

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

SECOND COORDINATION MEETING OF THE WORLD WEATHER INFORMATION SERVICE (WWIS) WEBSITE HOSTS

Toulouse, France 12 - 14 May 2009



FINAL REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Second coordination meeting of the World Weather Information Service (WWIS) website hosts was held in Toulouse, France from 12 to 14 May 2009. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Hon-Gor Wai (Hong Kong, China). The coordination meeting concentrated on several aspects related to the different language versions of the WWIS namely: Review of current status of WWIS; Developments since the first WWIS meeting in 2007 and follow up actions; Experience sharing through presentations by website hosts; Coordination of Web hosts and procedures to follow in future; Merging WWIS and SWIC Websites and effecting of updates; Enhancements to improve visibility and attractiveness of the Website; Language issues including common framework and translation into various languages and; Development of new products and technical improvements in view of new technologies.

The key conclusions from the work of the Coordination Meeting are summarized below:

- Identified measures to increase the number of participating Members and increasing of cities;
- Agreed to set up an online WWIS Forum;
- Agreed to align updating frequency across all language web sites;
- Agreed to develop a WWIS operational manual;
- Agreed to explore a new operation model with a centralized database;
- Agreed to make WWIS GIS-enabled;
- Agreed to develop a direct delivery of city forecast information to users' PC using 'widgets';
- Agreed to develop a I-Google gadget for presentation of WWIS city forecast;
- Agreed to develop software to enable other websites to retrieve city forecasts from WWIS;
- Agreed to adopt a new URL: [worldweather.wmo.int/\[ar/cn/fr/de/pt/es/it/ru\]](http://worldweather.wmo.int/[ar/cn/fr/de/pt/es/it/ru]) for different language sites;
- Supported the idea of collaboration with other Internet media;
- Agreed to raise visibility of WWIS through cross-links;
- Agreed to do a facelift of WWIS;
- Agreed to add observed weather WWIS city pages;
- Agreed to set up a common dictionary for weather descriptive terms.

1. Introduction

Météo France hosted the Second Coordination Meeting of the World Weather Information Service (WWIS) Website hosts comprising China (Chinese), Hong Kong, China (English), France (French), Germany (German), Oman (Arabic), Portugal (Portuguese), Spain (Spanish) in Toulouse, France from 12 to 14 May 2009. Italy, which was preparing to host the Website in Italian, was also represented at the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Hon-Gor Wai (Hong Kong, China).

1.1 Opening Session

The chairman, Mr. Hon-Gor Wai welcomed all participants to the meeting and thanked Météo France for hosting it. He pointed out the importance of the meeting in improving the WWIS and SWIC Websites. He referred to the programme of the meeting and requested all participants to contribute to covering it successfully.

Mr Samuel Muchemi (Scientific Officer, Public Weather Services Division, WMO Secretariat) welcomed the participants on behalf of the Secretary-General of WMO. He expressed the satisfaction of WMO with the leadership that HKO Observatory (HKO) had provided in the development and operation of the WWIS website as well as the Severe Weather Information Centre (SWIC) on behalf of WMO. He also thanked all Website hosts for their dedication and hard work in hosting and keeping the Website operational in different languages, which extended the reach of the information more widely. He congratulated all the Website hosts for having won the Stockholm Challenge Award in the Environment Category in 2008 and added that the Award was a significant endorsement by users on the value of the Website. He pointed out that the first meeting of Web hosts had helped steer the development of WWIS and SWIC to its current level. It was now time to review the status of the Web site and to chart out its future development in view of new Web technological innovations and expectations of users. He transmitted the apologies of the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring of Russia for not being able to participate in the meeting and pointed out that in their communication to WMO, they had expressed commitment to host the Website in Russian.

The list of participants is given in Annex I. The programme of the meeting is contained in Annex II.

