Address for the opening session

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Good morning, Dr. Ru,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my sincere pleasure and great honor to be here at the Seventh Joint Meeting of Seasonal Prediction on East Asian Winter Monsoon. First of all, on behalf of the Japan Meteorological Agency, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the China Meteorological Administration for giving me this opportunity to deliver an address for the opening session. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Beijing Climate Center for organizing and hosting this meeting.

It is needless to say, the prediction of the Asian monsoon activity is a key issue for us to provide better seasonal outlook for the East Asian countries including China, Korea and Japan. Since 1998, this joint meeting has played an important role in exchanging scientific findings and operational progress on the topic, among these countries. I would like to express my appreciation for every effort of CMA and KMA to maintain this important meeting.

Nevertheless, it still seems to be a pretty hard job for us to correctly predict the Asian monsoon activity with sufficient lead time. As you may recall, all of us in the northeastern Asia experienced extremely cold weather in last December. Monthly mean temperature of Japan averaged over 17 local observatories, recorded the lowest since 1948, and record-breaking heavy snowfall caused serious damage in the area on the Sea of Japan. In the following January, JMA issued a special report to the public on the background of the extremely cold December. The report has already been introduced at the occasion of the last spring session jointly held with the FOCRA-II, so I will not repeat here

in detail. I would just like to notice here that not only the 50-day-long negative spell of the Arctic Oscillation (AO), but also the extremely active cumulus convection over the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea were closely related to the cold weather.

After this severe event, JMA examined every possible way to improve our seasonal prediction system. For example, we reviewed the probabilistic expression in our outlook statement, and quick delivery of our analysis on the background of extreme weather. In the course of detailed verification, it was found that our extended-range ensemble prediction system could predict this cold event with lead time of a couple of weeks. If we had disseminated the information more clearly at that early opportunity, it could have helped people prepare for the cold temperature and heavy snowfall. I don't think we can make it in every occasion. However, users' needs will be satisfied by quick delivery of the information as soon as we detect a sign of weather regime change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In contrast to last winter, the sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific are currently being warmer than normal, and this situation is predicted to persist during the coming winter.   At present, it is not certain whether this situation is going to be identified as an El Niño event. However, as I will show you later at this meeting, numerical model prediction shows clear impacts of the warm SST anomalies. From the viewpoint of early warning, we have to communicate with users about the current situation and outlook as well as possible impacts to the society, with taking care not to trigger their over-reaction.   I hope we would reach a consensus on this matter through an intensive discussion in this meeting, and make some sort of public statement,.   I think that will make this meeting more fruitful.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, better monitoring and prediction of the

Asian monsoon activity can be realized by the better climatological data sets. In this regard, I am very happy to inform you that in March this year, JMA completed the Japanese 25-year Re-Analysis project, named JRA-25 and now all the data are available at the official website. I believe that the JRA data will provide you a sound basis for monitoring the current status of, analyzing the inter-annual variation mechanisms of and verifying the prediction skills of the Asian monsoon system, and therefore contribute to improving our climate information and prediction services. I hope that all of you get access to the JRA data and make use of them depending on your interests. With regard to the re-analysis project, I would like to inform you that JMA plans to co-host the "Third WCRP International Conference on Reanalysis", in Tokyo, January 2008.

Finally, I wish to express again my sincere appreciation for all the kindness of the Director-General of the Beijing Climate Centre, Dr. Dong and his excellent colleagues. Thank you very much for your attention.