how SOFF will cooperate and coordinate with its partner organizations in the delivery of quality capacity-building projects and activities;
- describe how peer-to-peer support among the meteorological agencies of neighboring countries will be used to support the less advanced countries to upgrade their observational capacity, how the Country Hydromet Diagnostics compares to other types of assessments and how duplicative assessments across agencies will be avoided;
- explore the potential to use a risk-based approach to selecting and prioritizing countries for SOFF support;
- consider potential perverse incentives and how to ensure that SOFF will support the poorest countries while also creating incentives for improving performance in the long-term;
- clarify the consistency of the SOFF approach with WMO’s open data policy;
- further develop the framework to demonstrate how the initiative will translate reduction of observational data gaps into concrete adaptation and resilience benefits for people in the recipient countries, ensuring that SOFF outcomes will reach the “last mile”;
- indicate the role of the private sector as a partner in assuring the success of SOFF.

11. WMO staff provided the following clarification on several questions:

- SOFF design originated from a baseline assessment of gaps in the global basic observing network. In addition, the current status of data exchange gaps across the globe can be publicly accessed in real-time thanks to the WMO WDQMS monitoring of data exchange system;
- The Country Support Initiative will be fully integrated into SOFF. The Country Hydromet Diagnostics is an essential part of SOFF innovation as it will assess countries' capacity across the whole hydromet value chain through peer-to-peer support as part of the CSI. The Country Hydromet Diagnostics is the common assessment tool of the Alliance for Hydromet Development;
- To avoid unintended incentive effects, the eligibility for the grants for the SOFF investment and compliance phases is dependent on the SIDS and/or LDCs status of a country;
- SOFF is planning to address the continuum between SOFF investments and "last mile" benefits in two main ways. First, investments will be embedded in larger hydromet/climate projects promoted by the SOFF implementing entities. This will ensure a coordinated approach that will link SOFF investments to the "continuum" of the climate services value chain and ultimately translate into adaptation benefits. Second, the SOFF readiness phase will not only assess the GBON gap but support countries with an integrated assessment of the whole value chain, thus providing countries and SOFF implementing entities with an overarching assessment on the country status and how to integrate SOFF support into the broader hydromet development efforts;
- Concerning the alignment of SOFF with WMO data policy, the basic design of GBON and SOFF is to make the observational data freely available as a global public good. WMO Data Policy defines essential data as free and openly exchanged and GBON is defined as the essential (or "core" under the upcoming new policy) elements for weather and climate;
- A risk-based approach will be explored to prioritize SOFF investments.

Sustainability

12. Delegates asked for more details on the rationale and operational aspects of the long-term support for compliance and the SOFF sustainability concept.

13. WMO staff noted experience has demonstrated that continued funding support for the compliance phase is needed to ensure the sustainability of basic observing systems in LDCs and SIDS. This can be justified on the grounds that beneficiary countries produce valuable global public goods that they could not be expected to fund on their own, given their economic and fiscal situation. The long-term support is built on the common reflection from

all members of the Alliance for Hydromet Development and several other development partners that many observing systems have not continued operating after the end of the project. To achieve long-term sustainability then, the required funds would have to come from the donor community or eventually from other mechanisms of financing global public goods. The delivery of compliance funding under SOFF will follow a results-based approach and be further specified in reports that will be submitted for the planned future SOFF funders' forums.

III. Closing

14. In his closing statement, the WMO Secretary-General thanked all delegates for joining the meeting, for their interest and statements of support, and for their very helpful questions and comments. He assured delegates that the SOFF team will reflect carefully on the issues raised and address them in the reports to be submitted for future meetings.
15. The Chairperson delivered a provisional summary of the event, thanked all participants, the WMO team, interpreters and logistical support personnel, and closed the meeting.

Annex I. Participant list

(* Member of Alliance for Hydromet Development)

