

# UNFCCC COP28 Policy Brief: Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF)

## 1. COP28 as important milestone for SOFF

SOFF is a specialized UN climate fund to support countries in closing the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) weather and climate data gaps, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

SOFF creation was spearheaded by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and co-created by WMO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

SOFF's design combines grant-based, long-term finance and peer-to-peer technical assistance. SOFF brings together National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS), UN organizations and development banks to support beneficiary countries in a coherent and systematic manner in closing the Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) gap.

According to the WMO Global GBON gap analysis of June 2023, LDCs and SIDS generate and internationally exchange less than 10 percent of the internationally mandated GBON data. Closing the GBON data gap will lead to better forecasts and early warnings. SOFF therefore is a foundational element and delivery vehicle of the UN Early Warnings for All initiative.

UNFCCC COP28 is an important milestone and provides an opportunity to bring systematic observation, GBON and SOFF to the forefront of climate change negotiations and to adequately reflected it in COP outcomes and corresponding COP and CMA decisions.

## 2. SOFF at COP28 – proposed decision language, key messages, events

### ➤ Proposed decision language

*Recognize* the need to enhance coordination of hydromet activities by the development partners to provide useful and actionable weather and climate information flow for mitigation, adaptation and early warning systems.

*Emphasize* the importance and urgency to address existing gaps in the Global Weather and Climate Observing System, particularly in developing countries.

*Encourage* Parties and other relevant organizations to support the further enhancement of the Systematic Observation Financing Facility (SOFF), including by providing financial support, in order to address the gaps and strengthen systematic observations and data exchange in developing countries, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

*Invite* development partners, international financial institutions and the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism, to provide support for SOFF as a vital opportunity and coordinated mechanism for strengthening observations and data exchange in LDCs and SIDS, critical for the implementation of the Early Warnings for All initiative, including through provision of climate finance.

➤ **Proposed key messages that could be reflected in various agenda items**

*Cover decision:* Emphasizing the importance and urgency to close basic weather and climate observation gaps and welcome SOFF as the mechanism to enhance and sustain the implementation of the Global Basic Observing Network in developing countries, particularly in LDCs and SIDS.

*Global Stocktake:* Ensuring universal coverage of early warning systems by 2027 including universal GBON compliance supported by SOFF.

*Global Goal on Adaptation:* Ensuring that the composite metric that is developed for the Global Goal on Adaptation includes GBON compliance.

*SBSTA:* Building on [FCCC/SBSTA/2021/L.5](#) emphasizing urgency to close the GBON gap in developing countries, particularly in LDCs and SIDS and highlight the importance of SOFF and welcoming its speed of implementation.

*Loss and Damage:* Recognizing that systematic observation and early warnings help to minimize and reduce losses and damages and note that SOFF is playing an important role and is listed as existing funding arrangement and innovative source relevant to addressing loss and damage (Transitional Committee TC2/2023/3).

➤ **Events**

*Earth Information Day:* The submission of Spain and the European Commission on behalf of the European Union and its Member States from 27 July 2023 requested a progress update on SOFF. The SOFF Secretariat stands ready to brief parties and provide an update on SOFF implementation.

*ECMWF-SOFF joint event "Innovative finance – better weather forecasts – effective climate action":* ECMWF has substantially contributed to SOFF development and is a member of the SOFF Advisory Board. At the recent Steering Committee meeting, ECMWF presented ways to further strengthen the [ECMWF-SOFF collaboration](#). This collaboration will be showcased at an event co-hosted by ECMWF and SOFF. The event will take place at the Benelux pavilion, 4 December 17.30.

*SOFF High-level event:* The main SOFF event is expected to launch the first SOFF Action Report, showcase the work of SOFF frontrunner countries, present the SOFF collaboration framework with the multilateral climate funds, and provide the space to publicly announce additional pledges. It will take place at the Benelux pavilion, 9 December 17.30.

