

**WMO OMM**

World Meteorological Organization
Organisation météorologique mondiale
Organización Meteorológica Mundial
Всемирная метеорологическая организация
المنظمة العالمية للأرصاد الجوية
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Annex: 1 (available in English only)

Subject: Invitation for an information session on closing today's major weather and climate data gaps through innovating climate finance – the United Nations Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) Impact Bond, 13 March 2025
3. p.m.–4 p.m. (CET), WMO press room

Your Excellency,

As the WMO Assistant Secretary-General, I have the honour to invite you to an information session on the envisioned Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) Impact Bond, on Thursday, 13 March, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Central European Time), in the WMO press room.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the urgency and importance of closing today's basic weather and climate data gaps and the role of [SOFF as a new United Nations climate fund](#) in establishing a new partnership with small island developing states, least developed countries and other developing countries.

Since opening its doors for business in July 2022, [SOFF has been operating at speed and scale](#). While initial support has already been provided to 60 countries with the support of 12 pioneer funders, more is needed. Therefore, SOFF aims at innovating climate finance and issuing a SOFF Impact Bond, the first impact bond on climate change. The bond is envisioned to be announced at COP30 as a concrete public-private contribution to the new climate finance goal agreed at COP29.

The meeting follows a recent visit to the United States where I had initial discussions with potential public and private partners for the SOFF Impact Bond. I also met the World Bank vice-president and treasurer who confirmed the Bank's interest to structure and issue the bond.

Speakers will consist of senior members of the SOFF bond development team that includes three former World Bank vice-presidents.

I have the further honour to enclose with this invitation a short introduction to SOFF. We would highly appreciate it if you could join us for the information session.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mr Thomas Asare
For the Secretary-General

To: Permanent Missions of Members with WMO to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva (limited distribution)

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATIONS FINANCING FACILITY (SOFF)



INTRODUCTION FOR POTENTIAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDERS

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 5

This note provides a brief description of the [Systematic Observations Financing Facility \(SOFF\)](#), a finance platform created by the United Nations to effectively support developing countries to contribute to the [Global Basic Observing Network \(GBON\)](#). GBON is an international agreement established by the [World Meteorological Congress](#) that requires all countries to collect and share key weather and climate data. Achieving GBON compliance has been mandatory from 2023, but huge data gaps persist.

SOFF seeks the engagement with potential public and private funders to raise the additional US\$ 260 million needed by the end of 2026 to close the critical data gaps that constrain the quality of weather forecasts and climate predictions and create the underpinning for sustainable development policy and finance decisions.

THE CONTEXT

Consistent and sustained generation and reporting of meteorologic data is essential. Any weather forecast beyond three days and climate prediction for any location on the planet require data from across the globe.

While GBON compliance is mandatory, [more than 140 countries lack the monitoring and reporting infrastructure and capacity to provide this data](#). Almost all of these are Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other developing countries. For example, the whole African continent has fewer reporting weather stations than Germany. This leaves a major gap in the global weather and climate monitoring architecture.

It is a gap that needs to be filled quickly. According to a report published by the World Bank, UK Met Office and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), closing this data gap would create global [annual socio-economic benefits amounting to US\\$ 5 billion](#). SOFF data are also [vital for enhancing AI](#)

applications in weather and climate science.

Additional funding of approximately US\$ 260 million is required by the end of 2026 for the installation and operation of the needed facilities and institutional strengthening of the National Meteorological Services. As basic weather and climate data create global benefits, this data represents a global public good. Therefore, financial support for developing countries to comply with their GBON obligations needs to be provided on a grant basis, also taking into consideration the difficult financial and economic circumstances of these countries.

THE RESPONSE AND THE FURTHER NEED

In 2021, 193 nations and territories of the World Meteorological Congress requested the creation of [SOFF as a new specialized United Nations fund](#) for basic weather and climate monitoring infrastructure, international exchange of this data and associated country capacity. [Three UN agencies jointly](#)

[established SOFF](#) that serves as the platform for providing this financing – WMO, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Since [SOFF opened its doors for business in July 2022](#), twelve sovereign donors have provided US\$ 108 million in grants. This support has enabled SOFF to [assist an initial group of 60 countries](#) in assessing their data gaps and preparing for infrastructure installation and data sharing. Already [32 countries have completed the necessary preparations](#), 13 of which have been approved for investment with strong country leadership and commitment, for example [Tanzania](#).

By end-2025, up to 20 surface stations and 2 upper air stations supported through SOFF investments are expected to start sharing data, representing a 35% increase in all surface data shared by LDCs and SIDS.

SOFF needs to raise an additional US\$ 100 million in 2025 and a further US\$ 150 million by end-2026 to respond to the investment needs of the initial group of 60 supported countries. An additional US\$ 10 million is required to respond to the demand from 35 countries that do not yet benefit from SOFF support to assess their data gaps and prepare them for infrastructure installation and data sharing investments.

THE SOFF APPROACH

SOFF funds recipients solely with grants. Recognizing that its investments fund developing countries' contribution to a global public purpose, SOFF provides [grant funding for investments in the required infrastructure and country capacity](#). Once the data sharing capacity is established, SOFF provides open-ended results-based grant contributions for operation and maintenance.

SOFF provides peer-to-peer assistance. To ensure sound technical implementation and sustained data sharing, SOFF has mobilized

advanced National Meteorological Services from 28 countries that provide long-term peer-to-peer technical assistance, including South-South twinning arrangements. For example, the South African Weather Service is supporting Mozambique's National Institute of Meteorology as a SOFF peer advisor.

As SOFF is providing grant-only support to developing countries, it has to raise its funds solely as donations. Given its global mandate, the urgency of its mission and the additional resources it needs, SOFF is engaged in an active fund-raising effort with existing and potential additional sovereign donors. It is also initiating a major effort to engage private philanthropies and other non-sovereign donors.

SOFF is working to offer options to potential funders, in particular with respect to the timing of contributions. While SOFF needs funding as soon as possible to continue the speed and scale at which it has been operating, it is developing options for funders to make forward pledges over a period of years, with SOFF accessing bond markets to front-load those pledges to provide immediate resources. This approach draws on extensive precedent, notably the bond-market transactions by the International Finance Facility for Immunisation and the bond issue undertaken by UNICEF during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

SOFF is also developing outcome-based options for funders that would condition their contributions on independent verification of the delivery of results – substantial increase in the generation and international exchange of basic weather and climate data.

[A SOFF bond that incorporates these options is in development](#) and will benefit greatly from discussions and feedback with potential donors and investors. It is envisioned that the bond will be announced at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.