



Ninth Steering Committee
22 October 2024

SOFF regional collaboration and partnerships

Decision 9.4

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

**Weather
and climate
data for
resilience**



Decision 9.4: SOFF regional collaboration and partnerships

The SOFF Steering Committee

Recalls intersessional decision 2.1 on SOFF regional workshops and engagement to be carried out under the leadership of the SOFF Secretariat and in collaboration with SOFF partners until June 2025.

Welcomes the SOFF regional workshops held so far for Africa, South Asia and the Pacific to foster regionally coordinated SOFF implementation, share knowledge and lessons learned, leverage investments and climate finance opportunities beyond SOFF, and consult with countries and partners and stakeholders on important SOFF operational topics.

Further welcomes that all regional workshops were co-organized with partners for increased impact and reduced costs.

Appreciates the efforts of linking SOFF support for countries in achieving GBON compliance with financing opportunities from international development and climate finance partners for comprehensive packages of support that span the whole meteorological value chain.

Notes the call from beneficiary countries for SOFF to continue providing opportunities for regional collaboration and leverage.

Requests the SOFF Secretariat

- to continue identifying regional opportunities through regional workshops and engagement, including holding a workshop for the Caribbean in the first half of 2025.
- to develop a collaboration agreement on complementarity and collaboration with the Weather Ready Pacific Programme, guided by the Steering Committee co-chairs, for envisioned signing at COP29.
- to develop a collaboration agreement on complementarity and collaboration with the African Development Bank on its Climate Action Window, guided by the Steering Committee co-chairs, for envisioned signing at COP29.

Purpose of this Document

This document provides an update on SOFF regional workshops and engagement for Africa, South Asia and the Pacific. The purpose of these workshops was to foster regionally coordinated SOFF implementation, share knowledge and lessons learned, leverage investments and climate finance opportunities beyond SOFF, and consult with countries and partners and stakeholders on important SOFF operational topics.

As outcome of these workshops, it is proposed to develop collaboration agreements for the Pacific with the Weather Ready Pacific Programme and for Africa with the African Development Bank Climate Action Window.

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SOFF regional collaboration and partnerships

1. Context

In November 2023, the 6th Steering Committee adopted with [Decision 6.6](#) the updated Work Programme for the first SOFF Implementation Period between July 2022 and June 2025. This updated Work Programme includes regional workshops to foster regionally coordinated SOFF implementation.

The 2023 Independent External Review of SOFF, endorsed through [decision 7.2](#), further emphasized the importance of regional approaches, in particular for coordinated implementation, procurement and sustainability of investments.

In January 2024, the Steering Committee through its [intersessional decision 2.1](#) approved the funding request for SOFF regional workshops to be conducted until June 2025 and allocated USD 200.000 for this purpose. The SOFF regional workshops aim at fostering regionally coordinated SOFF implementation, leveraging investments and climate finance opportunities beyond SOFF, and knowledge sharing and consultation on technical issues relevant to the respective regions. The Steering Committee requested the SOFF Secretariat to identify cost-sharing and co-financing opportunities from SOFF partners for the delivery of the outlined regional workshops and engagement.

2. Regional engagement Africa

The WMO Regional Association for Africa at its Eighteenth Session in 2023, through decision 4.1, requested a comprehensive African regional SOFF program to be implemented with urgency in order to close Africa's major GBON gaps. In May 2024, the Regional Association in its Decision 4.3/3 requested the WMO Secretary-General to communicate with the SOFF Steering Committee the importance and urgency of considering: (i) approving SOFF readiness phase support for the remaining African countries; (ii) approving investment funding requests from African countries when submitted to the Steering Committee for consideration; (iii) Supporting a phased expansion of SOFF support to middle-income countries including those in Africa; and (iv) stepping up SOFF resource mobilization efforts to enable all African countries to close their GBON gaps in sustained manner.

In response to these requests, SOFF so far programmed support to 25 African countries. At COP28, the African Development Bank launched the Climate Action Window that provides a substantial opportunity for complementary financing. In order to maximize synergies between SOFF and complementary funding from the Climate Action Window, the SOFF Secretariat and the African Development Bank co-organized the Africa regional workshop on closing the basic weather and climate data gaps in Africa, 11-13 September 2024 in Abidjan.

