

## PRESS RELEASE ECMWF 08-december-2015

Embargo: **8 DECEMBER 2015 – 13.00**

---

# FLORENCE RABIER APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts)

The President of ECMWF's Council, Professor Gerhard Adrian, has today announced that Dr Florence Rabier has been appointed as successor to Professor Alan Thorpe as Director General of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts.

Dr Rabier is an internationally recognised expert in Numerical Weather Prediction, whose leadership has greatly contributed to delivering major operational changes at both ECMWF and Météo France. Dr Rabier is especially well known within the meteorological community for her key role in implementing a new data assimilation method (4D-Var) in 1997, which was a first worldwide. Her career so far has taken her back and forth between Météo France and ECMWF, giving her a very valuable two-way perspective on the relationship between ECMWF and its Member States. Florence Rabier will take over from Professor Alan Thorpe when he moves on from the role at the end of December 2015. The appointment was made following a recruitment process overseen by the Centre's governing body, its Council, which gathers representation from all Member States.

President of ECMWF's Council, Professor Gerhard Adrian, said:

*"I am delighted that Florence Rabier has been appointed as the next Director General of ECMWF. ECMWF's world-class work is critical to all its Member and Co-operating States. As well as her impressive personal qualities, Dr Rabier brings to the job a wealth of experience in the fields of numerical weather prediction, data assimilation and international collaborations with the national meteorological services and research institutions in ECMWF's Member States and especially with our key partners of WMO and EUMETSAT. New appointments bring with them excitement but also sadness, and on behalf of our Council, I would like to thank Alan Thorpe for his consistently strong and professional leadership as Director General of ECMWF since 2011. He has done an absolutely outstanding job at an exceptionally testing time for the organisation."*

Commenting on her appointment, Dr Rabier said: *“It is a privilege to be offered the opportunity to lead ECMWF, at a time when weather prediction has become such a crucial aspect of our daily lives and our economies. I have great respect for the talent and professionalism of the staff of ECMWF and I am impressed by what we have achieved under the outstanding leadership of Alan Thorpe. I am also very excited about continuing to work with our partners within the Centre’s Member and Co-operating States, as well as in other parts of the world as we face and address the challenges of the coming years with them.”*

Michel Jarraud, Director General of the WMO said: *“Global weather prediction has been one of the largest scientific and technological challenges since the middle of the twentieth century. As particle physics, astronomy, life science, it requires a broad array of experiments and large facilities in order to address fundamental questions – and to produce valuable, everyday information to run our life. ECMWF has been playing a decisive role in this area since its creation.*

*Under the leadership of Professor Thorpe, ECMWF furthered its critical task of improving global numerical weather predictions through the inclusion of more atmospheric processes, taking into account the nonlinear complexity of the atmospheric system.*

*Over the past 40 years, forecast skill has been increasing by about one day every 7 to 9 years – a unique accomplishment. ECMWF is an essential partner of WMO, providing medium- and long-range forecasts and supporting national meteorological services from developing and least-developed countries in their effort to better forecast severe weather. It has been key in moving scientific progress into operational applications.*

*The leadership, energy and dedication of Alan Thorpe has been crucial for continuing these achievements.”*

Alan Thorpe commented on Dr Rabier’s appointment by saying: *“I am delighted that Florence has been appointed Director General of ECMWF. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with her over the past few years, and I am sure she will thrive in this new position. ECMWF is a fantastic place, where scientific talent, technological expertise and hard work mix to create world-leading results. She will bring energy, flair, deep knowledge and extensive experience to the role, and I look forward to following her accomplishments as an alumnus of the Centre.”*

For more information, please contact ECMWF Press Office at [pressoffice@ecmwf.int](mailto:pressoffice@ecmwf.int)

## Notes to editors

- ECMWF is an intergovernmental organisation supported by 34 European States. It provides weather services with medium-range forecasts of global weather to 15 days ahead as well as with monthly and seasonal forecasts. ECMWF's computer system at its headquarters in Reading, United Kingdom, is one of the largest for meteorology worldwide and contains the world's largest archive of numerical weather prediction data. It runs a sophisticated medium-range prediction model of the global atmosphere and oceans. The National Meteorological Services of Member States and Co-operating States use ECMWF's products for their own national duties, in particular to give early warning of potentially damaging severe weather.
- Florence Rabier first joined ECMWF as a consultant during her PhD in 1991, then as a scientist in data assimilation for 6 years in the 1990s. She came back from Météo-France in October 2013 to take up the position of Director of the newly formed Forecast Department. She has led major operational changes, including the 4D-Var assimilation at ECMWF and the assimilation of satellite data at Météo-France, and was responsible for the transition of NWP developments from research to operations at Météo-France in close collaboration with the Forecasting Department. Florence has experience in both externally-funded and cross-departmental project management. She led an international experiment involving a major field campaign over Antarctica, in the context of the International Polar Year and THORPEX. She has been awarded the title of "Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur", one of the highest decorations awarded by the French honours system.