

United Nations Nations Unies

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Dear Colleague,

I would like to follow up on my letter of 11 January 2008 in which I had outlined plans for an international conference on climate change and official statistics to be organized by UNSD in collaboration with Eurostat, the World Bank and Statistics Norway. I am glad to inform you that we have received many positive responses to the proposal from national statistical offices (NSOs) as well as strong support from international organizations.

There seems to be a general agreement that there is an urgent need to discuss how official statistics can best contribute to the measurement, monitoring and analysis of climate change and associated impacts. It is timely to build an agenda for action by the official statistical community. This agenda, the key output of the conference, will be discussed at the 40th Session of the UN Statistical Commission in 2009.

I am writing to you now to officially announce that the Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics will be held from 14 to 16 April 2008 in Oslo, Norway and to extend an invitation to you to attend and contribute to this event.

Please find attached for your information the provisional work programme of the Conference. As you will see, the sessions are built around the main aspects of climate change where official statistics can best contribute. There will be a strong presence of high level policy makers and scientists as well as statisticians to accentuate the frameworks that determine the need for and possibilities of official statistics to measure and monitor the causes and impacts of climate change and their relationship with development.

We already have acceptances from a number of excellent presenters including senior representatives from the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, European Environment Agency, the World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the statistical offices of Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway, and the Philippines.

The conference will be designed so there is plenty of time in the sessions for discussion between the participants and presenters. Please note that Sessions II, III and VII are expected to be longer than the other sessions. As we receive confirmations from invited speakers, a more detailed agenda will be gradually finalized.

A web page for the conference is on the UNSD web site (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/climate_change/). You are welcome to contribute country papers which should be submitted to Ms Eszter Horvath (horvath@un.org) by 28 February 2008 and will be placed on the web site as soon as possible.

Given the high level nature of the conference, we would like to recommend that NSOs be represented by the Director Generals or high level officials. Please note that this is not a technical conference where normally environmental statisticians would be represented. Since the capacity of the conference room is limited, there will be a maximum of two participants per country. Exceptions will be made for those countries providing presenters. We encourage you to invite a senior official from your country's environment policy agency as the second country representative.

The Conference will be held at the Oslo Military Society. The web link is http://www.oslomilitaeresamfund.no/index_eng.php. The Society's Conference Centre is about 150 meters from the Office of Statistics Norway.

All hotels within Central Oslo are reasonably close to the Conference Centre. Since April is a busy period for accommodation in Oslo it is suggested that you make your hotel reservations early. We attach a list of hotels recommended by Statistics Norway for your convenience. They have made some room reservations for the Conference at these hotels.

A registration form is attached for you to indicate who will represent your country at the Conference. To assist with planning, we would be grateful if you could send us your nominations by 22 February 2008 to Mr. Alain Gaugris (gaugris@un.org).

We are currently exploring the possibilities regarding funding for a limited number of participants from developing countries. If your attendance is dependent on funding, please indicate that on the registration form.

Should you have any questions regarding this conference, please send them to Ms. Eszter Horvath (horvath@un.org)

Thank you for your collaboration in this very important endeavor.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Cheung
Director
Statistics Division/DESA

Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

MONDAY 14 APRIL

Opening: The Conference will be opened by the Prime Minister of Norway or another high-level official. There will be short introductory speeches by the heads of the sponsoring organizations to outline their objectives for the Conference.

Session I: Setting the scope: Understanding the demand for statistics created by the scientific and policy framework of climate change and the role of official statistics in satisfying this demand. Understanding the statistical frameworks that currently exist and their relevance.

Speakers will include Professor Mohan Munasinghe, Vice-President of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), Jacqui McGlade, Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and a national Environment agency.

Session II: Greenhouse gas emission calculations as part of official statistics. What should be the role of NSO-s in the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and in informing adaptation and mitigation strategies? Are our statistics adequate?

Statistics underlying the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions encompass and feed primarily on energy statistics, but also on a wide spectrum of statistics on basic activities such as, production of industrial commodities, agriculture, forestry, transport, international trade, land use, waste-water, wastes, etc. Detailed statistics on physical flows in these activities are needed for development of greenhouse gas emission inventories.

