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Report of the Services and Forecast Systems Programme Area Coordinator

(Submitted by the SFSPA Coordinator)

The third session of the Commission established three primary thrusts for the Service and Forecast Systems Program Area. They are: i) ensuring marine weather safety for mariners at sea including emergency response for maritime distress; ii) reducing risks of natural disasters on coastal communities due to coastal extratropical storms and land falling tropical storms; and iii) the emerging area of establishing operational ocean forecasting services. These service thrusts resulted in the reestablishment of three expert teams (ETs) under the SFSPA: Expert Team on Marine Safety Services (ETMSS), its responsibilities will also include maritime emergency response; Expert Team on Wind wave and Storm surge (ETWS), and Expert Team on Sea Ice (ETSI). In response to the thrust iii), the Commission established a new expert team for the JCOMM Services, i.e., the Expert Team on Operational Ocean Forecast Systems (ETOOFS) and renamed the Service Program Area to Service and Forecast Systems Program Area (SFSPA). The Commission also reestablished the Service Coordination Group (SCG) which is critical for coordinating SFSPA projects carried out by expert teams.

Development of Climate Service for mitigation and adaptation of climate change impacts has emerged as a major driver for JCOMM services. This links to two priority focus areas for SFSPA. They are: a) providing weather and sea ice information and emergency response services to ensure the navigation and maritime safety for the Arctic Ocean, and b) providing enhanced warning and forecast services for coastal hazards and inundation to reduce disaster risks resulting from natural hazards and consequences of global sea level rise such as storm surge.

The current intersessional period between JCOMM-III (Nov. 2009) and JCOMM-IV (May 2012) is unusually short with merely two and half years. At the JCOMM-III, the Commission endorsed a comprehensive list of priority activities for each Service Program Area Expert Team. However, the SFSPA will focus on a limited number of priority projects that are of high impact, many of them cross expert teams in nature, and are considered as "low hanging fruit" to ensure achieving expected outcomes within this short intersessional period. Some of the key projects include: Coordinate the implementation of GMDSS; create an initial catalogue of marine and oceanographic parameters for Electronic Navigation Charts; develop experimental suites of on-demand arctic marine weather and sea ice products; disseminate a demonstration suite of marine weather service products via weather gmdss.org; conduct a survey of ship operators and other operational oceanographic service users; begin the development of the Guide for Ocean Forecasting Systems; and develop the extreme wave data base and storm surge climatology.

The ETMSS and ETSI will jointly lead the effort to coordinate the expansion of navigation safety and emergency response services into the Arctic Ocean through the implementation of GMDSS there by

2011. This effort includes incorporating sea ice information into the suite of marine weather warning and forecasts to address the particular challenge of navigating in the icy waters. In addition, the two teams will also lead a project toward developing a capability to incorporate critical marine weather forecast variables such as wind/wave into electronic navigation charts (ENC), based on the successful efforts by ETSI that had made ENC compatible sea ice charts.

At the recent Service Coordination Group meeting in Melbourne, Australia (SCG-V, May 2010), the Group finalized a list of priority projects to be carried out by SFSPA expert teams during this current intersessional period. Five priority projects that ETMSS is leading are described in the report by the ETMSS Chair.

An important objective for the ETMSS-III is to review the status of these priority projects, adjust timeline if necessary, and identify issues and/or opportunities that need the attention of the JCOMM management committee. The 8th session of the JCOMM management committee will meet in November 2010. It will be an opportunity to bring potential issues or opportunities to the management committee for their discussions or actions. In addition, progress to date on these projects and any potential adjustment on priorities and timelines will be reported to the management committee.