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Statement from the director of the institute on the final report of the Commission No. 5

First of all, I would like to express my high appreciation for the work of the Commission and for their efforts to objectively evaluate our institute. The recommendations of the Commission are very useful and we are already starting to follow most of them.

Several explanatory remarks were prepared in collaboration with the team leaders.

1. Regional vs. global scope of individual research teams

We agree with the Commission's remark that the scope of atmospheric studies carried out in the Departments of Meteorology and Climatology is more "regional" than in the other teams ("... the work is connected mainly with regional studies", p.2, and elsewhere in the text). We would like to emphasize, however, that although many meteorological and climatological studies are carried out for Central Europe or have appellation "regional" or "Czech Republic" in their titles, they are often methodological ones and may therefore have much wider (in some cases "global") implications. In climate modelling, for example, regional climate models allow for (and require) studying different aspects of the climate system than global models, and these aspects may be of the same or even higher importance not only as to relevance for society (due to the "regional" focus), but also with respect to their scientific originality. In meteorological studies we use mainly Czech data; partly because of the Czech community requirements and partly because detailed data, for example high resolution radar data, are extremely difficult to obtain from foreign meteorological services in Europe. The results of the studies, however, are representative for Central Europe at least.

2. National collaborations

We fully agree with the Commission that not only international links but also national cooperation are important and need to be developed (as mentioned and recommended in several parts of the evaluation report). The national cooperation is not sufficiently emphasized in the materials submitted for the evaluation, as we focused more on the Institute's international research

activities. We would like to emphasize that presently we cooperate and are in close touch with nearly all research institutes and universities in the Czech Republic relevant to our fields of study, in terms of joint projects and papers, involvement of students in research, informal collaborations, data exchanges, etc. In our opinion, we have very good and broad cooperation with both institutions specifically mentioned in the final report: the Global Change Research Centre in Brno and the Czech Hydrometeorological Institute. Especially the Czech Hydrometeorological Institute is an important partner for both departments (of Meteorology and Climatology) and, for example, in the evaluated period the Dept. of Meteorology had 6 joint projects. This and other national cooperation will be further supported and developed in the future as they are vital for the Institute.

3. Interpretation of numbers related to papers submitted for the evaluation

The following remarks are mainly intended to the organizers of the evaluation, but also concern the final report.

We have a general comment concerning presentation and interpretation of the numbers of papers submitted for the evaluation by individual research teams – as the total number of papers for each team was given “by definition” (i.e. by the average size of each team), the absolute numbers of papers and of those falling in individual quality classes are not comparable between research teams, institutes etc. In our opinion, relative numbers (in %) should always be presented and interpreted instead.

Another point that is worth commenting is that it was not clear which criteria will be applied when evaluating the papers (that represent only minor part of all papers in IF journals over the given period for all research teams of the Institute). Some teams might have considered more relevant to submit mainly (or only) first-author papers, rather than papers in top journals to which their contribution was less important (e.g. papers with wide international teams of authors that do not have the first author from the research team/institute). It is not clear to us – and the report does not provide any clue – to what extent does the evaluation take the contribution of individual research teams to these outputs into account.

Our last comment to this point is rather technical: There are several misprints in the text related to these numbers. For the Department of Climatology (the smallest one of the evaluated teams), only 12 papers could “have been involved in the evaluation” (not 16 as stated, p.8), and 4 were ranked in categories 1 or 2 (not 3 as claimed). In relative terms, this is a non-negligible error (4 out of 12, not 3 out of 16) that may lead to possibly biased conclusions.

4. Development and support of promising research directions

We agree with many recommendations of the Commission related to research directions that should be developed and supported in the near future. This is an essential part of the Institute's management policy to identify and support promising research directions, such as "development of numerical models" or "biometeorology and climatology" that are recommended to be "strengthened in the next years" (p. 6-7), and generally to support research groups that demonstrate increasing research quality (and particularly so if associated also with growing relevance for society). We will closely follow and implement many of these recommendations at the management level. However, we must carefully select the number of research topics to be able to do our research at an internationally appropriate level.

Zbyněk Sokol
Director