

Professor Cuomo, dear Co-Chairmen, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is both an honour and a pleasure for me to welcome all of you on behalf of General Capaldo, Director of the Italian Meteorological Service to this 15th International TOVS Study Conference that is going to be opened in this marvellous site of Acquafredda of Maratea, one of the most beautiful piece of coast of Italy.

Unfortunately General Capaldo, who intended to address this important technical conference himself, has been kept away by other urgent engagement and he therefore asked me to convey to you his best wishes for a successful conference. This fact is of particular significance for me because, although no longer directly involved in the technical TOVS related matters, I am still a member of the International TOVS Working Group, having attended four past TOVS Conferences. I am still receiving all email from the group and I see in the audience a lot of colleagues that I know since many years.

As you know the Italian Meteorological Service belongs to the Italian Air Force, and this the reason why I am wearing this official dress for this official occasion. Being an integral part of the Air Force, and in the light of the available resources, our activity is more focused on the operational application of meteorology with development activity mainly connected to the improvement of the meteorological products, while keeping a close relationship with universities and research institutes that are more suited for research development.

Indeed we are very grateful to the National Council of Research and particularly to Professor Cuomo for having hosted this very important event in Italy and particularly in this region of Basilicata that contributes substantially with its research institute of Methodologies for Environmental Analysis and the University of Potenza to the advances in the use of TOVS and other atmospheric sounding data and related applications.

In this regards the ITSC represents the most authoritative forum where the connection between the research and the operational people is realised. The results and the recommendations coming from TOVS conferences have been always considered as a basis for development programmes and future visions for operational agencies and taken into account in the other satellite related groups, such as CGMS and WMO satellite groups. This not considering that the development, the distribution and the improvements of software packages for exploiting sounding data, that are now widely used operationally, has been performed under the aegis of the ITWG.

Among the different topics that will be addressed at the meeting I would like to mention in particular two events that are going to improve substantially the operational use of sounding data:

- One is the already operational Regional ATOVS Retransmission Service, RARS, already covering most of the Northern Hemisphere and that is growing to cover the entire globe, allowing the fast distribution of ATOVS data everywhere and that will be the first example of the WMO International Global Data Dissemination System, IGDDS for exchanging satellite data and not only.

- The other is the advent of IASI data, after the launch of METOP-A, that unfortunately suffered a further delay, and for which I wish the best success for the next attempt. This, together with the improved use of AIRS, will make the difference in the use of sounding data and will enable a valuable step forward in the NWP, together with the future development of microwave sounders.

In this field the contribution of this group will be essential, as it is already demonstrated simply looking at the agenda for this meeting and counting how many presentations are devoted to interpretation of IASI data both for research and for operational applications.

Before closing my short intervention I would like to remember the incomparable work done by Guy Rochard who I met first in 1980. He introduced me to the “secrets” of satellite data processing, and since the very beginning of the ITWG era, was one of the promoters of the use of TOVS data creating some important milestones for the operational use of sounding data.

Finally let me make a chauvinistic remark: this is the 15th ITSC, while the first official meeting of ITSC was held in 1983 in Igls. However the first proposal for setting up an international group for improving the use of satellite data was first put forward in Italy, at a conference on Satellite Meteorology of the Mediterranean, held in Erice, Sicily, in 1980, convener Bizzarro Bizzarri. At that time an Expert panel was set up composed of a number of people that most of you may have known i.e. Matthias Eckart, John Eyre, Herbert Fisher, Yves Le Ninivin, Rainer Bleck, Francois Cayla, Djuro Radinovic, Gerhard Steinhorst, Heine Woick. Also Bill Smith was there. The recommendation put forward by the Experts was: “to recommend the ECMWF to set up a study team to develop models of basic atmospheric physics which leads to the satellite-observed radiation patterns, in order to improve the understanding and thus the use of satellite data” . That was the beginning of ITWG.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, thank again for being here for this conference and I wish you an enjoyable and fulfilling week in Maratea.

Thank for your attention.