The workshop brought together more than 100 participants from more than 20 countries and both “communities”, SOFF and Climate Action Window. Questions were raised regarding SOFF funding for Middle-Income Countries in Africa, emphasizing the critical importance of accessing SOFF resources to achieve mandatory GBON compliance. Participants identified opportunities for sub-regional GBON implementation, with focus on the WMO Information System (WIS), approaches to calibration of instruments and GBON trainings as well as the role of the WMO Regional Centres in Africa. The discussions underscored the need for clearer guidance from WMO as SOFF Technical Authority as well as a collaborative framework at the regional or sub-regional level. Countries requested SOFF to develop a regional support program for increased efficiency and effectiveness, taking advantage of WMO regional centres and facilitating collaboration between SOFF beneficiary countries.

Stakeholders’ consultations were conducted on gender, civil society and the private sector as well as on the design of the SOFF compliance phase. Compliance phase consultations underscored the importance of realistic country co-financing arrangements, such as considering in-kind contribution. Addressing the administrative complexities associated with result-based payments is critical, including addressing rising costs. Adopting a phased approach in both the Investment and Compliance Phases was discussed.

The workshop provided also an opportunity to discuss with partners complementary financing opportunities, particularly in the framework of the UN Early Warnings for All (EW4All) Initiative, to ensure countries receive a broader package of support beyond SOFF to strengthen the meteorological value chain. Recognizing the synergies between the support offered by SOFF and the African Development Bank’s new Climate Action Window, the discussion led to the proposal of structured partnership between the two initiatives through a Memorandum of Understanding. This collaboration aims to enhance cooperation and streamline efforts in closing the basic weather and climate data gaps by leveraging shared resources and expertise, laying a stronger foundation for climate resilience. Please see [workshop outcome document](#) and [web story](#) for more details.

3. Regional engagement Pacific

In September 2021, the WMO Regional Association South-West Pacific at its Eighteenth Session, through Decision 9, committed its Members to contribute to the further development and prompt implementation of the SOFF. Following this decision, the President of the Regional Association submitted to the SOFF Secretariat a request for a SOFF Pacific SIDS regional program.

The SOFF regional workshop was co-hosted by the SOFF Secretariat and the Fiji Meteorological Service and took place 10-12 April 2024 in Fiji, back-to-back with the CREWS Pacific SIDS Steering Committee meeting and with a cost-sharing arrangement with CREWS. It brought together representatives from 13 Pacific Islands countries, the 3

Implementing Entities for the Pacific region (UNDP, UNEP and World Bank), peer advisors (New Zealand and Australia), WMO, as well as representatives from Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Weather Ready Pacific Programme, Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Adaptation Fund and CREWS.

Workshop participants emphasized the need for SOFF and appreciated the role it plays in the context of EW4All initiative. Progress and speed of SOFF implementation was welcomed considering the urgency of the challenges in the Pacific, emphasizing the need to balance speed with sufficient time given to consultation. Countries clearly stated the importance of the “two-way street” and requested SOFF to ensure that beneficiary countries have access to and are able to interpret and use the enhanced global forecast products that are developed based on their GBON observations. Participants stressed that the compliance phase of SOFF is the clear innovation compared to other financing mechanisms. They emphasized the importance of the SOFF compliance phase and the ongoing consultations to fine-tune this phase. In this regard, countries stressed that compliance costs will be high in the Pacific, given the remoteness and logistical challenges in the region related to regular maintenance. Finally, participants highlighted that a main challenge for the region is coordination between all initiatives and multilateral and bilateral partners. Please see [workshop outcome document](#) and [web story](#) for more details.

Following the workshop, the SOFF Secretariat continued discussions with the Pacific SOFF beneficiary countries, Implementing Entities, peer advisors and the Weather Ready Pacific Programme on developing a structured approach to collaboration. Consequently, the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC) at its meeting 17-19 September 2024 noted the complementarity and need for close collaboration between SOFF and the Weather Ready Pacific Programme and the importance of a coordinated approach to implementation of the two long-term complimentary funding mechanisms for the Pacific. The PMC recommended that the Weather Ready Pacific Project Management Unit and the Systematic Observation Financing Facility Secretariat develop a Memorandum of Understanding under the guidance of their Steering Committee chairs, with the objective the Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the chairs of the respective Steering Committees and an envisioned joint announcement at COP29.

