Communicating Climate Change (R-4)

1. The successful communication of climate change and variability information to the world's public remains one of the least resolved issues within Climate Change. Disseminators and communicators of climate change information come from a wide background within science and the humanities, but generally with a strong presence from the world of television broadcast meteorology. This group of people is made up primarily (but not exclusively) of broadcast meteorologists, skilled weather presenters, and environmental journalists. It is not however a cohesive group – and there are varying levels of comprehension of the core science within this group of people. However, it is the daily broadcast meteorologist/weather presenter who is recognized as the most trusted, credible and talented person capable of delivering the complex message of climate change.

2. The round table agreed that there was not enough dialogue between scientists and communicators, and that the development of climate services were not being advanced quickly enough – especially in light of the recent

accelerated rate of climate change and variability noted by many climate scientists.

- The round table participants, together with the audience, voiced agreement on the following main recommendations

1. National Meteorological and Hydrological Services' should involve those who communicate the daily weather messages from within their own organizations when planning for the mass distribution of timely climatological information. The climate change message must be delivered efficiently and effectively – irrespective of any prevailing political persuasion.

2. There is a pressing societal need for climate change information. It is necessary to make sure that weather and climate communicators themselves remain at the very forefront of the science. Researchers, scientists, climatologists and academics within the field are urged to share their knowledge freely, willingly, and in a timely manner to further the process of dissemination. Access to information remains the single biggest hurdle for many weather and climate communicators.

3. Best practices in regards to “delivering the message” range widely from country to country, because of differences in the varying regional threats, and difference in the delivery mechanisms around the world. However there are a few rules and techniques that can aid effective delivery of the message. These techniques need to be shared amongst all broadcasters. Weather broadcasters should have access to training in these techniques and be empowered to use them. The World Meteorological Organization has a lead role in this task; it should tap into the professional broadcast organizations to facilitate broadcast and presentation training for those who require it.

4. Communicators of climate change must remain independent. Every socio-economic sector will potentially be affected by our changing weather, and the communicator should not be aligned with any one single group. It is of the utmost importance that broadcasters who discuss climate change and variability are not perceived by the audience to be unduly influenced by political ideology nor economic considerations.

5. There should be a much greater degree of dialogue between climate change scientists, and those who communicate to end-users.

6. Finally, weather broadcasters should take a lead in reaching out to other communities – in particular the education and health communities – in promoting discourse over climate change and variability.