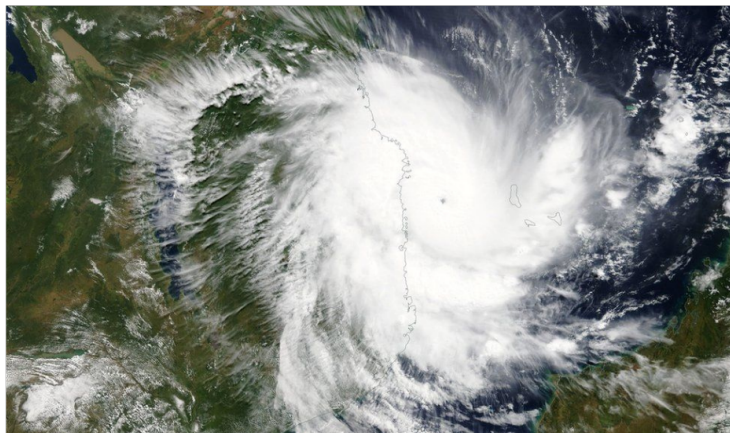


Southern Africa Ministerial Meeting on Integrated Early Warning and Early Action System Initiative



**5-9 September 2022
Maputo, Mozambique
Concept Note**

Introduction

On the 23rd of March 2022, the Secretary General of the United Nations called on the WMO to lead a new initiative that will provide every citizen on the planet with Early Warning Systems¹ in the next 5 years. This call is a result of the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather and climate events, which when combined with increasing vulnerability of the socio-economic system, are causing disasters with devastating impacts across the globe compromising the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global and regional agendas. In Africa, the initiative by the Secretary General comes at a very critical time.

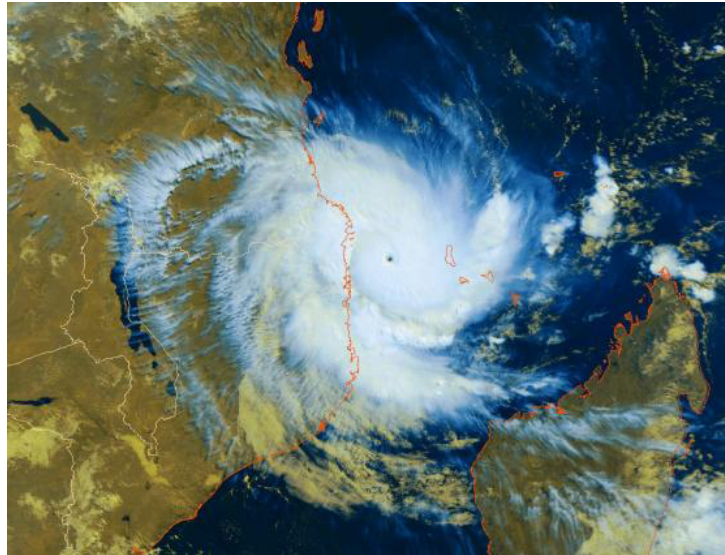
During the 35th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly, which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 5-6 February 2022, the AU Heads of State and Government adopted the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) and the Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services) (2021-2030). While the former provides a framework to guide, coordinate and support Africa's response to climate change, the Meteorology (Weather and Climate Services) Strategy serves as a continental strategic framework for integrated and coordinated mechanisms that provide strategic direction to Member States and other stakeholders in streamlining policies that address challenges and opportunities associated with the development and application of adequate weather, water and climate services at national, regional and continental levels. Among others, Pillar 3 of the Meteorology Strategy calls for action on improving early warning systems and climate risk management for the protection of life, property and the environment.

In addition, the 40th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 2-3 February 2022, adopted the Africa Institutional and Operational Framework for Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action. Consequently, the African Union further translated the Framework into the Africa Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action System (AMHEWAS) Programme, which aims to substantially reduce continental disaster losses by 2030 by ensuring availability and access to multi-hazard early warning and risk information to the African public by 2030. A coherent implementation of the initiative will significantly contribute to operationalization of effective multi-hazard early systems across the African continent.

The Nairobi Declaration adopted by the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction at the Eight African Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in November 2021, called upon the African Union Commission, United Nations organizations, especially the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Development Programme and other Development Partners to continue to strengthen their support to Member States and Regional Economic Communities through the provision of guidance, tools and technical assistance. In addition, to facilitate the exchange of experiences, including the strengthening of the multi-hazard and impact-based early warning systems for early action and for effective transboundary risk management.

In Africa, extreme weather and climate events constitute a serious threat to the socio-economic development of the continent. Severe floods, droughts, tropical cyclones and storms, heat waves, ocean surges and several other climate extremes have impacted negatively eroding the recent socio-economic gains made by the continent.

In March 2019 Southern Africa was hit by Tropical Cyclone Idai that caused devastation to the City of Beira and the Province of Sofala in Mozambique to be followed a month later by Tropical Cyclone Kenneth the strongest cyclone ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere, which hit the northern part of Mozambique.



Climate projections point to a future which, if appropriate measures are not taken, will see more adverse impacts as a result of the robust increase in the intensity and frequency of temperature and heavy precipitation extremes as well as an increase in the length of dry spells, more frequent droughts and an increase of tropical cyclones of Category 4-5, which are the most devastating. The 2021/2022 rainfall season saw 6 cyclonic systems bring devastating torrential rainfall that brought colossal damage to the region within a period of six weeks.

