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Transforming the Secretariat – Overview of the Reforms

WMO Reforms – Context: In response to evolving global challenges, growing demands for integrated Earth system and science for service approaches and increasing financial uncertainty, the Secretary-General initiated a strategic transformation of the WMO Secretariat to strengthen institutional resilience and optimize resource allocation.

This comprehensive reorganization is designed to enhance service delivery as well as to strengthen technical and scientific capacity to ensure continued alignment with Member priorities. These measures reflect WMO's commitment to sound financial stewardship, sustained leadership, and support for broader United Nations system efficiency under the UN80 initiative. The reforms reflect both WMO's commitment to the broader UN80 initiative and the need to develop a coherent "One WMO" approach to meteorological, hydrological and climate services.

It is important to note that several foundational reforms were initiated in 2024, laying the framework for the broader transformation of the Secretariat that is being presented now in 2025. These early measures included the restructuring of the executive management leadership redefining roles and responsibilities between the Deputy Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General. In addition, other changes related to the establishment of an independent Office of the Legal Counsel and the creation of the Division of Controller and Management Services were introduced.

These 2024 reforms addressed longstanding recommendations from oversight bodies and were instrumental in strengthening WMO's internal control environment, enhancing accountability and preparing the Organization for the more comprehensive changes implemented in 2025 and contained in the summary below.

"One WMO": Historically, the WMO Secretariat operated through a series of distinct departments, each with its own mandate, leadership and workflows. While this structure allowed for specialization, it also fostered fragmentation and duplication of effort, and critically limited cross-functional collaboration, often impeding the Organization's ability to respond effectively to Member needs and evolving global challenges.

The 2025 reorganization marks a decisive shift toward a "One WMO" approach. "One WMO" seeks to create a unified, integrated organizational framework that breaks down institutional silos and promotes synergy across all WMO activities.

At its core, this transformation is centred on the adoption of a single Earth system approach, recognizing that weather, climate, hydrology and environmental services are interconnected and must be delivered through seamless coordination.

Overview of key specific reforms:

- **Two integrated departments:** As part of this modernization effort, we are creating a more streamlined and less top-heavy structure by consolidating our four programmatic departments into two integrated departments and abolishing several senior positions, while strengthening our technical and scientific capacity in priority areas. Earth System Data and Predictions and Science, Services and Capacity Development will replace the previous existing four departments of Infrastructure, Services, Science and Innovation

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and Member Services, enabling cross-disciplinary collaboration and reducing administrative overhead. This structural shift reflects a deliberate move away from siloed operations toward a unified Earth system approach, where meteorological, hydrological, climate and environmental services are treated as interconnected components of a single value cycle.

- **Regional Coordination Office:** A newly established Regional Coordination Office reporting directly at the highest level to the Secretary-General, ensures that Member engagement and service delivery are decentralized, responsive and aligned with regional priorities. The change is intended to empower WMO regional offices with greater autonomy and operational capacity, enabling them to deliver tailored support aligned with region-specific priorities. This includes the deployment of project managers in the field to mobilize resources, lead initiatives and engage proactively with regional and global partners.
- **Administrative integration:** The Secretariat has consolidated its core administrative functions into three unified divisions: the Division of Development Partnerships and Programme Delivery, the Division of Human Resources and Corporate Services and the Division of Controller and Management Services. This integration enables more strategic alignment between resource mobilization, programme implementation and organizational accountability. For example, by merging donor relations, public-private partnerships and programme delivery under a single leadership structure, WMO ensures that financing and execution are coordinated, enhancing transparency and impact. Similarly, the integration of human resources, procurement, travel and conference services into one division fosters a more people-centred and responsive administrative framework.
- **Office of Global Communication and Engagement:** Communication and stakeholder engagement are centralized under the Office of Global Communication and Engagement, ensuring consistent messaging and strategic outreach. This office will be mandated to lead global outreach, crisis communication, internal messaging and stakeholder engagement, aligning all efforts with WMO's strategic priorities.
- **Financial impact:** The WMO Secretariat's reorganization was driven not only by the need to modernize and integrate operations, but also by the pressing financial realities and potential liquidity crisis facing the Organization. In an environment of increasing budgetary uncertainty, WMO recognized the imperative to reduce costs while safeguarding its core mandate.