Name	Country / Institution	Role
Johannes Linn	WMO/SOFF Global Facilitator	Chair
Gerhard Adrian	WMO	President
Petteri Taalas	WMO	Secretary-General
Anthony Rea	WMO	Presenter
Markus Repnik	WMO	Presenter
Laura Tuck	WMO/SOFF Global Facilitator	Presenter
Claire Clement	Australia	Potential funder
Michael Staudinger	Austria/WMO Regional President	Potential funder
Erwin Künzi	Austria	Potential funder
Helmut Hojesky	Austria	Potential funder
Martin Pammer	Austria	Potential funder
Jen Collette	Canada	Potential funder
Shannon deGraaf	Canada	Potential funder
Xiaodan Na	China	Potential funder
Xianghua Xu	China	Potential funder
Branka Ivancan-Picek	Croatia	Potential funder
Kreso Pandzic	Croatia	Potential funder
Tilde Vejen Jespersen	Denmark	Potential funder
Jochen Luther	European Commission	Potential funder
Valentina Villoria	European Commission	Potential funder
Harri Pietarila	Finland	Potential funder
Liisa Oravisto Gomes	Finland	Potential funder
Maria Hurtola	Finland	Potential funder
Outi Myatt-Hirvonen	Finland	Potential funder
Marie-Pierre Meganck	France	Potential funder
Stewart Collis	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Potential funder
Britta Horstmann	Germany	Potential funder
Gregor Laumann	Germany	Potential funder
Olaf Pollmann	Germany	Potential funder
Philipp V. Carnap	Germany	Potential funder
Vassilios Sitaras	Greece	Potential funder
Árni Snorrason	Iceland	Potential funder
Geir Oddsson	Iceland	Potential funder
Magnus Sigurdsson	Iceland	Potential funder
Adriano Raspanti	Italy	Potential funder
Alessandra Chiarini	Italy	Potential funder

Maria Gemma Pinto	Italy	Potential funder
Marie Sol Fulci	Italy	Potential funder
Akihiko Shimpo	Japan	Potential funder
Kensuke Suzuki	Japan	Potential funder
Byoungcheol Kim	Korea	Potential funder
InSun Kim	Korea	Potential funder
Sungwha Son	Korea	Potential funder
Choi Ys	Korea	Potential funder
Abdulaziz Alqarawi	Kuwait	Potential funder
Salah Al Ansari	Kuwait	Potential funder
Andrew Ferrone	Luxembourg	Potential funder
Gé Verver	Netherlands	Potential funder
Rubert Konijn	Netherlands	Potential funder
Aage Jorgensen	Nordic Development Fund	Potential funder
Astrid Tveteraas	Norway	Potential funder
Abdulla Al Mannai	Qatar	Potential funder
Elena Mateescu	Romania	Potential funder
Ayman Ghulam	Saudi Arabia	Potential funder
Pablo Ortiz-de-Galisteo	Spain	Potential funder
Ilmar Karro	Sweden	Potential funder
Fabio Fontana	Switzerland	Potential funder
Gabriela Blatter	Switzerland	Potential funder
Murat Altinyollar	Turkey	Potential funder
Ozan Cakir	Turkey	Potential funder
Sadik Arslan	Turkey	Potential funder
Abdulla Ahmed Al Mandous	UAE/WMO Regional President	Potential funder
Helen Bye	UK	Potential funder
Katherine Marsden	UK	Potential funder
Nyree Pinder	UK	Potential funder
Brittany Croll	USA	Potential funder
Courtney Draggon	USA	Potential funder
Dan Muller	USA	Potential funder
Fred Branski	USA	Potential funder
Youssef Elkei	USA	Potential funder
Arghya Sinha Roy	ADB*	Observer
Mahamat Assouyouti	AF*	Observer
Al-Hamndou Dorsouma	AfDB*	Observer
James Kinyangi	AfDB*	Observer
Zita Wilks	African Group of Negotiators	Observer
Lorie Rufo	CIF*	Observer
Xianfu Lu	CIF*	Observer

John Harding	CREWS	Observer
Amir Habchi	EBRD*	Observer
Fabio Venuti	ECMWF	Observer
Florian Pappenberger	ECMWF	Observer
Jaehyang So	GCA*	Observer
Joseph Intsiful	GCF*	Observer
Urvaksh D. Patel	GCF*	Observer
Fareeha Iqbal	GEF*	Observer
Astrid Zwick	InsuResilience	Observer
Daouda Ben Oumar Ndiaye	IsDB*	Observer
Phento Tshering	LDC Group	Observer
Sonam Zangmo	LDC Group	Observer
Tashi Chuki	LDC Group	Observer
Ben Webster	REAP	Observer
Benjamin Larroquette	UNDP*	Observer
Jochem Zoetelief	UNEP*	Observer
Pierre Bardoux	UNMPTF	Observer
Vladimir Tsirkunov	WB*	Observer
Montserrat Barroso	WFP*	Observer
Amos Makarau	WMO	WMO
Annick Champagne	WMO	WMO
Ben Churchill	WMO	WMO
Bernard Gomez	WMO	WMO
Christophe Jacob	WMO	WMO
Clare Nullis Kapp	WMO	WMO
Claudia Rubart	WMO	WMO
Elena Manaenkova	WMO Deputy Secretary-General	WMO
Elhousseine Gouaini	WMO	WMO
Ernest Afiesimama	WMO	WMO
Evan Thompson	WMO Regional President	WMO
Filipe Lúcio	WMO	WMO
Georgina Kahama	WMO	WMO
Jean-Paul Gaudechoux	WMO	WMO
Johan Stander	WMO	WMO
Joseph Mukabana	WMO	WMO
Juerg Luterbacher	WMO	WMO
Kanayo Nwanze	WMO	WMO
Karolin Eichler	WMO	WMO
Laura Paterson	WMO	WMO
Lorena Santamaria	WMO	WMO
Mario Peiró	WMO	WMO

