

Eighth Steering Committee

18-19 June 2024

SOFF at COP29

INF 8.6

Systematic Observations Financing Facility

**Weather
and climate
data for
resilience**



Purpose of this Document

This document is prepared as input for consultation with the Steering Committee on positioning SOFF at COP29. It includes an initial positioning proposal, suggested SOFF events at COP29 and the SOFF Policy Brief for WMO Climate Policy Advisors.

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SOFF at COP29

1. Context

The document SOFF at UNFCCC 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) is seeking guidance by SOFF Steering Committee members on positioning SOFF at in that process. It includes key messages and suggested actions to consider. Input by Steering Committee members will be reflected in a Decision document for consideration at the 9th Steering Committee meeting, ahead of COP29, and for the updated SOFF Policy Brief for WMO Climate Policy Advisors.

Closing the GBON data gap is essential for better forecasts and timely early warnings – a foundational element of the Early Warnings for All initiative (EW4All). Past COPs and Subsidiary Body decisions emphasized the need to address existing gaps in the global climate observing system (see [web story about SOFF at COP28](#) for details).

The Updated Resource Mobilization and Outreach Strategy and Action Programme until June 2025 (Decision 8.2) proposes two targets related to COP29. Firstly, SOFF is prominently featured at COP29 Earth Information Day; and secondly, SOFF is featured in the COP29 cover decision.

2. Proposed positioning

2.1. Envisioned levelled-up UNFCCC-process engagement

Based on engagement with the WMO Climate Policy Advisors (see Annex), the following is envisioned.

Featured in COP29 cover decision

COP29's main goal is reaching an agreement on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), paving the way for stronger ambition on updating the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) in 2025 and ensuring that the information that goes into the next cycle of the Global Stocktake (GST) is more accurate. Since SOFF has a key role to play in supporting countries in achieving mandated Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) compliance and closing their basic weather and climate data gaps, SOFF should be featured in the COP29 decision text and SBSTA conclusions.

Strong recognition in SBSTA

SOFF would benefit from language language that

- recognizes the global public good nature of GBON systematic observations for all Parties;
- emphasizes SOFF essential role in supporting Parties in meeting their GBON obligations;

- acknowledges SOFF rapid implementation progress and high country demand;
- stresses the need to mobilize additional contributions to the SOFF UN fund; and
- welcomes the decision of the Third Session of the WMO Infrastructure Commission (15-19 April 2024) to develop a roadmap for GBON expansion by 2025.

Reference in New collective quantified goal on finance (NCQG) decision to support SOFF Resource Mobilization

In order to increase funding for systematic observations through SOFF as the specialized and dedicated fund, SOFF would benefit from language that

- recognizes SOFF as one of the modalities for the enhanced provision and mobilization of climate finance to support the preparation of NDCs and NAPs;
- invites parties and multilateral funds under UNFCCC to provide support to the SOFF UN fund for strengthening systematic observations and increased capacity in data generation and international exchange, which is vital for national climate plans including NDC/NAPs and for the next GST cycle and the implementation of the Early Warnings for All Initiative.

Loss and Damage

The establishment, operationalization and initial capitalization of the new Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) were key milestones. The LDF is expected to play a key role in coordinating the 'mosaic' of funding arrangements that address losses and damages, including slow onset events, extreme events and addressing non-economic losses and damages.

SOFF was referred to an example of an entity in the funding arrangements in COP28 decision on the LDF, therefore falls under the funding arrangements of LDF.

Additionally, EW4All being high priority of both UNSG and WMO, there is potential for SOFF to leverage its position as a strategic partner. As early warning systems are essential to the adaptation and loss and damage strategies of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), SOFF has a unique opportunity to work with the UNFCCC and act as a partner to the funds established under the UNFCCC. SOFF therefore envisions text that

- recognizes systematic observations and SOFF's role as foundational element to minimize losses and damages;
- invites SOFF to operate as one of funding arrangements for the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF).

Earth Information Day

For COP29, SOFF stands ready to brief parties and provide an update on SOFF Implementation at the UNFCCC mandated event.

2.2. Suggested actions

SOFF Steering Committee

- SOFF Steering Committee members representatives linking their countries' COP finance negotiators with the SOFF Secretariat and together advocating for SOFF being strongly featured in COP decisions.
- Steering Committee members that are Parties to the UNFCCC support SOFF to be invited, and then accredited by the LDF by its board, to operate as one of the funding arrangements, as a fund that can funnel and speedily deliver finance for loss and damage.
- Steering Committee members that are Parties to the UNFCCC clearly demonstrate in their submissions to UNFCCC that systematic observations and the data that they produce are essential for among others, national climate planning and early warning infrastructure.
- Steering Committee members that are Parties to the UNFCCC to submit a request for SOFF to present a progress update at the Earth Information Day 2024.

SOFF co-founders

- Principals to champion SOFF engagement at their high-level events.

SOFF funders

- SOFF funders considering inviting their countries' COP finance negotiators to the next SOFF funders meeting.

