

**ESCAP/WMO
Typhoon Committee**

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

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TC Chairperson's Report 2013

*(Submitted by the TC Chair,
CM Shun, PR of Hong Kong, China with WMO)*

ACTION REQUIRED:

The Committee is invited:

- a) To take note of the key events in 2013
- b) To consider the ideas and proposals of the TC Chair in formulating the future AOPs, initiatives and recommendations

TYPHOON COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2013

1. Typhoons in the Region

1.1 It was quite an eventful year in 2013 in terms of typhoon hazards and impact in the Typhoon Committee (TC) region. While more details could be found in reports of TC Members and RSMC Tokyo, the catastrophic case of Typhoon Haiyan would surely be remembered and studied for years to come. While missions to the Philippines were being planned by TC/WGDRR in synergy with ESCAP and WMO to review and study the case, initiatives in response to the preliminary lessons learnt had already been set in motion. **TC Members and all working groups are encouraged to consider further initiatives and follow-up actions arising from Haiyan.**

1.2 One tragic aspect of Haiyan's case was that despite the availability of fairly reliable forecasts and warnings, both in terms of cyclone motion and storm surge threat, the outcome of high casualty figures in thousands was **a stark reminder of the need for more DRR effort in ensuring effective emergency response.** Although the critical factors in the case of Haiyan were yet to be ascertained, the importance for the warnings issued by the NMHSes (or other competent authorities) to go the last mile, with effective communication to the public, the media and all emergency response stakeholders to trigger timely response actions was very clear. One initiative, proposed by Hong Kong, China (as a strawman for triggering further initiatives) and agreed by the WGDRR during the 8th IWS in Macao, China, was to produce outreach and educational material such as short videos to alert the vulnerable communities about the impact of storm surge and other typhoon-related hazards for use by TC Members.

1.3 Apparently, increased alertness and awareness on the potential threat of Haiyan after what it had done to the Philippines helped in some way to mitigate its subsequent impact on Viet Nam. In turn, it prompted the question of whether the Philippines could have reaped similar benefits given that Haiyan had also left a trail of devastation across the less inhabited Micronesian island of Kayangel in Palau earlier. In an increasingly connected world where information could be beamed across the internet within a short time, the relay of news images such as these might also have served an advanced warning purpose in raising people's awareness in the Philippines. The possibility of engaging the news/social media or utilizing crowd-sourced information should be further explored for potential DRR benefits.

1.4 One intriguing development in the case of Haiyan was Viet Nam's urgent request to WMO and TC Members for technical support and advice in operational forecasting and warning of the typhoon. On receipt of such a request, WMO organized immediately a small *ad hoc* emergency response team to coordinate assistance to Viet Nam. In particular, RSMC Tokyo Typhoon Centre, China Meteorological Administration and Hong Kong Observatory provided prognostic guidance material as well as advice on communication and warning strategies for Viet Nam's reference. Based on such recommendations and technical advice, actions were taken well in advance to mobilize and evacuate people in vulnerable areas, resulting in limited impact in terms of losses of lives and damages to properties. The international collaboration in support of Viet Nam

was a success story demonstrating the excellent cooperation fostered by the WMO family spirit, and the DRR benefits through well orchestrated and synergized actions.

1.5 As the emergency assistance provided to Viet Nam was an *ad hoc* approach, a full analysis of the response, including the differences it made, and how it might be improved for future emergency response in similar situations, should be undertaken and documented. In the future, **how extra support could be effectively rendered for Members in need through established mechanisms, supported by a network of operational contacts in the TC region, should be further considered and pursued**, taking due consideration of the roles of the WMCs, RSMCs and other centres concerned (e.g. RFSCs under SWFDP). Standardized and synergized procedures in the form of a concise and comprehensive technical guide should be developed for urgent reference and actions, and this brought into focus the relevance of the SSOP project currently undertaken by TC.

1.6 The development of impact-based forecasting and warning should be pursued and operational methodology, notably CAP, to facilitate the effective communication of warnings should be further developed by TC Members. More effective use of the web-based forecasters' forum (<http://www.typhoon.gov.cn/en/bbs/>), already established for the TC region by WGM with kind cooperation of the Shanghai Typhoon Institute, should be encouraged with a view to promoting real-time or near real-time operational exchanges among Members, especially under emergency response situations. SWFDP for SE Asia, a WMO project presented during the 2nd TRCG Forum held in conjunction with the 8th IWS, is another relevant initiative that deserves the attention and support of the TC community in the coming years. To enhance capability in forecasting as well as DRR aspects, **Members are urged to actively support or take advantage of these capacity-building opportunities where possible.**

2. Cross-cutting Projects and Field Experiments

UFRM

2.1 The UFRM project was completed in early 2013, with achievements and outcomes not only useful for TC Members but also outside the TC region. As a consequential activity of UFRM, WGH had proposed a new project, named Operational System for Urban Flood Forecasting and Inundation Mapping (OSUFFIM), for TC Members with the objectives of: (1) carrying out research on the key technical issues in the UFRM project; and (2) developing a real time operational platform for urban flood forecasting and inundation mapping for TC Members, a cross-cutting initiative linking all three components.