Challenges in the provision of Early Warning Systems

Impact-based Early warning systems (EWS) which allow people to know that hazardous weather or climate events are on their way, and inform how governments, communities and individuals can act to minimize impacts are inadequate in the region. Efforts are therefore needed to tap on WMO, continental, regional and national frameworks, weather, water and climate services, as well as on the Africa Institutional and Operational Framework for Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action to provide disaster management institutions, decision-makers and citizens with effective forecast and prediction systems, information and warnings. This needs to be supported by strong and coherent institutional mandates to decide and take action on the most appropriate preventive and mitigation measures to safeguard life, property and development gains.

With increasing impacts and evolving needs of users there is need to shift from the current state of affairs to impact based forecasts and risk-based warning to enable early actions by relevant stakeholders, and in particular the communities most at risk. To realize this ambition, efforts and investments are needed in the entire weather and climate service value chain from observations, forecasting and prediction, to communication of early warning that are supported by legal and institutional arrangements to ensure effective coordination with disaster management institutions. The aim is to ensure that early warning information leads to effective early action and response. These investments however need to be prioritized and coordinated to ensure that resources are invested in the areas where improvements are required in a manner that brings transformational change from the current status and ensures sustainability.

Objectives of the conference

The Conference aims to seek agreement on the priority requirements for the region to further accelerate the implementation of Sendai Framework Target G, “to substantially increase availability of and access to early warning and risk information to people by 2030”. The Conference will also take into consideration the gaps identified in the implementation of the Sendai Framework as well as address the recommendations provided by the Eight Africa Regional Platform for DRR of 16 -19 November 2021, in Nairobi, Kenya, and the recent Third Multi Hazard Early Warning Conference (MHEWC-III) of 23-24 May 2022 in Bali, Indonesia. The main objective of this Conference is to develop the Southern African region action plan on Impact-Based Early Warning System (EWS) for Early and Anticipatory Actions in response to the call of the Secretary General of the United Nations to ensure that every person on earth is protected by EWSs and in this case, the Southern Africa region. In keeping with the continental strategic direction, the preparation of the Action Plan requested by UN Secretary General will be informed by the existing African strategic framework (i.e. the Integrated African Strategy for Meteorology (Weather and Climate Service), relevant SADC Regional Strategic frameworks, and the Africa Institutional and Operational Framework for Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action (AMHEWAS). The specific objectives include:

- Identifying the specific requirements from both the meteorological and disaster risk management communities for effective early warning systems for early and anticipatory actions, which are informed by existing experiences in the Region. Among others, this would include enhancing Earth system observations and monitoring; better predictive and early warning capabilities; coordinated communication for anticipatory action, a strategy for reaching the last mile with hydrometeorological information leveraging the use of ICT technology as well as institutionalized operational coordination between meteorological and disaster risk management institutions;
- Identifying the resource needs for the establishment of a fully integrated SADC Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre (SHOC), leveraging authoritative hydrometeorological information from WMO mandated Centres and supporting Member States in the anticipation of crises;
- Promoting integrated cross-border cooperation and transboundary collaboration among stakeholders including development partners;
- Preparing the sub-regional contribution to the SG’s EWS initiative to be launched at COP 27, which will include an assessment of the status of EWS in Africa; and
- Supporting the rollout of the AMHEWAS in the SADC region, including member states.



Expected Outcomes

The main outcome from the conference is that a framework and an action plan on Early Warning Systems (EWS) initiative is developed in Mozambique and other Southern Africa countries to ensure that every person in the region is protected by EWS in line with UN Secretary General's call. Other outcomes include:

- Specific requirements from both the meteorological and disaster management communities, which are informed by existing experiences in the Region, to set up an effective EWS to cover all citizens in the Region are identified. These requirements would include enhancing Earth system observations and monitoring, better predictive and warning capabilities and coordinated communication for anticipatory action and investment;
- Regional Ministers responsible for meteorological and disaster management institutions are committed through a ministerial declaration to achieve EWS initiative. In addition, these ministers are supported with requirements for early warning system in their preparation for COP 27;
- Ministers committed to facilitate and support operationalization of AMHEWAS; and
- Opportunities for investment in response to the EWS initiative are identified as EWS are a proven effective and feasible adaptation measure providing greater return on investment. This would be a follow-up on the call on developed countries to follow through on their commitment to at least double their climate finance for adaptation to developing countries by 2025.

Significance of the Conference

It is important that the Conference provide an opportunity to develop an integrated action plan in response to the call of the UN Secretary General to ensure that every person on Earth is protected by EWSs. The roadmap to bridge the gap between early warnings and early and anticipatory actions together with the specific requirements to enhance an effective impact based EWS in SADC Region can be replicated in other subregions of the continent and elsewhere, as a contribution towards the five-year action plan for universal EWS to be presented in the UNFCCC COP 27 in November 2022. Furthermore, the commitment of Ministers responsible for meteorological and disaster risk management institutions would be achieved through a Ministerial Declaration. Finally, investment in EWS initiative to overcome current challenges in addressing EWS challenges in the region would need to be considered.

Conference Partners