SOFF beneficiary countries

- Advocate about the importance of systematic observations and their benefits through SOFF to be features in the COP29 cover decision.
- Highlight SOFF at regional opportunities.

3. Events

Events organised by the SOFF Secretariat

- SOFF high level event that provides an opportunity for funders to publicly announce pledges to the SOFF UN fund.

SOFF at Steering Committee and Advisory Board members' events

- SOFF being featured at events from SOFF Steering Committee and Advisory Board members.
- To showcase collaboration, members are asked to maximize SOFF visibility by actively involving SOFF in their engagements and events.

Annex: SOFF Policy Brief to WMO Climate Policy Advisors

1. Context

SOFF sought guidance for its positioning at COP29 from WMO Climate Policy Advisors at their virtual meeting on 25 April 2024 to prepare a SOFF Policy Brief. This Policy Brief reflects feedback received from this group.

2. SOFF Status

SOFF is delivering at speed and scale: SOFF opened its doors for business in July 2022, approved first country Readiness funding requests in March 2023, and today is supporting 60 countries including 11 countries with approved Investment funding requests. The average time it took for countries from a programming decision to approved Readiness funding corresponds to 3.7 months. For more information see [SOFF Action Report 2023](#) that was launched at COP28, noting that significant additional progress has been made in 2024.

SOFF urgently needs additional resources to respond to strong country demand: The SOFF Steering Committee has set USD 200 million as the SOFF funding target for June 2025. Unfortunately, while having mobilized USD 79 million in less than two years, SOFF is off-track to achieving its funding target. Unless additional resources can be mobilized, SOFF will not be able in 2024 to fully respond to country demand and provide funding for all countries that have developed their SOFF investment proposals. For more information see Annex on SOFF funding needs.

SOFF has gained initial traction with UNFCCC but needs increased visibility and acknowledgement of its importance and its rapid progress at COP29. In 2022, SBSTA58 highlighted progress in systematic observation through SOFF and called on SOFF to continue supporting LDCs and SIDS. Building on this, SBSTA59 in 2023, recognized SOFF continued efforts to address the gaps in systematic observation and it encouraged parties and relevant organizations to further strengthen their support to the systematic observations community. At COP28, SOFF for the first time was featured at the Earth Information Day. Most importantly, SOFF was mentioned in the historically important decision operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund which identified SOFF as having potential to play a role in the funding arrangements to address loss and damage.

3. Bringing SOFF into COP29 decisions and SBSTA conclusion

3.1 SBSTA conclusion

SOFF in the SBSTA conclusion should build on the SBSTA58 conclusion that highlighted progress in systematic observation through SOFF and on the SBSTA59 conclusion that recognized SOFF continued efforts to address the gaps in systematic observation and encouraged parties and relevant organizations to further strengthen their support to the systematic observations community.

SOFF would benefit from SBSTA conclusion language that (i) recognizes the global public good nature of GBON systematic observations for all Parties; (ii) emphasizes SOFF essential role in supporting Parties in meeting their GBON obligations and strengthening systematic observation; (iii) acknowledges SOFF rapid implementation progress and high country demand; (iv) stresses the need to mobilize additional contributions to the SOFF UN fund; and (v) welcomes the decision of the Third Session of the WMO Infrastructure Commission (15-19 April 2024) to develop a roadmap for GBON expansion into other earth observation domains by 2025.

3.2 New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG)

COP29's main goal is reaching an agreement on the NCQG, paving the way for stronger ambition on updating the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) in 2025 and ensuring that the information that goes into the next cycle of the Global Stocktake (GST) is more accurate. SOFF is supporting countries in achieving mandated Global Basic Observing Network (GBON) compliance and closing their basic weather and climate data gaps. SOFF is improving the accuracy of information that goes into NDCs, NAPs and the GST process and plays an important role in mobilizing finance for NDCs and NAPs and the effective use of resources.

SOFF would benefit from COP29 decision language that (i) recognizes SOFF as one of the modalities for the enhanced provision and mobilization of climate finance to support the preparation of NDCs and NAPs; (ii) invites SOFF to operate as one of funding arrangements for LDF; (iii) invites parties and multilateral funds under UNFCCC to provide support to the SOFF UN fund for strengthening systematic observations and increased capacity in data generation and international exchange, which is vital for national climate plans including NDC/NAPs and for the next GST cycle and also the implementation of the SGs Early Warning for all Initiative.