2. Discussions

2.1 Review of current status of WWIS by Hong Kong, China

2.1.1 Background

The chairman gave the background information regarding the Website and recalled that WWIS was intended to establish a centralized source to access official weather information issued by the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs). The operational trial commenced on 14 December 2001 in English language by 84 WMO Members. It became operational on 23 March 2005 with English, Arabic, Chinese and Portuguese. The Spanish version started in 2006, the French version in 2007 and the German version in 2009. As of May 2009, 122 members were providing city forecasts for 1321 cities in 7 languages. 162 Members were providing climatological data.

2.1.2 WWIS page view statistics

He presented a summary of WWIS page view statistics and the growth of visits over time. He also presented the data ingestion methods that were currently being employed and products of forecast data collected from NMHSs. Examples of bulletins in different formats including the 2- and 4-digit weather icon codes were presented. Examples of XML bulletins were also presented.

2.1.3 Challenges

He pointed out some challenges that they were facing. It was pointed out that bulletins received in Microsoft WORD format from some Members could not be decoded by the program and therefore had to be handled by hand. In this regard, HKO would inform WMO and then WMO Secretariat would contact the Members concerned to request them to transmit information to HKO in the ASCII character format.

2.2 Developments since the first WWIS meeting in January 2007 and follow up actions.

The following highlights concerning the WWIS were presented:

2.2.1 Highlights of 2007

- Algeria joined in January.
- French version launched in January.
- Montenegro joined in summer.
- Moldova joined in November.

2.2.2 Highlights of 2008

- Papua New Guinea joined in February.
- Portugal replaced Macao, China in hosting the Portuguese version.
- WWIS won the Stockholm Challenge Award in the environment category.

2.2.3 Highlights of 2009

- Iraq and Afghanistan started to provide city forecasts in February.
- The German version was launched in March.
- New Caledonia started providing city forecasts in April.
- Italian and Russian language versions were under preparation.

2.3 Increasing WWIS Participation

2.3.1 Getting more WMO Members to participate in WWIS project

In order to get WMO Member countries that had not yet started to participate in the WWIS project to do so, the following points were agreed upon:

- Mr. Muchemi (WMO Secretariat) to contact PWS Focal Points of the countries of RAI (Africa);
- Lt. Col. Leonforte (Italy) to contact Albania and Lebanon;
- Mr. Ricardo Deus (Portugal) to contact Cape Verde and Angola;
- Mr. Al Maqbali (Oman) to contact Kuwait and Yemen;
- Mr. Mendez Rio (Spain) to contact Ecuador, Honduras and Nicaragua
- Mr. Claude Gaillard (France) to explore the provision of forecasts for Andorra and Monaco

2.3.2 Increasing number of cities

The Secretariat was asked to contact Members with a request for them to increase the number of cities for which they were supplying forecasts or climatological information for uploading on WWIS. It was suggested that their attention be drawn to how WWIS compares to other Websites such BBC e.t.c. HKO was asked to take the lead in providing relevant statistics in this regard.

2.4 Experience sharing

The WWIS Web site hosts made presentations of their experiences as follows:

2.4.1 Oman

The representative from Oman, Mr. Al Maqbali made a detailed presentation of the hardware and software structure of the WWIS Arabic system. He described how information received from HKO is translated into Arabic and how accurate translation into Arabic is achieved using a dictionary that they had developed at the Meteorological Service of Oman.

Mr. Al Maqbali suggested that we start a WWIS discussion Forum to enable Web hosts to discuss hosting issues with each other easily. This idea was supported by the meeting with enthusiasm, and it was suggested that the Forum include a section for participating Members as well. The meeting requested Mr. Al Maqbali to design the WWIS Forum prototype and point the WWIS web hosts and the Secretariat to it once it was done.

Challenges

- A technical problem which occurs while opening links located on the map located on the welcome page of the Arabic version site was mentioned. It was agreed that he works closely with Mr. Deus (Portugal) to try and get a solution.
- Mr. Al Maqbali drew the attention of the meeting to the fact that in a few cases, country borders on the map were not strictly accurate. It was agreed that this problem would be addressed when updating the map.
- The meeting was informed of various efforts made by Oman Meteorological Service to get translations of city names into Arabic without success. After discussion, the meeting suggested that the NMS requests the national broadcasting organization of Oman for assistance since broadcasting services are likely to possess such information.