Emissions (and removals) of greenhouse gases are calculated/estimated on the basis of activity data with the help of emission factors. The development of the methods of calculation/estimation and the establishment of the emission factors is usually outside the scope of official statistics. However, as these calculations require a large amount of official statistics, and the reliability of the calculations depend on the quality of these statistics, the NSO-s should be involved in the process (i) to understand better the special needs for statistics (ii) to make the other players (environmental ministries, research institutes etc) better understand the role of statistical standards, classifications and the advantage of their use.

There will be presentations from several National Statistical Offices who are involved in the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions. The UNFCCC will outline their expectations for these estimates and the main lessons from their review of existing estimates.

TUESDAY 15 APRIL

Session III: What is the role of official statistics in the measurement of the impacts of climate change?
Measurement of the impact of climate change is to a large extent based on sources outside the statistical system. They include meteorological and hydrological information, physical environmental data and data from scientific research. In order to assess the impacts of climate change and the consequent adaptation and mitigation measures, however, this information has to be linked with existing statistics on the population, on human/economic activities and on the environment (exposure, vulnerability or adaptive capacity). Impacts on the economy, the society and the natural environment have to be assessed. Statistical offices also have a role in the integration of the different data sets with official statistics, such as indicator systems, with the objective to describe the vulnerability or adaptive capacity of a country to impacts of climate change. Impact analysis is usually outside official statistics and belongs to the field of modeling. But official statistics can still play an important role by providing the source data or integrated statistical systems such as environmental accounts as essential inputs into these models.

There will be presentations from both international environment agencies and national statistical agencies to help focus the discussion in this session. The presentations will be structured along the lines of the economy, society and the natural environment respectively although consideration will need to be given to linkages.

Session IV: Official statistics and carbon emission trading.
Carbon Emission Trading will be one of the most important responses to Climate Change in many countries. What is the role of official statistics in supporting the carbon market? How can NSOs support analysis that examines the implications of carbon trading on the economy and economic growth? How useful are the I-O Tables for such analysis?

The EEA will give a presentation on their experience with the European Carbon Emission Trading. There will be a presentation from a National Statistical Office which has been given additional resources to improve statistics that are relevant to the national carbon emission trading scheme.

Session V: The assessment of adaptation/mitigation strategies
How can official statistics contribute to the assessment of costs and benefits of, and tradeoffs between adaptation and mitigation policies, measures and instruments? Can we monitor their effectiveness and impacts?

The main presentation will be from an international agency that has undertaken research on adaptation strategies and therefore able to provide an assessment of the major statistical requirements.

WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL

Session VI: How can official statistics support climate change scenario development and modeling and better inform the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report?

Statistics used as input: population projections, economic growth and income, energy structure and other driving force statistics. There have been criticisms of some of the statistical assumptions in the scenarios.

The IPCC will give a presentation on the key requirements for the Fifth Assessment Report. A national statistician will give an initial response on how the official statistical community might be best able to respond.

Session VII: Bringing it all together: Possible frameworks and standards for climate change statistics. Are existing frameworks adequate? Do they need to be amended or extended? What needs to be done to ensure these frameworks can be applied by National Statistical Offices?

Statistics to describe and monitor all aspects of climate change are manifold and come from multiple sources. There is a need for frameworks and standards that integrate statistics related to climate change and link official statistics with other information.

There will be presentations from several National Statistical Offices on their experiences on utilizing frameworks that are relevant to statistics on climate change.

Session VIII: Conclusions and recommendations: Agenda for action

Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics

RECOMMENDED ACCOMODATION

Statistics Norway recommends the following hotels and has made reservations at the indicated price

<http://www.thonhotels.com/cecil>

Single-room N. kr 1235, breakfast included

<http://www.thonhotels.com/spectrum>

Single-room N. kr 945, breakfast included

<http://www.royalchristiania.no/index2.html>

Single-room N. kr. 1495, breakfast included

http://www.ricahotelvictoria_english_version.cfm?oa=hotel.display&con=459

Single-room N. kr 1115, breakfast included