- **About SOFF**

SOFF is a specialized UN climate fund to support countries in achieving mandatory GBON compliance and closing the basic weather and climate data gaps. GBON was established by the 193 countries and territories of the World Meteorological Congress (resolution 2, 2021) that also requested SOFF creation (resolution 3). GBON for the first time clearly defines the minimum set of mandatory weather and climate data that all countries are obliged to internationally exchange. SOFF was co-created by WMO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 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 (ADB, AfDB, IsDB, IADB) 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. Initially, SOFF focuses its support to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Today's major GBON data gaps undermine effective climate action. 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. The situation is particularly dire in Africa and Fragile and Conflict Affected States. Africa's 36 LDCs and SIDS – home to 600 million people – GBON

compliance rate for surface land stations is 7 percent; Germany has more GBON compliance surface land stations than the whole African continent. 39 countries classified as Fragile and Conflict Affected states cover one eighth of the world's population and have in total only 7 GBON compliant land surface stations. Closing the GBON data gap is essential for better forecasts and timely early warnings. Therefore, data generated through SOFF supported systematic observations are essential for global and national forecast products, which are, in turn, crucial to prepare national climate mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage plans.

SOFF is a delivery vehicle of the UN Early Warnings for All initiative. SOFF is a foundational element and delivery vehicle of the UN Secretary-General's [Early Warnings for All initiative](#) (EW4All) and its Executive Action Plan launched at COP27 – warnings are only as good as the data they are built upon. GBON compliance rate in the initial 30 focus countries of the EW4All initiative is 5 percent for surface stations and 6 percent for surface land stations. SOFF is providing support to all initial 30 focus countries, has already provided close to USD 55 million funding for these countries, and requires additional USD 100 million to support these countries in achieving GBON compliance.

SOFF is a funding arrangement to address Loss and Damage. The COP28 decision on the Loss and Damage Fund ([FCCC/CP/2023/11/Ad.1](#)), in paragraph 20 on funding arrangements, states that *“Entities that form part of the funding arrangements should explore ways of better coordinating all channels of finance, including bilateral, regional and multilateral channels, with the aim of improving synergies and coherence among the existing and new arrangements for responding to loss and damage”*. Paragraph 21 highlights *“Initiatives such as Early Warnings for All, Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems initiative, the Systematic Observations Financing Facility and Global Shield against Climate Risks are welcome to increase their support for activities that enhance response to loss and damage”*. Given that SOFF is identified under the Funding Arrangements of the Loss and Damage Fund, and because EW4All is a high priority of both the UNSG's office and WMOs, there is potential for SOFF to leverage its position as a strategic partner in the loss and damage space. Because early warning systems are essential to the adaptation and loss and damage strategies of SIDS and LDCs, SOFF has a unique opportunity to work with the UNFCCC and act as a partner to the funds established under the UNFCCC. Particular attention should be devoted to the topics of accreditation and establishing SOFF in the LDF ecosystem as a fund that can funnel and speedily deliver finance for loss and damage. To do this, it will be necessary for member parties to clearly demonstrate in their submissions to UNFCCC that systematic observations and the data that they produce are essential for among others, national climate planning and early warning infrastructure. Furthermore, SOFF can also contribute to the Santiago Network which is critical in assisting the most vulnerable countries with the technical assistance required for addressing loss and damage.

At COP28, SOFF signed a [collaboration framework with multilateral climate funds on enhancing systematic observations](#). This framework was [requested by the June 2023 SOFF Steering Committee](#). It spells out how SOFF partners – the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Climate Investment Funds (CIF), Adaptation Fund (AF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the CREWS initiative – collaborate in a seamless manner to strengthen systematic observation and the use of observational data for effective decision making.

Over time, SOFF is envisioned to expand its support to Lower Middle-Income Countries and, linked to potential GBON expansion, to other earth observation domains. Concerning the expansion, following a resolution of the World Meteorological Congress (May 2023), the 5th SOFF Teering Committee (June 2023) considered the SOFF long term vision of a potential expansion of SOFF Investment and Compliance support to Lower Middle-Income Countries. Yet, given SOFF funding constraints, the Steering Committee has put this decision on hold. Concerning SOFF expansion to

other earth observation domains, SOFF is expected to follow the GBON expansion trajectory. The third Session of the WMO Infrastructure Commission (15-19 April 2024) decided to develop a roadmap for GBON expansion for World Meteorological Congress consideration in 2025 with a target of a World Meteorological Congress decision to amend Technical Regulations relevant to GBON in 2027.

Annex: COP28 Decision on Matters Relating to Finance – New collective quantified goal on finance (FCCC/PA/CMA72023/L.10)

Paragraph 26 of COP28 Decision on Matters Relating to Finance – New collective quantified goal on finance (NCQG) ([FCCC/PA/CMA72023/L.10](#)) confirms the urgent need to support implementation of existing NDCs and NAPs. Additionally, it confirms the need to increase climate finance from a wide range of sources, instruments and channels for these plans in the NCQG.

“26. Confirms that the deliberations on the scale and elements of the new collective quantified goal will take into consideration the exigent need to support implementation of current nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, including those submitted as adaptation components of nationally determined contributions, increase and accelerate ambition, and reflect the evolving needs of developing country Parties, and the need for enhanced provision and mobilization of climate finance from a wide variety of sources and instruments and channels, recognizing the interlinkages between the different elements of the new collective quantified goal, including in particular how the structure will impact the scale.”