2.4.2 China

Mr Zhao representing CMA presented the status of the Chinese version of WWIS. He described the modules comprising the Chinese system and explained how information received from HKO was ingested, translated into Chinese and how it was updated. The following points were noted:

- Due to the difference in implementation, the operation of the Chinese version is not completely the same as the English version.
- Some popular Websites of the National Meteorological Center which offer external services provide hyperlinks to the Chinese version of WWIS Website. They include the official website of CMA and the Asian Aeronautical Meteorology Service.
- A lot of analysis related to Web access has been done on the WWIS Chinese Web pages. The meeting commended CMA for the work done and noted that similar analysis could be done for other language versions.
- There was suggestion to use RSS as a good technique to disseminate city forecasts to other websites.

Challenge

- Because of the difference in Web implementation, CMA could not update the Chinese version of the website using database provided by HKO.

2.4.3 France

Mr. Gaillard made a presentation of the French version of WWIS and pointed out the following:

- The Internet services in Météo France have been sub contracted out. Hence he works on the WWIS Web site during his spare time.
- He has designed a very simple system which runs on PCs.
- There was observation that if we had city identifier codes on xml files, then there would be no need for a data base. Instead, each country would use a simple JavaScript to represent the data. Translation into different languages would be

effected on one server making it unnecessary to have language Web hosting on different locations. This point is discussed below under item 3 (Coordination and Procedures), on the bullet discussing 'common server for all languages'.

- Regarding mapping of cities there was suggestion that we seek information on latitude, longitude and Height Above Sea Level for all cities so that they can be accurately presented. It was decided that Mr. Deus (Portugal) shares a table which he has access to that contains this information with all Web hosts. He pointed out, however, that the hosts will need to validate the table.

2.4.4. Spain

Mr. Méndez Rio presented the status of the Spanish version of WWIS and pointed out the following:

- There are 380 million Spanish Speakers in 20 countries so the Spanish version has a potential to serve a lot of people;
- AEMET has been active in the project since June 2005 when they started sending 5-day forecasts for 12 cities. They started hosting the Spanish version in September 2006;
- AEMET is committed to continue hosting the Web site in the foreseeable future and will continue to maintain the hardware, software of WWIS Spanish version as well as update its content.
- Their system comprises 4 dedicated servers, 2 frontends and 2 back ends. The Basic software includes Linux, Java, Tomcat, MySQL, Apache and Webalizer
- He suggested serving private companies etc with data i.e. Web services. He informed the meeting that users had suggested using RSS for supplying data.

2.4.5 Germany

Mr. Thomalla presented an overview of the development of the German version of WWIS and pointed out the following:

- The final decision to host the German language version of WWIS was taken in January 2009.
- The Site was officially launched on 23 March 2009 (World Meteorological Day). This was marked by press releases in Hong Kong and Germany and an Information Note was distributed at the CBS Conference (Dubrovnik, Croatia 25 march to 2 April 2009)
- The system is based on a simple translation scheme which utilizes the weather icon codes only.
- DWD uses xml-files from ftp-server for update. The software configuration is based upon Apache Webserver and php script.
- Updates happen 4 times every day.
- DWD plans to automate the monthly web statistics. HKO is therefore requested to state whether the current pdf-information is sufficient.

Challenge

- DWD has noticed that updates do not always happen automatically hence differences often occur between the HKO English version and the German version. Mr. Thomalla will check whether it is a problem in DWD after which he will send files to HKO if the problem recurs in order to try and trace the problem.