4. Regional engagement South Asia

The World Bank, in collaboration with several partners, organized the South Asia Hydromet Forum (SAHF) in February 2024 in Sri Lanka. The SOFF Secretariat virtually participated and presented SOFF progress in the region. The forum brought together over 200 stakeholders to strengthen regional collaboration and synergies for better hydromet and early warning services in South Asia. A key focus was on creating a shared vision for building a regional observation network for weather, water and climate services. To achieve this, a commitment was made to enhance collaboration between SOFF and the SAHF.

As a follow up to the forum, the South Asia SOFF regional workshop on closing the basic weather and climate data gaps, advancing SOFF implementation and creating synergies took place 24-26 September 2024 in Thimphu, Bhutan. It was co-hosted by Bhutan's National Centre for Hydrology and Meteorology and the SOFF Secretariat. More than 40 participants from the South Asian countries, SOFF peer advisors, SOFF Implementing Entities, WMO Technical Authority, multilateral and bilateral partners and the SOFF Secretariat attended the workshop that was held in hybrid format.

The workshop distilled Investment phase early lessons learned, including considering a phased approach to the SOFF investment phase and avoiding over-investment beyond GBON, having sustainability of investments in mind. Participants also discussed regional opportunities. While GBON compliance is a national obligation, WMO regional centres and regional mechanisms provide an opportunity for complementary support. Countries were encouraged to complement SOFF support with regional collaboration opportunities provided by the SAHF and the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate.

Countries highly appreciated the hands-on, practical support of SOFF peer advisors and stressed the need for better integration of WMO Secretariat core support to Members with the support provided through SOFF and its peer advisors, highlighting the need for clear, easy understandable and self-explanatory WMO Technical Authority guidance.

Countries stressed that they are eager to benefit from their data sharing through the use of ECMWF data and products as well as products from other global and regional producing centres. ECMWF proposed a “train the trainer” programme with SOFF peer advisors so that all peer advisors can be capacitated in a hands-on manner to make best use of forecast data and products from ECMWF and other producing centres.

SOFF was highlighted as an opportunity to address a main challenge – fragmented international partners support and overinvestment. With its clear focus on the first part of the meteorological value chain and its operational model including open-ended peer advisors technical assistance, SOFF creates an opportunity for countries to assess what complementary support is needed from other partners, with support from the Implementing Entities, peer advisors and SOFF Secretariat.

Finally, the workshop also provided an opportunity for stakeholder consultations on gender, civil society and private sector as well as on the design of the compliance phase. The workshop concluded with the proposal to conduct this type of engagement and on SOFF investment phase lessons learned on a regular basis. Please see workshop [outcome document](#) and [web story](#) for more details.

5. Looking ahead

Collaboration and partnerships in the Pacific and Africa: Under the guidance of the Steering Committee co-chairs, the SOFF Secretariat would develop a Memorandum of Understandings with the Weather Ready Pacific Programme and African Development Bank's Climate Action window for fully complementary and structure collaboration in the Pacific and Africa.

Collaboration and partnerships in South Asia: The SAHF is developing a proposal for complementary CREWS funding which would further strengthen the complementary collaboration between SOFF and CREWS.

Collaboration and partnerships in the Caribbean: The SOFF Caribbean regional workshop is planned for March 2025, envisioned to be co-organized with the Inter-American Development Bank and CREWS. The SOFF Caribbean program aims at streamlining GBON implementation in the region with a focus on coordinated SOFF implementation and leveraging of existing networks and investments in the region. The workshop is expected to discuss the design of the Caribbean regional GBON network, coordinated SOFF implementation with the aim to standardize equipment procurement as much as possible, enhancing spare parts availability, pursuing economies of scale as well as exploring options for regional operation and maintenance practices. Regional organizations like the Caribbean Meteorological Organization, the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre will be invited to participate in the workshop.