



# WMO FEATURE

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## THE WORLD OF WEATHER AND WATER

Point Of View

### ELEVENTH CONGRESS WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Interview with Mr. Zou Jingmeng  
President  
of the  
World Meteorological Organization

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Point of View  
Eleventh Congress

Interview with Mr. Zou Jingmeng  
President  
World Meteorological Organization

by Dr. Sylvia Moore  
Public Information and Press Office (WMO)

Dr. Moore: The eleventh Congress of the World Meteorological Organization has unanimously re-elected Mr. Zou Jingmeng President of the World Meteorological Organization for a second four year term.

Dr. Moore: Mr. Zou is with me in the studio now to talk about Chinese Meteorology and the World. Mr. Zou you are the administrator of the State Meteorological administration of China. You have played a leading role in Chinese and in international meteorology taking on a wide range of responsibilities, especially in the fields of environmental protection and climate. China must be a microcosm of world climate. There are so many variations in your country are there not?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: You are correct. The climate in China forms part of the globe. The consequences of the global climate change certainly will have its effect on the climate in China. For example, the studies and analyses on temperature variations in China based on the records as far as 5,000 years ago such as historical references in literature, local gazettes, and tree rings, show that cool and warm periods took place alternatively.

For instance, the temperature during the period, 3,500 - 1,000 B.C., was 2 degrees centigrades higher than the current one. However, the period from 13th to the 20th century was identified as a cool period with the annual mean temperature being 1.5 degrees centigrade below the current one. Since the 1970's, the temperature has increased. In particular, the average winter temperature in northern China has increased by about 2 to 3 degrees centigrades in the last 10 years. This coincides with the trend of global warming.

In respect of precipitation variation, the rainfall in the agricultural zones in eastern China has decreased significantly since 1965. In many areas of northern China the rainfall in the 1980's decreased by over 100 mm compared with that of the 1950's. Due to climate warming, lakes in the northwest of China are gradually drying up, and the soil is gradually desiccated.

Chinese scientists and the government are carrying out in-depth studies of the possible impact of such a climate change on the national economy of China and the response strategies that need to be adopted.

Dr. Moore: Climate change is a relatively new problem which you are tackling in China and of course the problem is being tackled world wide. But you have another problem which I understand is a centuries old problem. The Yellow River basin is the cradle of Chinese civilization. Flooding on its lower reaches brought untold miseries and calamities. What can we learn from the Chinese experience in flood management?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: The Chinese government has always attached great importance to flood prevention along the Yellow River. The middle reaches of the river in the Henan Province are found to be the most vulnerable. Therefore the Chinese government has set up a special establishment "The Yellow River Water Conservancy Committee" responsible for the integrated management of the river.

In other words, the issue of flood prevention is dealt with as system engineering. In this respect, a number of measures have been taken such as afforestation to prevent soil erosion, building dams to buffer the stroke of flood, consolidating banks to prevent flood breakthrough, and establishing flood diversion areas to avoid damages in densely populated areas.

One of the important measures is to make joint and co-operative efforts between the meteorological and hydrological departments in order to monitor closely the movements of heavy rainfalls when they occur, and to issue heavy rain and flood forecasts, on the basis of which decision-makers could take emergency steps to minimize possible loss of life and property by evacuating people into safe areas. This has been our main experience in this respect.

Dr. Moore: Chinese meteorology goes back to ancient times. China was one of the first countries to develop observing instruments, for instance let's take Zhang Heng who lived from 78 - 139 AD. He had a profound knowledge of calendar making and mathematics. He made numerous astronomical and geophysical observations and to do so he invented the armillary sphere, itself a microcosm of the universe positioning North and South poles, Equator, the Zodiac, the principle constellations so he could observe the movements of the sun, moon and stars. He made the armillary sphere turn automatically and designed a clepsydra for measuring time. Can you tell us more about these fascinating inventions?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: It is true that the history of Chinese meteorology can be traced back to ancient times. It can be said that it is part of the glories of Chinese ancient civilization. Even at that time, our ancestors knew how to grow crops by utilizing local climatic conditions. Zhang Heng was one of the remarkable scientists in ancient China. In addition to what you have just mentioned about his successful achievements in science, I think he was also remembered as the inventor of the world earliest instrument for wind direction and speed. Since meteorology is my profession, I am pleased and feel proud to have invoked the contributions made by Zhang Heng to meteorology.

