AMS Board on Global Strategies (BGS)

Remarks of Dr. Joel N. Myers

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Board Meeting, August 14, 2014

Thank you for inviting me to speak here this morning, and congratulations on the formation of this new AMS Board on Global Strategies.

Your mission statement notes that "The goals of the BGS are to promote collaboration in the development of and access to high-quality, sustainable, long-term meteorological and climatological observations, models, and predictions around the globe… and to increase access to such meteorological and climatological information, especially in developing countries, to improve the continuity of business, better health, and safer environmental conditions.

To be successful in your mission, you must adapt to the world of rapid change and, if you hope to have influence in the developing countries, you will need to articulate a model that resonates and can be clearly and logically articulated.

As you know, many of the developing countries have limited infrastructure and often suffer from a lack of observations and radar and other types of data that we take for granted in the more developed world.

So the sequencing of future progress and development in these countries will not follow the standard models or pattern we are accustomed to. For example, in many of these countries, mobile devices are already promulgating at a much faster rate than the rate that wired telephones spread in the developed world, and many are bypassing that entire step. This of course leads to other developments.

For example, in the last few months, internet.org was launched as a partnership between Facebook, Google, Qualcomm, AccuWeather, and various other companies to provide free internet content to the developing world Phones are available to carry this information that sell for as little as $29 dollars. I saw many low cost phones at the recent Consumer Electronics Show. At the rate prices are falling, such phones might be available for as little as $10 dollars in the near future. On these phones, you will be able to receive many of the products that were not even accessible in the United States five or ten years ago.
While this technology can bring such things as the AccuWeather localized 45-day forecast to every neighborhood in Zambia, which

is the first country we launched with Facebook, and also provides the hourly forecast, which was not available to anyone on the planet before we developed it 10 years ago, it is now available to the people of Zambia.

However, because they do not have sophisticated radar, we will not be able to provide them with AccuWeather MinuteCast, our latest invention that allows users to see precisely when precipitation will start and end to the nearest minute.

With these types of greatly improved information and capabilities available, the development of weather information in developing nations will skip over various steps and, for example, it may not be necessary for Zambia to run advanced meteorological and climatological models.

With the tremendously accelerating increase in information, which I spoke about in my AMS Summer Meeting keynote address, along with the ability to mine and manipulate data, such changes of this nature will accelerate at a parabolic rate going forward.

To repeat what I said on Monday, a full 90 percent of all of the data in the history of humanity has been generated in the past

700 days. This means that in 2018, we will have 100 times as much data and information and capability than we have now and in twelve years we will have one million times as much.

This, along with the increase in communication speed, data storage capability, and artificial intelligence, which are all accelerating -- will lead to an unparalleled velocity of change in nearly every aspect of our life. So it is clear that, in the coming decade, the only constant will be hyperbolic, accelerating change, and that will require many of our traditional ways of thinking to go by the wayside.

It is important for this committee's work to factor in that we have entered an age where business has taken over some of the role that used to be the domain of governments. We have begun to see this in numerous ways; some subtle and some more obvious. I have to believe that in the old days a Putin would have rolled his tanks into Ukraine; but now, because of the economic pain Russia is being subjected to, and the information in real time, Russia seems to be thinking very carefully about invading Ukraine. //

It appears that economic sanctions are what brought Iran to the negotiating table. At the same time, new technologies such as Twitter and social media have led to social and political changes

and increased turmoil in the Middle East. While government debt here and abroad is growing substantially, which seems to be reducing the power and flexibility of government, large corporations have increased their cash flow and global footprint. As a result, many of the government meteorological agencies will not be able to follow the pattern that might have been recommended by this committee if it existed a few years ago.

I believe most of you have seen or heard me describe the model and supply chain of forecasts and the relative roles of the components of the successful Weather Enterprise in the United States, and I pointed out why the government's role is shrinking and is more limited than it was in the past and this trend will probably continue. Yet all three partners of the American Enterprise -- the government, the academic and research sector, and America's Weather Industry, all have a vital role to play.

I believe it is a fact of life that - of the three components of the Enterprise - the Weather Industry is best suited to adequately assess, adjust, and adopt to changes, keeping abreast of

developing technology and techniques that enable it to find new and better ways to present forecasts, warnings, and data that increases the usability and value of forecasts and reduces the loss of lives and property, while enhancing the quality of life.

This gap between the government and industry is widening because of rapid and accelerating technological change. Further, there is a powerful driver of business growth. Capitalism and keen competition for profits are what drives creativity and progress, underpinning creative destruction.

The American Constitution and American Exceptionalism have led to America being the leader in the world. I believe this message and explanation is often criticized because it is not sufficiently articulated. As President Calvin Coolidge said, the business of America is business. It is part of our culture. It also provides the opportunity for people from any strata of society to succeed and allows for great upward mobility for those who are motivated, driven, and work hard. America has been the world leader in many areas and inventions for over 100 years because of this philosophy.

Recently this included the internet, the iPad, and inventions from many others, mainly American companies. That is the reason why America dominates the Information Age. And all of these

companies innovate, compete, and change rapidly and continuously.

This is part of the message that should be delivered to developing countries. In these developing countries, the government is the leader in data sourcing and collecting data and it has been the only source of forecasts and warnings. In some countries, data and information is made available and, in others, it is less so.

The best way that countries can get the most economic benefit from their weather information is to make that data readily available on a free and open basis as has been the case here in the United States. The weather industry will then take that data and turn it into the best products to benefit the safety of the citizens, and most benefit the economy of that country.

To be most effective, I advocate that the BGS focuses on, fosters, and utilizes the model that has worked most effectively in producing the best Weather Enterprise in the world, the American Weather Enterprise, which has been built on the strengths of the three components of the Enterprise as I described in the keynote on Monday.

So I have been asked, what can BGS do to help? I believe the facts are clear, that open data and competition among weather

industry companies benefits everyone. It improves the economy, improves public safety, and improves the quality of life.

And yet, in many parts of the world, government continues to follow a different model in which the government restricts access to and use of its data, and dampens the forces of competition that yield these benefits.

I urge this board to become a force for more openness and sharing of data globally because it will actually benefit these countries.

After all, this is an argument that I and others have been making for some time … and while we have made significant progress in the tripartite partnership that is the American Weather Enterprise, our progress in other nations has been limited.

Various analyses have been made by Jeffrey Lazo, John Dutton and others to ascertain the total value to the economy of weather forecasts, warnings and data. But I do not believe these analyses have fully expressed the value that is added by a vigorous,

competitive weather industry and the open sharing of government data.

I believe this Board can have some impact by showing governments why they will benefit from making available to all -- the weather and climate data and allowing, even encouraging, commercial competition.

Some nations have commercial arms to their met services that have full access to government data, while competing private sector firms do not. Clearly, this gives an advantage to the commercial arm, but it deprives the citizenry and business of the best products that competition produces.

Very simply, the more the government makes all of its weather data available to anyone and everyone, and without controls and restrictions, the more it will lead to an improvement in business, public safety, the quality of life, the health of its citizens, better agriculture, better use of resources, and a better overall economy.

The free, open, and unrestricted availability of government weather data, forecasts, and output is the basis of the U.S. Weather Enterprise, and it has led to creativity and innovation, as well as a higher return to the government in terms of a better economy, and the increase in tax revenues generated from higher employment and productivity throughout the many areas that are affected directly and indirectly by the weather and that benefit from timely, accurate weather forecasts and warnings.

And it has given America the best overall weather services available anywhere in the world.