*SOFF contributing to other events, including*

- Canada, 3 Dec, 16.00, Canadian Pavilion
- Finland, 3 Dec, 17.00, Finnish Pavilion
- African Development Bank, 4 Dec, 14.30-15.30, Africa Pavilion
- Nordic Development Fund, 4 Dec, 16.00, Nordic Pavilion
- Interamerican Development Bank, 8 Dec, 14.00, IDB Group Pavilion
- Netherlands, 10 Dec, 11.30, Benelux Pavilion

### 3. About SOFF

#### **SOFF is a new and specialized UN climate fund**

SOFF is a specialized UN climate fund to support countries in closing today's [Global Basic Observing Network \(GBON\)](#) weather and climate data gaps. Established by the World Meteorological Congress, GBON for the first time clearly defines the minimum set of weather and climate data that all countries shall internationally exchange. While mandatory, as of June 2023, LDCs and SIDS generate less than 10 percent of the GBON data.

SOFF recognizes the global public good value of GBON data as any forecast for any part of the globe beyond three days requires GBON data from across the globe. SOFF provides long-term, results-based grant financing and long-term peer-to-peer technical assistance delivered by advanced met offices on a cost-recovery basis ([national met offices from 28 countries](#), including advanced met offices from the Global South). SOFF investments are channeled through [9 Implementing Entities](#) – World Bank, regional development banks and UN organizations (UNDP, UNEP, WFP, IFAD) – that are requested to combine SOFF resources with their own financing or resources drawn from the multilateral climate funds for comprehensive packages of support spanning the whole meteorological value chain.

#### **SOFF is a delivery vehicle supporting UN Early Warnings for All initiative**

SOFF is a foundational element and delivery vehicle supporting the UN Secretary-General's [Early Warnings for All initiative](#) and its Executive Action Plan launched at COP27 – warnings and forecasts are impossible without reliable monitoring and international data exchange.

#### **SOFF is speedily delivering**

SOFF opened its doors for business in July 2022 and as of today the Steering Committee has programmed support to 62 countries including all 30 initial focus countries of the UN Early Warnings for All initiative. Out of these 62 countries, 59 countries are already receiving SOFF support. The average that it took for these countries from the Steering Committee programming decision to developing countries' funding requests to Steering Committee funding approval has been 3,9 months. At its next meeting ahead of COP28, the SOFF Steering Committee is expected to approve SOFF investment funding, the second out of three SOFF phases, to an initial group of frontrunner countries that successfully completed the readiness phase.

While the Steering Committee has substantially increased the SOFF ambition level (the initial target set was to program 15 countries for readiness phase support in the first year of SOFF operation), SOFF is confronted with high demand – 39 additional countries have requested SOFF support, including through a formal decision of the WMO Africa Regional Association for a comprehensive African SOFF regional program covering all African countries.

## **SOFF is an expert led mechanism**

WMO standards are setting the scope of the projects, WMO manuals and guides are guiding the implementation plans, WMO members work in a peer-to-peer collaboration to build a solid, long lasting, meteorological infrastructure, WMO secretariat is reviewing the plans and monitors the results and the compliance.

## **Peer-to-peer technical assistance**

SOFF is built on long-term peer-to-peer collaboration and support among NMHS, harnessing their operational experience as providers of peer technical advice. WMO members provide hands-on peer-to-peer technical and institutional assistance, including South-South peer support. This ensures sustainability, coherence, credibility, and trust of technical assistance provided.

## **SOFF Collaboration Framework with multilateral climate funds**

SOFF has developed a collaboration framework with the major multilateral climate funds represented in the SOFF governance structure, expected to be announced at COP28. This framework was [requested by the June 2023 SOFF Steering Committee](#). It spells out how SOFF will partner in a seamless manner with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Climate Investment Funds (CIF), Adaptation Fund (AF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the CREWS initiative to strengthen systematic observation and the use of observational data exchange for effective decision making.

## **Potential expansion of SOFF financial support to lower Middle Income Countries (MICs)**

Following a resolution of the World Meteorological Congress (May 2023) and the decision of the 5<sup>th</sup> SOFF steering Committee (June 2023) the SOFF Steering Committee at its meeting 27 November 2023 will consider a proposal for a phased expansion of SOFF investment and compliance support to lower MICs.