Dr. Moore: What about modern times in China in terms of meteorological and hydrological instruments in the service of mankind?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: The Chinese Meteorological Services pursue the policy of opening to the outside world and reform which is adopted by the Chinese government. While endeavouring to learn new science and technology from technically advanced countries, we are also concentrating on the development our own technical instruments and facilities aimed mainly at increasing our self-reliance in connection with meteorological instruments and technical supplies.

In particular since the last decade, Chinese scientists and engineers have developed sophisticated meteorological sounding equipment. For example, the polar orbiting meteorological satellite which is still operating in space and which was designed and produced in China. Moreover, various instruments and equipment including weather radar, mini or micro computers are manufactured in China.

Within the limits of our capability, we shall provide meteorological instruments and transfer technology to other developing countries. However, we also realize that compared to the developed countries, there are still many gaps in-between. Nevertheless, we shall continue to learn from the experience of the developed world and endeavour to be creative in an effort to make our due contributions to the world meteorology as a whole.

Dr. Moore: In your statement on your re-election as President of the World Meteorological Organization, you clearly showed your dedication to the cause of science and technology in the service of economic and social development. China has always been particularly concerned about developing countries.

I would like to mention the Meteohydex exhibition which took place alongside Congress. Clearly some of these new instruments on exhibit are going to be fundamental in helping to monitor the climate more closely and precisely. What technological developments impressed you most at that exhibition with regard to ensuring better living conditions?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: Chinese meteorologists are interested in all advanced science and technology in the world and are eager to learn. What we have seen at this exhibition is a specimen of the up-to-date technology in the world. Taking into account the progress made in meteorological science and technology, those products are important in ensuring the quality of weather observations, accurate analysis of weather conditions and to prepare action of accurate weather forecasts. I found this exhibition very impressive.

Dr. Moore: Mr. Zou the relationship between national meteorological services and international cooperation is obviously close to your heart. And when we talk about Chinese meteorology and the world I believe that you mean the world in the widest sense of the word, and strengthening world-wide cooperation and bridging the gap between developed and developing countries. How can the World Meteorological Organization best meet this challenge?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: I appreciate your understanding of the linkage between the Chinese Meteorological Service and the World. In this context, China is continuously promoting and strengthening international co-operation in the field of meteorology. As President of the World Meteorological Organization, I personally felt, throughout this Congress the warm atmosphere of co-operation, solidarity and dialogue as is expected from the world meteorologists.

The Congress spent a whole day discussing how to strengthen international co-operation, how to develop national meteorological services and bridge the gap. Relevant resolutions on these issues have been adopted by this Congress. I am confident that in the coming four years, WMO will further its technical co-operation in sharing the experience of its Member countries and strengthening training and education activities so as to improve the meteorological services throughout the world.

Dr. Moore: You are a firm believer in friendly international cooperation and indeed the World Meteorological Organization's history is an epitome of that. You said that in China there is an expression "The road ahead may twist and turn but the future is bright". That is a very positive statement. What are the major twists and turns facing the World Meteorological Organization and what is its main focus towards a bright future?

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: With those words we can summarise the great achievements the Chinese people have attained in socio-economic development and indeed the difficulties they have experienced over the past four decades and more.

Turning now to WMO, the biggest difficulty facing WMO at present is financial constraints. On the one hand for a long time, the budget of this Organization has been kept at a zero-growth level, whereas on the other hand, the meteorology related issues, like global environment and climate change confronting the human society, warrant new contributions from WMO in these fields. While WMO needs to help the developing countries maintain their traditional meteorological services and encourage their active participation in activities related to global environment and climate change, it is, however hindered by its limited resources.

Yet in spite of all this, I firmly believe that as long as governments of nations are fully aware of the important role the national meteorological services play in natural disaster reduction, and in advising their governments on the measures needed to adjust to global climate change, as long as governments henceforth render active support to this role and show due concern to the development of this Organization, WMO will surely register new scores and reach new highs in the years to come.

Dr. Moore: That is very encouraging Mr. Zou and may I wish you the very best and a safe journey back. That was Mr. Zou the President of the World Meteorological Organization speaking just after the eleventh Congress of the World Meteorological Organization at Geneva, to Dr. Sylvia Moore the Public Information and Press officer. This is a radio information programme for international broadcasting and is available for the press and for broadcasters throughout the world as a WMO feature.

Mr. Zou Jingmeng: Thank you very much indeed good bye.