A new Hydrometeorological Service building will reinforce alerts and the prevention of catastrophe risks in Haiti

The building will be inaugurated on Friday, 26th May by the national authorities and the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization

***Port-au-Prince*, May 24th 2017** - The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Petteri Taalas, will visit Haiti from May 25th-27th to inaugurate - with the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development (MARNDR, acronym after Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rural) - a new building of the Hydro-meteorological Service of Haiti (UHM). This facility will improve the warning services and the disaster risk prevention, helping also to reduce loss of life and property damage in Haiti.

Mr. Taalas will be accompanied by WMO's Regional Development and Activities Director, Mary Power, at the inauguration of a building built under the project 'Climate Services for Vulnerability Reduction in Haiti' , with a budget of 6.5 million Canadian dollars funded by Canada and realized in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development. During his visit, the WMO's Secretary-General will meet with the Haitian authorities to analyze further ways of improving Haitian hydrometeorological services and follow-up once the building is operational, which is planned for the end of 2017.

Hydrometeorological Service, crucial for disaster risk reduction and resilience

Extremely vulnerable to the effects of hydrometeorological hazards and related natural disasters, Haiti is located on the main trajectory of tropical storms and hurricanes. As a result, the country experiences a tropical storm every two to three years (on average), and a major hurricane every six or seven years. Despite an increase in the frequency of hurricanes accompanied by heavy rainfall in recent decades, drought-prone areas have continued to expand due to changes in land cover and environmental degradation, which increases risk of disasters. Reports on climate change show that the percentage of days with very high temperatures has increased dramatically since the 1950s and that rainfall has declined sharply in the Caribbean region of Haiti. In addition, rising sea levels are expected to increase the risk of flooding, storm surge, erosion and other hazardous coastal phenomena - threatening infrastructure, populated areas and vital survival facilities, as well as populations and their livelihoods. Natural disasters have led to a deterioration of meteorological monitoring infrastructure, climate and water resources, plus associated institutions and services. Currently, Haitian meteorological and hydrological services need capacity-building at all levels in terms of infrastructure to operate, and tools to make observations and provide information products and services to the authorities and public. WMO will continue to work with national authorities and partners in this regard, as the hydrometeorological service is crucial for disaster risk reduction and to enhance resilience of the population.

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