SSOP

2.2 After the TC-45 Session, activities and actions associated with the SSOP project increased in intensity following the appointment of Mr. Jim Weyman as the Program Manager/Technical Advisor. A kick-off workshop was held in May 2013 at the UN Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand. In-country pilot workshops were held in

succession in the Philippines, Bangladesh and Pakistan in October 2013. In preparation for the pilot workshops, the Program Manager had prepared and compiled five documents of available information on early warning systems and SOPs. Members had been invited to nominate focal points in developing the final SSOP. Due to a slightly delayed start of the project at the initial preparatory stages, a revised work plan and budget for the project were prepared for consideration by ESCAP and a project extension from a termination date of 31 July 2014 to 31 December 2014 was requested. Further discussion would need to be conducted with the Project Manager to see how the remaining tasks could be satisfactorily completed and the project outcome timely delivered.

EXOTICA

2.3 Following up on the field experiment proposed by WGM in the TC-45 Session, WGM had made attempts to leverage the enhanced observation set up for SCMREX in 2014, while the Hong Kong Observatory would continue to make available observations from their aircraft reconnaissance flights over the northern part of the South China Sea during the coming typhoon season to test out concepts. A revised implementation plan for the full-fledged field experiment proposed by WGM was discussed during the 8th IWS, and further feedback from TC Members and inputs from RSMC Tokyo will be sought.

3. Effective Governance and Strategic Development

3.1 As a result of proposals at the TC-44 Session and decisions at the TC-45 Session, governance and efficiency of TC were enhanced. Session meetings were shortened, Members' country reports were streamlined with executive summary for decision-makers, Rules of Procedures were revised, and AWG chairmanship and ToRs of working groups were reviewed. Meanwhile, with reference to an earlier request for strengthened DRR support at TCS, the opportunity is also taken to express our appreciation to Macao, China for kindly agreeing to the attachment of a seconded DRR specialist who has since joined the Secretariat team in July 2013.

3.2 During the intersessional period, a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan was undertaken by AWG, and Members were consulted on the changes proposed. As WMO is actively considering the new WMO Strategic Plan 2016-2019 and its priority areas, **TC Members are invited to take these into further consideration in the review and update of the TC Strategic Plan.** The draft priority areas being discussed (at the time of writing of this document) by the presidents of the WMO technical commissions, regional associations and executive council bodies are: DRR; Service Delivery focusing on effective, timely and efficient services to the public, civil aviation, marine transportation with increased attention on coastal zones and the needs of LDCs and SIDS; GFCS; Scientific Research to improve sub-seasonal to seasonal predictions, polar weather prediction, climate projections and on advancing megacity services; WIGOS coupled with WIS; and Capacity Development. DRR and Service Delivery are directly relevant to the TC.

4. Outlook

4.1 At the AWG meeting in Bangkok, Thailand in May 2013, it was agreed in principle that the PTC Joint Session would be held in early 2015 and to be hosted by ESCAP in Bangkok. Follow-up discussion at the AWG meeting in Macao, China in December 2013 recommended that PTC representatives should be invited to the TC-46 Session and TC delegates should also attend the PTC Session in early March 2014 to pave the way for the Joint Session, as well as to explore other collaboration options.

4.2 It was recognized that with the next IWTC to be held in Jeju, Republic of Korea in December 2014, it would be an ideal opportunity for TC representatives to engage in the workshop and the TC Chair was also approached in the organization of the event. TC was expected to actively contribute to the IWTC discussion from the regional perspective, such as any operational or research gaps identified in the course of reviewing the case of Typhoon Haiyan.

4.3 It is unfortunate that due to circumstance, the TC Chair is not able to personally attend the TC-46 Session to present the Chairperson's report for 2013. It is hoped that at the TC-46 Session, **Members and working groups will fully consider the above ideas and proposals in formulating the future AOPs and initiatives of the TC. The TC-46 Session may also wish to agree that a Chairperson's report should be prepared and presented at every TC session in the future.**

4.4 Given the ever-increasing constraints and competition in human and financial resources from different priority areas, it is considered that the annual IWS, AWG and TC sessions are highly valuable platforms for Members in the region to have regular exchanges and to seek further cooperation and partnership to enhance Members' capacities in typhoon-related disaster risk reduction and service delivery, thereby meeting the regional societal needs. Therefore, **focused joint efforts delivering clear, tangible and effective results should be actively pursued by Members and working groups, underpinned by continuous improvements to governance, efficiency and leadership of the TC and TCS.**

4.5 The TC Chair would like to thank the TCS, AWG, working groups and all TC Members for their excellent cooperation and support in the past year.
