

**WELCOME ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE
WMO First Session of Southeastern Europe
Climate Outlook Forum (SEECOF-1)
Zagreb, Croatia, 11-12 June 2008**

By Ivan Čačić
DHMZ Director and PR of Croatia with WMO

Distinguished guests, dear colleagues

It is my special honour, privilege and pleasure to welcome you at the first Regional Climate Outlook Forum on the European continent. I'm very pleased that the World meteorological organization – WMO has chosen South-Eastern Europe, including Caucasus region, as a pilot region for the Forum activity. Fortunately this great initiative has become reality because of the well-built support of the World Bank, Deutscher Wetterdienst, Meteo Swiss, Environmental Agency of the Republic of Slovenia and the Croatian Government.

For that reason my special welcome is going to here present:

Croatian Secretary of Science and Technology Prof. Dr. Dražen Vikić Topić

Mr Ron Hoffer, the World Bank Representative

Dr Silvo Žlebir, Director-General of Environmental Agency of the Republic of Slovenia who is here also representing Slovenia as the EU presidency country

Dr Rupa Kumar Kolli, Chief of World Climate Applications and Services Division of the WMO and the last but not the least, Dušan Hrček, representative of the WMO Office for Europe and the WMO Secretary General representative in this Forum – the key person responsible for this event.

Let me indorse welcome of Dr. Daniel Keuerleber-Burk, the President of the WMO Region VI – Europe who has expressed his awareness on the importance of the meeting, his contentedness to know that this event serves the aims of the RAVI Strategic Plan as well as his appreciation to the organizers of the Forum for their engagement and their continued support of RAVI matters.

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

I'm delighted to see you all here: Directors and representatives of the National meteorological and hydrological services – NMHSs of the 16 countries together with the users – including representatives of numerous ministries and state bodies - and joined with the world-class experts in the seasonal and climate forecast.

We are all aware of the power of the long time-range information such are seasonal forecast and climate projections, particularly for the strategic planning, energy and water management and securing sustainable development. Climate change and related weather extremes has become global reality what nobody can escape. Every corner of the world is affected by the new reality. Here in Croatia, for example, we had one of the warmest summer 2007 (joined with disaster events such are forest fires with human casualties – not only in Croatia but also in Greece) and the warmest winter 2006/2007 ever on the record.

This raises high responsibility of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and consequently their obligation in raising their capability to serve users with the proper information.

It was strongly recognized by the meteorological and hydrological community worldwide under the umbrella of the WMO. Here, in the South-Eastern Europe, it was also acknowledged by the Informal Conference of Directors of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, so called ICEED. It is important to identify again that all the NMHSs of ICEED and Caucasus region countries are also present now on this Forum – giving thus very positive signal of readiness to raise capacity building and information potential for the users as well as readiness to work together - to build regional synergy what could be materialized through numerous centres of excellence – fulfilling thus the goals of the Strategic plan of the Region VI – Europe.

We are all looking forward that this Forum serves as one of the best approach in achieving the most important strategic goal: to meet the need of the users with the best possible scientific and technical potentials.

We are very pleased that Croatia is contributing in this goal and we are proud to act as a proactive partner. For this achievement I wish to gratitude the WMO and the co-sponsors for their support, guidance and assistance.

Distinguished colleagues, I wish you enjoyable stay in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, and the most successful and productive Forum.

Thank you.