2.4.6 Italy

Lt. Col. Giuseppe LEONFORTE representing the Italian Air Force Weather Service National Centre of Meteorology and Aeronautical Climatology (CNMCA) presented information on the preparations that his service is undertaking as they get ready to host the Website in Italian. The following resulted from his presentation:

- Hosting in Italian is intended to start by 31 August 2009, latest.
- They were trying to come up with a way of indicating 'Data not available' when no data appeared. The meeting discussed and decided that in cases where a country has not joined the project, it would simply not appear on the website and hence it was decided not to implement this option.
- Italian language sometimes uses the same word to describe different weather phenomena. This causes the problem of the same weather phenomenon having two different symbols. They are working on this and other problems to improve translations. E.g. where multiple elements are mentioned, the system will prioritize and keep the symbol of the more severe weather type.
- The Italian version of WWIS will be integrated into an upcoming new version of AFWS Website by the second half of 2010.
- HKO provided Italy with the format of all city forecast product files during the meeting.

2.4.7 Portugal

Mr. Deus representing the Portuguese Meteorological Institute (IMP) presented the status of hosting the Portuguese version of WWIS. The following points were noted:

- The IT solutions developed by HKO were used during the development of the IMP Portuguese version computer system.
- The software comprises of:
 - CentOS (Open source operating system)
 - Tomcat (implicational server)
 - Apache (Open source web server)
 - mySql (Open source data base)
 - Awstat (Open Source access analysis application)
- The communication protocol is FTP

He presented the analysis of web visit statistics showing that the web site was having an average of about 15000 visits per month.

3. Coordination and Procedures

- Mr. Wai informed the meeting that under the current implementation plan of the WMO Information System (WIS), HKO had been designated one of the potential Data Collection/Production Centre (DCPC) for the WWIS project. HKO has to develop the required data management functions by the next CBS session in 2010. The detailed requirements would be available from the CBS ISS team later in 2009. He would keep the WWIS coordination group informed of the progress and any impact on WWIS operations.
- HKO will be sending the Newsletter to all members of coordination group and the Secretariat in future.

- Methods of analyzing Web access were discussed with a view to deciding whether to standardize the methods used or to leave hosts to adapt whatever method they wished. It was finally decided that although the different methods may have some differences, such differences were not serious so it was decided not to specify the statistics collection software to be used.
- It was agreed that all website hosts should report on daily page visits.
- It was decided to standardize updating data in all language versions to be done every half hour in future. HKO will include city identifiers in the XML update files.
- Updating of the structure of the Web will be carried out every two months. Updates should, as far as possible, be completed by the 5th day of the month by all the language hosts.
- It was noticed that the English version of the newsletter was being translated into the Spanish language only. After deliberation, it was decided that translation to other languages was not necessary and hence to also discontinue the Spanish version of the newsletter.
- A discussion forum named WWIS Forum for participating Members and language hosts will be set up. Mr. AL MAQBALI (Oman) will lead the process and host the Forum pages in Oman.
- An operation Manual will be developed which will describe the agreed procedures of WWIS. Mr. Wai will do the first draft and share it with the rest of the coordination group.
- Sharing System configuration information: All hosts agreed to use the WWIS forum to share the System configurations for their particular language System in order to learn from each other's experience.
- HKO was requested to make available, the combined city forecast update in zip format and name according to the time and date.
- HKO was requested to make available the whole database dump of last previous version after each bi-monthly update.
- The logo should always be included in the update.
- Common Server for all languages: An idea involving having a modular approach to host all data for all languages in one server was floated and discussed. It was viewed as a good solution especially for updating and efficiency of WWIS. Mr. Deus was requested to take lead in this process of investigating what possibilities the Content Management Systems (CMS) might offer in this regard for future consideration.

4. Merging WWIS and SWIC

Mr. Wai briefed the meeting about the operation of SWIC and prompted the meeting to deliberate on the strategy for integrating the WWIS with SWIC. The meeting discussed at length the idea of reproducing the SWIC maps showing observations of heavy rain/snow and thunderstorms in WWIS. While the implementation would be relatively straightforward, the meeting noted that the absence of sufficient reports in the map might lead users to believe that there was no severe weather in the locations they were looking at and it might be dangerously wrong in some cases. The meeting also thought that the map display format might not be easy for the general public to associate the severe weather reported with specific cities which were listed under WWIS. The meeting instead agreed to include a new item in the page of each city weather icon showing severe weather in the past 24 hours. The meeting also agreed that the integration of tropical cyclone information would be tackled in the next merging phase. The meeting noted that

the harmonization of warnings across borders would be crucial to the integrated display of severe warnings in future.