Key financial outcomes:

- 68 posts abolished, including multiple senior-level posts (D-2, D-1, P-5) and overlapping administrative roles.
- 49 new positions created, strategically aligned with emerging priorities such as regional coordination, digital transformation and Earth system integration.
- Net reduction of 19 posts, of which 12 were at the levels of D-2, D-1 and P-5, resulting in a leaner, more agile Secretariat.

Cost savings – staff costs:

- CHF 5.2 million saved annually in staff costs funded by the regular budget.



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- This represents: 10.3% of the original staff cost budget and 7.5% of WMO's total annual budget (based on the 2026 budget approved by EC-79).

Cost savings – efficiencies:

- Additional savings and efficiencies are being identified in the development of the supplemental budget to be presented to EC-Ext(2025). While reductions in all objects of expenditure are being identified, the main focus of the savings and efficiencies is a reduction in travel costs and costs associated with short-term staff and consultants.
- The additionally planned efficiencies and savings are expected to represent approximately 3.0% of WMO's total annual budget (based on the 2026 budget approved by EC-79).
- In addition to the above efficiencies, and in line with the expectations of the UN80 initiative, WMO has a long history of cooperation with other United Nations system organizations and is actively engaged in nine of the United Nations High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) far-reaching efficiency initiatives. A selection of key areas of WMO cooperation with the United Nations system focused on efficiencies both for WMO and the wider United Nations system is as follows:
 - Ombudsman and ethics functions, which are outsourced to the United Nations to have consistent and high-quality functions in a cost-effective manner;
 - ERP and payroll processing, which represent two of the HLCM far-reaching efficiency measures, and which WMO embraced through outsourcing to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) prior to the UN80 initiative;
 - Partnering on procurement through the Common Procurement Activities Group (CPAG) to leverage the combined purchasing and negotiating power of the Geneva-based United Nations organizations to benefit all organizations.
- **Staff impact:** In line with established United Nations administrative and legal practice, the WMO Secretariat has ensured that all staff affected by the reorganization were appropriately informed, consulted and engaged throughout the process. Staff were provided multiple avenues for input and feedback through:
 - Consultation: Staff were able to provide comments and suggestions through a Task Team which included representatives of the Staff Association. The Staff Association maintained direct communication with staff, providing regular updates on Task Team discussions and outcomes.
 - Regular communication: At the same time, three townhalls were held to inform staff of current challenges and the reorganization, ensuring transparent dialogue and trust-building.
 - Digital transparency platform: To further support transparency and access to information, WMO established an intranet site on the WMO Hub, where staff can access reform-related documents, timelines and announcements. This platform serves as a central resource for staff engagement and ensures that all personnel are kept informed of developments in real time. The intranet page also provided information to staff on special measures in place for those who chose to transition out from WMO.

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Staff, including those affected by the reorganization, also have access to independent and confidential support services. Staff may seek free assistance from the Staff Counsellors Office, Office of the Ombudsman, Office of Staff Legal Assistance and a management evaluation review process. These services are available to help staff navigate the transition, raise concerns and receive guidance on their rights and options.

It is important to note that these services are external to WMO and operate independently of its management structure. This ensures that these mechanisms are free from conflicts of interest or undue influence and reinforces WMO's commitment to fairness, transparency and the protection of staff rights in line with United Nations administrative and legal standards.

In addition to the general intranet site providing reform-related updates, WMO has created a dedicated intranet page focused on support services. This platform provides access to information and resources, ensuring timely awareness and engagement.

Conclusion

The 2025 reorganization of the WMO Secretariat represents a necessary transformation, undertaken in response to evolving global demands, the need to overcome operational inefficiencies and growing financial uncertainty. By embracing a unified "One WMO" approach, the Organization is shifting away from fragmented, siloed structures toward a more integrated, agile and accountable framework.

The reorganization is not only strategic but critically fiscally responsible. With a net reduction of 19 posts and projected annual savings of CHF 5.2 million in staff costs, WMO strengthens its financial stewardship while safeguarding its core mandate. These savings will be reinvested into high-impact areas, while focusing resource mobilization strategies to support core activities and regional empowerment, ensuring that WMO remains fit for purpose and responsive to Member priorities.

Together, these reforms position WMO to lead with greater coherence, efficiency and impact delivering integrated meteorological, hydrological, environmental and climate services that critically meet the needs of its Members. The transformation ensures WMO remains a vital, responsive, and financially sustainable organization able to address emerging challenges while maintaining uninterrupted high-quality services for all Members.
