

WORK OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS
ON ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS (1988/89)

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

1. The Conference reviewed at its 1988 plenary session the work done since the early seventies in the field of environment statistics, the organization of that work and the results achieved. The review was based on the preparatory work done by a meeting of experts in Geneva, January 1988. The review led to the general approval of the recommendations for further work as formulated at the January 1988 meeting. A copy of these recommendations is attached for easy reference.

2. However, the Conference wished to accelerate work on the standard statistical classifications of land use, water use and wastes. Consultations by correspondence were held on the land use and water use classifications, and a Work Session was devoted to the revision of the waste classification. A meeting in March 1989 considered the necessary revisions of the classifications, and it was able to recommend:

- the ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Land Use (CES/637);
- the ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Water Use (CES/636); and
- the Draft ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Wastes (CES/638)

The waste classification will be reviewed again after the compilation of the next Compendium of ECE Environment Statistics.

3. Thanks to the availability of additional resources, the above-mentioned work was implemented without changing the schedule of other work on environment statistics. Thus, a work session on air quality statistics was held in November 1988, and its meeting on the subject is being prepared (for September 1989). It is expected that the meeting will agree on the ECE Standard Statistical Classification of Ambient Air Pollution.

4. The series of annual work sessions for methodological discussions continued with a meeting in Voorburg (The Netherlands), and the next meeting in Budapest (Hungary, September 1989) is under preparation.

5. A further meeting of the participants in the co-ordination of international environmental data base managers was held in Geneva in March 1989. It made progress in practical arrangements for data exchange between environmental data bases at the international level.

6. A consultation by correspondence has been held on which issue to choose for the next Compendium of ECE Environment Statistics (tentative publication date: 2nd quarter 1991). It turned out that "the environmental impacts of agriculture" and "the motor car and the environment" are the two subjects of top interest. They are proposed to the Conference for selection for the next two compendia.

7. Finally, work has started on the development of a water quality classification and on the definition of indicators of economic aspects of environmental protection. Work sessions in these two projects will be held in December 1989. It is hoped that their preliminary results can be tested in the preparation of the next Compendium of ECE Environment Statistics.

- (b) Statistics on environmental aspects of human settlements should be discussed with more emphasis in annual work sessions dealing with general methodological concerns. The development of concepts, definitions and classifications in this area should be assessed after such discussion and after the publication of the related Manual, which is currently under preparation in the United Nations Statistical Office.

49. The detailed recommendation for further work below includes (i) indications regarding the time scales that should be observed in work on individual issues; and (ii) indications as to the need for the holding of meetings on individual projects. It was understood that, in addition to the holding of meetings in the three languages where necessary, other methods of work will continue to be used as required in the way in which they were usually applied in the implementation of the Conference's work programme. The Meeting stressed that all work recommended on the development and revision of standard international classifications, including any test, should be completed within the years up to the 1993 plenary session of the Conference.

50. In conclusion of its discussion, the Meeting recommended the following structure of sub-programme 12.5 in the programme of work of the Conference:

A. DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS IN INDIVIDUAL AREAS OF ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

This programme element is designed to deal with the development and revision of statistical nomenclatures in individual areas, either in the form of standard international classifications or for the purpose of their use in international data collection.

- (a) Revision of the draft ECE International Standard Classification of Ambient Air Pollution. Environmental problems with the emission, concentration and deposition of air polluting substances ought to be the starting points for the revision. The way in which measurement practices influence air pollution statistics should be dealt with in the revision, and the statistical measures to be used in data presentation should be specified whenever possible. (Within five years; meeting.)
- (b) Revision of the draft ECE Standard International Classification of Solid Waste. The revision should in particular reconsider the use of the term "solid"; review in a rigorous manner the coverage of radioactive wastes; simplify, if possible, the breakdowns of industrial and household wastes; and consider whether the term waste is adequate for the categories shown of agricultural wastes. (Within three years; meeting.)
- (c) Development of concepts and definitions regarding activities of environmental protection. The purpose of the related work would be to lay the conceptual foundations for the inclusion of related data into international data collections such as the Compendium of ECE Environment Statistics. Of particular relevance are data on capital expenditure as well as current expenditure for environmental protection; data on the construction of protection facilities; data on goods and services for environmental protection; data on control programmes, consent conditions and enforcement; and statistics on the implementation of low-waste

technologies. Work on this project cannot be expected to finish soon. At least one meeting will be required.