5. Development of new products and Technical Improvements in View of new Technologies

5.1 Geographical Information system (GIS)

The meeting agreed to make WWIS GIS-enabled. . To this end the Secretariat was asked to request participating Members for geographical references of the cities included in WWIS. If such information is not available, it was agreed that coordinates of the synoptic observation stations in the city might be used.

The meeting was informed that discussions by WMO with Google were already happening associated with other initiatives such as the Common Alert Protocol (CAP). It was also noted that weather information was already available on Google Earth. The meeting therefore agreed to explore the WWIS interface with Google Earth/Google Map at no cost to WMO. In order to assist WMO with negotiations, the coordination group offered to produce a draft proposal to Google for WMO. The proposal will be developed by the group by discussing ideas over the WWIS Forum which is to be set up. Mr. Deus was requested to lead the process. WMO may take the lead in exploring with Google after a suitable interface has been identified.

5.2 RSS and XML

In order to make the WWIS city forecasts available on other websites, it was observed that RSS feeds could be employed. A standardized XML file format would allow the information to be published and viewed by many different users. The meeting recommended that this feature be added to WWIS. It was further agreed that the question of whether or not WWIS would avail coded forecasts to other websites for displaying be discussed during the meeting of the OPAG/PWS meeting of the Expert Team on PWS in Support of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DPM) (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 25-29 May 2009).

5.3 Widget

It was agreed to develop a weather widget (pop-up) for pushing WWIS city forecasts to users. Users with a WWIS weather widget installed on their PCs would get weather update pop-ups whenever there was an update. Mr. Al Maqbali was requested to initiate this process.

5.4 CAPITAL names for capitals

It was agreed that to highlight the weather forecasts of the capital cities of the participating Members, names of capital cities in the list of cities under individual Members' page, would be displayed in capital letters. For languages without capital letters, bold face fonts would be used.

6. Enhancements to Improve Visibility and Attractiveness of WWIS

6.1 Visibility

In order to ease search by Google the following was agreed:

- To adopt the following format for the WWIS URL: worldweather.wmo.int/language where 'language' should be represented as follows: /ar (Arabic); /cn (Chinese) /fr (French); /de (German); /pt (Portuguese); /es (Spanish) /it (Italian); and /ru (Russian). HKO will look into the feasibility of this proposal.
- To use key words to increase chances of being listed first by Google. Key words to apply for all languages. Mr. Wai will make available tips on how to boost the ranking of WWIS in Google search.

6.1.2 Cross-linking

In order to increase usage of WWIS by tourists, the following was agreed:

- To approach some of the tourism websites with a request for them to cross link with the WWIS. It was agreed that all coordination group members identify popular tourist websites and exchange information about them over the WWIS Forum. The Secretariat will then send a request for them to create cross links.
- To request BBC, CNN, Aljazeera and other popular media sites to cross link with the WWIS possibly with the help of IABM.
- To request Airlines also to cross link their websites.

6.1.3 Connection with travelers

In order to reach more travelers it was agreed:

- To have a small JavaScript that travel agencies could use to display information from WWIS on their own Websites. In this regard, users would access information for certain cities and would also provide a link to the main WWIS Website. **Mr. Zhao** was requested to develop a prototype. It should be a very simple display with very few words and comprise mainly pictograms.
- Gadgets: to using the I-Google interface to create a small gadget that can be used to display city forecasts from WWIS Website.
- Mr. Muchemi to assist Ricardo contact the WMO Webmaster to learn how WMO handles encoding of different languages.

6.1.4 Publicity

The following was agreed upon to publicise the Site:

- HKO to update and simplify the WWIS pamphlet within 3 months and share it with other hosts for translation to other languages. The pamphlet will then be sent to tourist companies.
- The Secretariat to use every opportunity to publicize the Website.

