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# Tokyo Typhoon Center 30th anniversary marks achievements and challenges

Tokyo, 11 October 2019 _ Dramatic improvements in satellite technology, forecasts and early warnings have helped save hundreds of thousands of lives from tropical cyclones. But the increasing societal impacts as a result of sea level rise, more extreme weather and population shifts call for even more concerted disaster risk management in the future.

This was the underlying message of the High-level Dialogues on Tropical Cyclones, which were hosted by the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) to commemorate the 30th anniversary of WMO's Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre (RSMC) Tokyo – Tokyo Typhoon Center. In addition to celebrating three decades of achievement, a concluding statement pinpointed priorities for the next decade to protect lives and livelihoods.

"The vital role you play in making the world more resilient to natural disasters will be more important than ever in the years to come," said Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Shinzo Abe, in his video message sent to the ceremony, highlighting the important contribution of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in making the world more resilient to natural hazards.

The event in Tokyo on 10-11 October was attended by senior Japanese government officials, WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)/WMO Typhoon Committee Members and all WMO Regional Specialized Meteorological Centers (RSMCs) for tropical cyclone forecasting.

An outcome statement issued at the end of the High-level Dialogues highlighted the role of NMHSs as a trigger for disaster prevention and response of the whole country. It also stressed the importance of collaboration between all sectors of society, including physical and social science areas, in order to enhance warning services of NMHSs based on an understanding of risk perceptions and human behavior.

Mr Yasuo Sekita, Director-General of JMA and the Permanent Representative of Japan with WMO, emphasized the shared perception on the urgent need for NMHSs to enhance social science approaches through inter-sectoral collaboration to better serve the society, and confirmed his decision to take lead in supporting NMHSs in developing capacity through various activities of RSMC Tokyo.

"Tropical cyclones are among the most devastating of all natural hazards. They wreak havoc with their violent winds, torrential rainfall and associated storm surges and floods," said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas. "Seven out of ten disasters that caused the biggest economic losses in the world from 1970-2019 are tropical cyclones," he said.

"New technologies and dramatic advances in monitoring and forecasting skills of tropical cyclones achieved in the last 30 years means that death tolls of tens or even hundreds of thousands are a thing of the past. Improved multi-hazard early warning systems will help us protect lives and property in the future. But the challenges are immense," said Mr Taalas.

Sea level rise and extreme weather patterns are having an increasing impact on vulnerable populations, especially those of Small Island Developing States (SIDSs) and coastal megacities. Some studies show an increase in tropical cyclone intensify because of climate change.

As the meeting took place, typhoon Hagibis tracked towards Japan. It was one of the most rapidly intensifying tropical cyclones on record. Although Hagibis was forecast to weaken ahead of landfall, it is still expected to have a serious impact on transport, infrastructure and major events including the Rugby World Cup.

The Tokyo Typhoon Center is one of WMO's longest-established Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres. It is responsible for the western North Pacific region, where more tropical cyclones occur than anywhere else in the world, and serves the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee.

The other RSMCs are La Reunion (France), Miami (USA), Honolulu (USA), Nadi (Fiji) and New Delhi (India).

Since its establishment in 1989, RSMC Tokyo has witnessed drastic improvements in satellite imagery and tropical cyclone track forecasts, as well as capacity development for disaster-prone developing countries in the basin.

JMA shares meteorological data from the Himawari-8 satellite with the Asia-Pacific basin and has provided technical assistance for obtaining and using the data. This has proved vital to support improved preparedness in the face of rapidly developing weather systems such as tropical cyclones.

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