



Media Alert
For immediate release

ICTP, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to launch South Asian Climate Outlook Forum

***WMO Secretary General, ICTP Director to sign agreement
on Thursday 6 August, 9 am, ICTP Adriatico Guesthouse, Trieste***

(4 August 2009, Trieste, Italy) Nearly half of the world's population is affected by the South Asian monsoon, which brings severe storms and flooding every year to wide swathes of Asian Countries. But climate change is now making things worse, strongly impacting the region's agriculture, health and economy.

Improved climate predictions could help the region with disaster risk reduction, agriculture and economic planning, and is at the heart of an agreement to be signed between the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and the WMO on Thursday, 6 August.

Media are invited to the signing ceremony, which will be attended by ICTP Director K. R. Sreenivasan, WMO Secretary Michel Jarraud, and Professor Jagadish Shukla, President of the Institute of Global Environment and Society, as well as high-level representatives of South Asian meteorological services.

Shukla, who initiated climate and weather studies at ICTP in the 1980s at the behest of ICTP founder and Nobel Laureate Abdus Salam, and who is chairing a meeting this week and next on predictability of climate and weather, explained why ICTP is the ideal institute to take the lead in coordinating climate predictions for South Asia. "Abdus Salam had a strong interest in this area and asked me to start research and training activities in weather and climate. Those activities have since evolved into ICTP's Earth System Physics section, and now, after 20 years of weather and climate activities, we have the capability to help South Asian countries," he said.

Shukla explained that the goal of the agreement is to have countries in South Asia work together to produce better seasonal climate forecasts. "Director generals from all of the region's meteorological services will be in Trieste to launch the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum and pledge their support to its cause," said Shukla.

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The monsoon is essential for South Asia's agriculture, but poor infrastructure and poverty have left communities increasingly ill equipped to cope with the impact of weather disasters. Flooding and landslides claim lives, destroy property and crops and increase the prevalence of diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. Climate and weather predictions can help increase society's resilience to climate change and how it affects South Asian societies.

For more information, please contact:

Mary Ann Williams, ICTP Public Information Officer. Tel.: 040 2240 603;
mwilliams@ictp.it