

CPC African Desk Celebrates 20th Anniversary



Seated, left to right: Amira Ebrahim (Egypt), Wassila Thiaw, Awatif Ebrahim (Egypt), Aaron Ntiranyibagira (Burundi), Lotfi Khammari (Tunisia); Standing, Endalkachew Bekele (Ethiopia), Vadalamani Kumar (CPC)

For two decades, the National Weather Service has been providing support to African national meteorological services to develop capacity in weather and climate forecasting through a residency training program at the Climate Prediction Center's African Desk.

The African Desk became operational and hosted its first trainee from Kenya in March 1995. The desk initially focused on climate monitoring and forecasting, but was expanded in 2006 with the establishment of a Weather Desk to provide support to the World Meteorological Organization's Severe Weather Forecasting Demonstration Project through training in weather forecasting and the development of products required for severe weather forecasting.

More than 130 meteorologists from 35 countries in Africa have been trained on the African Desk. Four former trainees have moved up in the chain of command to become WMO Permanent Representatives of their respective countries. Dozens more have moved up to leadership positions. The residency training program is complemented by a NOAA-USAID climate training workshop series, initiated in 2009, that has enabled the training in climate of far more professionals from different regions of the world than NCEP could host in the residency program. The training workshops have been organized for all the ocean basins of the world. More than 200 meteorologists and scientists from countries in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Central America, South America, and Southeast Europe have completed training in these workshops. In 2010, the activities of the African Desk expanded yet again, with the establishment of the Monsoon Desk in 2010, now forming the CPC International Desks.

In addition to training, one of the key missions of the CPC International Desks is to provide domestic and international agencies with access to real-time NCEP operational weather and climate forecasts for any given region of the world. The desks also provide support to many domestic and international programs, including USAID's Famine Early Warning System and Disaster Risk Reduction program, Regional Climate Outlook Forums, and more recently, the World Health Organization climate and health initiative.

NOAA has also been working with sister agencies with specific interest in Africa and the developing world to support decision making in areas that are challenged by natural disasters such as droughts, floods, tropical cyclones, etc., and considered economically vulnerable due to shortage of food or drinking water.



Cutting the cake: (from left to right) Mike Halpert, Acting Director, CPC, Wassila Thiaw, Team Leader African Desk, Louis Uccellini, NOAA AA for Weather Services, Bill Lapenta, NCEP Director and Wayne Higgins, NOAA Climate Program Office Director



Acting CPC Director Mike Halpert makes a few remarks to CPC staff



African Desk Team Lead Wassila Thiaw and Acting CPC Director Mike Halpert listen to NCEP Director Bill Lapenta's remarks on the occasion



Former CPC Director and current NOAA Climate Program Office Director Wayne Higgins provides his perspective on the importance of the African Desk.



National Weather Service Director and former NCEP Director Louis Uccellini contributes some reminiscences on the history of the African Desk.