6.1.5 Collaboration with the media

It was agreed that the question of whether or not WWIS would avail coded forecasts to the media should be discussed during the meeting of the OPAG/PWS meeting of the Expert Team on PWS in Support of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DPM) (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 25-29 May 2009).

6.1.6 Face lift Web design

It was observed that the Website has not had a facelift for a long time. It was thus decided to renew it so that it can be more attractive. In this regard, it was agreed:

- To place the 'search' window of the Website at a more prominent position on the welcome page
- To have new animated weather icons for the Website as part of the WWIS face lift
- That language hosts submit design requirement of the new website to the WWIS Forum by Nov 2009.
- To redo the Website and to include all the new features discussed during the meeting, as well as any other features that may be found desirable and agreed upon by the coordination group, through the WWIS Forum. In order to carry out this very demanding exercise, two possibilities were proposed and named Plan A and Plan B:
 - Plan A - WMO to fund a modern website with guidance and input from the coordination group. In this regard the Secretariat was requested to indicate to the Web hosts whether the option would be considered. In case plan A was not possible then Plan B would be followed.
 - Plan B – Individual Web hosts to come up with design proposals for consideration by the coordination group and WMO Secretariat.

7. Language Issues

7.1 Common dictionary of weather description

- Each Web host was requested to send to HKO the list of phrases they are currently using. HKO will then collate a grand list of words and distribute it to all the hosts for use in development of their own dictionaries.
- Each host was also requested to share their own methodologies and programmes for translations with all other hosts through the WWIS Forum.

7.2 Translation of City names

- Hosts wishing to translate names of cities to their own language were advised to seek help from WMO if their language happens to be one of the official languages of WMO. Online services were also recommended.

8.0 Any other business

It was suggested that the next meeting be held after two years. However, no venue was suggested. The representative of Oman indicated that he would find out whether the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and Meteorology would be willing to host the next meeting.

9.0 Closure

The chairman Mr. Wai closed the meeting at 1630H. He thanked all the participants for their lively contributions during the meeting. He wished all the participants could follow up closely on actions expected of them and to stay in close contact using the upcoming on-line WWIS Forum. On behalf of WMO, Mr. Muchemi thanked the host, Météo France for the excellent welcome and conference facilities put at the disposal of the Meeting. He reaffirmed the satisfaction of WMO with the contribution of all Web hosts to the success of the WWIS Website.

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

CBS/OPAG-PWS/WWIS-2/INF. 2
(07.04.2009)COMMISSION FOR BASIC SYSTEMS
OPEN PROGRAMME AREA GROUP
ON PUBLIC WEATHER SERVICESSECOND COORDINATION MEETING OF
THE WORLD WEATHER INFORMATION
SERVICE (WWIS) WEBSITE HOSTS

ITEM: 1.2

(TOULOUSE, FRANCE, 12-14 MAY 2009)

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

COMMISSION FOR BASIC SYSTEMS
 OPEN PROGRAMME AREA GROUP
 ON PUBLIC WEATHER SERVICES

**SECOND COORDINATION MEETING OF
 THE WORLD WEATHER INFORMATION
 SERVICE (WWIS) WEBSITE HOSTS**

(TOULOUSE, FRANCE, 12-14 MAY 2009)

CBS/OPAG-PWS/WWIS-
 2/INF. 2
 (07.04.2009)

ITEM: 1.2

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

	Tuesday, 12 May	Wednesday, 13 May	Thursday, 14 May
AM 0930	1. Opening 2. Review of current status of WWIS by Hong Kong, China 3. Developments since the first WWIS meeting in 2007 and follow up actions.	Discussion of key issues: 1. Coordination and Procedures. 2. Merging WWIS and SWIC and updating the Website.	Discussion of: 1. Enhancements to improve visibility and attractiveness of the website. 2. Language issues, common framework and translation
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
PM 1400 1700	1. Experience sharing: Presentations by WWIS website hosts: Oman, China, France, Germany, Portugal, and Spain. 2. Future Web hosts: Italy, Russia	Discussion of: 1. Development of new products and technical improvements in view of new technologies. 2. Visit	Any Other Business and adopting of meeting report