Mary Power	WMO	WMO
Maud Steiner	WMO	WMO
Sohyun Na	WMO	WMO
Nadia Oppliger	WMO	WMO
P. Michel Nikiema	WMO	WMO
Paul Egerton	WMO	WMO
Rodney Martínez	WMO	WMO
Roland Abah	WMO	WMO
Rose Devillier	WMO	WMO
Serena Odianose	WMO	WMO
Wenjian Zhang	WMO Assistant Secretary-General	WMO
Yinka R. Adebayo	WMO	WMO

Annex II. SOFF statements of support

Session	Statement by	Type
1. Opening	Frank Bainimarama , Prime Minister Fiji	Recorded
	Kristalina Georgieva , Managing Director of IMF	
	Country Video with 8 statements Aubrey Webson , UN Ambassador for Antigua and Barbuda, AOSIS Chair Tanguy Gahouma , Chair of African Group of Negotiators Carlos Eduardo Correa , Minister of Environment of Colombia Pearnel Charles Jr., MP , Minister of Housing Urban Renewal Environment and Climate Change of Jamaica Gilberto Silva , Minister for Agriculture and Environment of Cabo Verde Fanomezantsoa Lucien Ranarivelo , Ministre de l'Agriculture de l'Elevage et de la Pêche du Madagascar Vincent Timbindi Dabilgou , Ministre des Transports, de la Mobilité urbaine et de la Sécurité Routière du Burkina Faso Yolanda González Hernández , WMO President Region III, South America	
2. SOFF Rationale	Florence Rabier , Director-General of ECMWF	Recorded
	Michael Staudinger , WMO President Region Europe	Live
3. SOFF Design and Implementation	Alliance Video (9 Statements) David Beasley , Executive Director, WFP Inger Andersen , UNEP Executive Director Carlos Manuel Rodriguez , GEF CEO Juergen Voegele , Vice President, World Bank Yannick Glemarec , GCF Executive Director Bruno Carrasco , ADB Director General Achim Steiner , UNDP Administrator Mafalda Duarte , CIFs CEO Bandar M.H. Hajjar , IsDB President	Recorded
4. Road to COP	Sonam Phuntsho Wangdi , Chair LDC Group on Climate Change, delivered by Phento Tshering, lead negotiator.	Live
	Daouda Konate , delivering ANCOMET statement WMO President Region Africa	Recorded

Annex III – Forum background information

- Report for the SOFF First Funders' Forum:
https://library.wmo.int/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=21862#.YGQqWK8zY2x
- First Funders' Forum presentations:
<https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/how-we-do-it/development-partnerships/Innovating-finance/SOFF-funders-forum>
- SOFF statements of support:
<https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/how-we-do-it/development-partnerships/Innovating-finance/SOFF-support-statements>
- More information on SOFF can be found at:
<https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/how-we-do-it/development-partnerships/Innovating-finance>

Annex IV. Final Agenda First Funders' Forum

Agenda

SOFF First Funders' Forum

24 March 2021, 12:00-15:00h CET

Time	Agenda Item	Description
25 mins	1. Opening a. Welcome b. Agenda c. Opening remarks d. Statements	Welcome: Secretary General, WMO President, WMO Opening Remarks: Prime Minister of Fiji Managing Director, IMF Statements: Beneficiary countries
50 mins	2. SOFF rationale a. Statements b. Presentation c. Discussion	Statements: European meteorological institutions Presentation: Chapter 1 of Report
75 mins	3. SOFF design and implementation a. Statements b. Presentation c. Discussion	Statements: WMO Presidents of Regional Associations Alliance for Hydromet Development Presentation: Chapters 2-5 of Report
20 mins	4. Roadmap to COP26 a. Statements b. Presentation c. Discussion	Statements: Beneficiary countries Presentation: Chapter 6 of Report
10 mins	5. Closing	Closing statement by Secretary General, WMO Summation by Chair