- (d) Development of an ECE Standard International Classification of Water Quality. A classification of broad quality classes should be developed. Particular attention should be paid to the adequacy of the classification for environmental concerns with emissions, loadings as well as concentrations of pollutants in water. Recommendations regarding the use of statistical parameters and the statistical recognition of measurement practices should be included if and where appropriate. (Within five years; meeting.)
- (e) Revision of the draft ECE Framework of Fauna, Flora and Habitat Statistics. The revision should primarily aim at improvements in the definition of status categories and of categories of area protection. The revision should make full use of the work on the development of a European Red Data Book. In addition, the residual category of the list of species groups ought to be further detailed. Finally, the possibility of introducing the concept of "conservation care" into the framework was to be explored. (Within five years; meeting.)
- (f) Revision of the draft ECE Standard International Classification of Water Use. The water use classification should be greatly streamlined. More widely used statistics on the assessment of surface water resources could perhaps be found, and the need for maintaining a distinction between re-use and recycling of water should be reconsidered. (Within five years; meeting.)
- (g) Revision of the draft ECE Standard International Classification of Land Use. The revision should bring about a better orientation of the classification towards environmental aspects and a number of improvements in particular areas regarding both detail required and terminology or definitions used. Furthermore, conceptual work of more fundamental importance could be undertaken in relation to the revision, such as the development of concepts regarding the qualitative aspects of land and soil conditions and the degree of natural uses of forest. This work should be concluded over the next five years. It might be possible to organize it without the holding of a further meeting.
- (h) Development of statistics on chemicals from an environmental point of view. The concepts, definitions and classifications needed in this field should relate to the production, stockage, transport and use of chemicals. Any results of such work should only be cast into the form of an international recommendation, if and when they appear to be sufficiently responding to the needs of a broad range of member countries. The work should initially aim at a review of existing national practices. A meeting on the subject should not be organized during the intensive phase of work on the revision of classifications.

B. INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DATA SERVICE

The purpose of this programme element would be to organize the collection, compilation, storage and dissemination of environment statistics to national and international users.

- (a) Maintenance of a computerized ECE data base of environment statistics. The ECE data base as existing in Part One of the experimental Compendium should be updated on a continuous basis. Updates should occur at times and according to methods which are agreed upon with each responding country separately. The data base should be available for use by national statistical offices, the Economic Commission for Europe and its subsidiary organs; other international organizations; and should serve the publication of future Compendia of ECE Environment Statistics.
- (b) Publication of Compendia of ECE Environment Statistics. The structure and contents of any future Compendium should be determined in an intergovernmental meeting. They should be developed from Part One of the experimental Compendium. If possible from an organizational point of view, future Compendia should each contain a statistical monograph (see (c) below). Compendia should appear at regular intervals of two to three years, i.e. starting around 1990.
- (c) Publication of statistical environmental monographs. Subjects to be chosen and their presentation should continue to be policy-oriented and well adapted to the comprehensive statistical presentation of complex issues. Possible subjects for these monographs include forest damage; the North Sea; The Rhine; international movements of hazardous wastes; the relation of agriculture and environment; and the automobile.

C. GENERAL METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

The discussion of issues of a methodological nature and the development of guidelines for the maintenance of adequate quality of environment statistics are the subject of this programme element.

- (a) Consideration of specific methodological issues at annual work sessions. Future work in this regard should follow past practices with regard to both objectives and organization of the work.
- (b) Consideration of broad multi-disciplinary topics of methodological and related concerns at seminars. Some methodological issues can best be discussed as part of an extended area of concern. The organization of the work in the form of a seminar is particularly advisable when the gathering of experts from different fields is a precondition for the success of the work undertaken.
- (c) Development of quality measures of environment statistics and their presentation. The work should aim at the identification of relevant quality aspects of environment statistics and the definition of measures, which could help to describe these aspects, including their presentation. The work could result in a standard recommendation. Particular attention should be paid in this work to the quality aspects of internationally reported environment statistics.
- (d) Promotion of bilateral and multilateral projects. The work in this area should be continued according to current practice. In

addition, any test of a draft standard international classification in the field of environment statistics should be organized under this heading.

D. DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA OF ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS AS A WHOLE

This programme element is designed to deal with the systematic relationships between sub-areas of environment statistics as well as with the development of statistical instruments which enhance such relationships.

- (a) Development of environmental indicators. This development should be undertaken as a long-term effort in revision and amending, as required, the draft ECE Set of Environmental Indicators. The original concept used in the existing draft set should be further tested. Wherever appropriate, the development of individual indicators should be entrusted to meetings convened in the various individual areas of environment statistics as detailed under programme element A.
- (b) Consideration of emerging systems of frameworks of environment statistics. Such consideration should be undertaken if and when systems become apparent that hold the promise of international use.
- (c) Co-ordination of work undertaken under individual programme elements in the work programme of the Conference. This co-ordination should include the monitoring of the efforts by the Conference to contribute to improved co-ordination between international organizations which are active in the field of environment statistics.