

New climate forecasting system to be created

September 4 2009, By ELIANE ENGELER , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- The World Climate Conference has approved the creation of a new climate forecasting system to help countries adapt to climate change and enable them to better prepare for natural disasters, officials said Friday.

Delegates from around 150 nations attending the conference adopted the declaration by consensus on Thursday, and the U.N. weather agency predicted the new Global Framework for Climate Services would be up and running by 2011 to improve climate forecasts and share that information around the world.

Rich countries such as the United States already have systems that provide climate forecasts, but only in the short term and not coordinated with the rest of the world, said Thomas Karl, director of the National Climate Data Center at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"Climate services is a new concept," he said in an interview.

He said even climate information from Mali or Malaysia is important to the U.S., and that the new framework will provide that and have experts from around the world regularly meet to coordinate their analysis of [climate change](#) information.

The price of creating the new system was not given, but Karl said it would probably cost twice as much as the world currently spends on climate prediction.

The Global Framework for Climate Services will provide forecasts on weather patterns months or even years ahead, Karl said. In the next few months, the U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization's members will meet to set up a task force to help implement the framework.

African countries said Friday they hoped the new system would help their farmers prepare for droughts and floods, and make agriculture - the cornerstone of most of their economies - more resilient to climate change.

Guinea's minister of transport, El-Hadj Mamady Kaba, said the Global Framework would send climate information out faster to the people who need it and help authorities plan for disasters.

"Extreme climate events are being seen more and more frequently," he told the conference, citing severe droughts, floods, cyclones, wind and dust storms, as well as heat waves.

John Njoroge Michuki, Kenya's environment minister, said: "Dried up water bodies and wetlands, and drastic changes to rainfall patterns, have resulted in flooding, rising epidemics and severe and prolonged drought and famine" in his country.

Of the 11 glaciers on Mount Kenya at the beginning of the last century, five have melted, Michuki told the conference, adding that there is an "urgent need" for more climate information.

Rich nations should support the installation of more weather and climate observation stations in Africa, Michuki said.

The five-day World Climate Conference, which was ending Friday, tried to find ways for the world to cope with global warming that will occur because of greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere, regardless of

what climate negotiations achieve in a December meeting in Copenhagen. Delegates said the Geneva conference will provide useful scientific information for the Copenhagen negotiations, which aim at forging a new accord to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on reducing the gases blamed for global warming.

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