



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

ESA/STAT/AC.117
UNCEEA/1/13

**First Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on
Environmental-Economic Accounting
New York, 22-23 June 2006
United Nations Secretariat Building, Conference Room C**

**Report of the Working Group on Statistics for
Sustainable Development**

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A WORKING GROUP ON STATISTICS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WGSSD)

INTRODUCTION

1. Sustainable development indicators are used by national governments and international agencies for monitoring progress towards goals set by national governments and comparing performance among countries. The working group should identify good concepts and practices in order to assist national governments and international organizations in the design of sustainable development indicator sets and in the development of official statistics in the area. However, it should be clear that the objective is not to develop international recommendations on a particular set of sustainable development indicators to be used at the national level. Effort should be devoted to establishing a common understanding of the “object” of sustainability (that which is to be sustained) and to establishing core principles of the measurement of sustainability.

PROPOSAL

2. The working group should:

- i) articulate a broad conceptual framework for sustainable development measurement. While the starting point of this work should be the concept of capital, the group should also consider other approaches to the extent the capital approach is found insufficient from a conceptual standpoint;
- ii) identify the broad domains that good indicator sets should span;
- iii) develop a menu of good sustainable development indicators in order to help governments and international organizations when they are designing indicator sets;
- iv) identify a small set of indicators from the menu that might become the core for international comparisons;
- v) identify basic data systems necessary for a small set of indicators and identify their possible sources (existing or new statistical surveys, administrative records, information derived from environmental monitoring systems);
- vi) discuss the relationship between integrated environmental and economic accounts and sustainable development indicators.

3. The working group will be a joint working group of the OECD and the UNECE Conference of European Statisticians (CES) chaired by Robert Smith from Statistics Canada. The OECD Statistics Directorate will provide the working group with a secretariat; some secretarial support will also be provided by UNECE and Eurostat. The working group will submit a more detailed project (with milestones) to the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 2006. The working group should, at the conclusion of its work, report back to the Conference of European Statisticians and the OECD Annual Meeting of Sustainable Development Experts.

TIMETABLE

4. The working group should endeavour to have an interim set of recommendations by spring of 2007, in time for discussion as appropriate at the June 2007 meeting of the CES. A final set of recommendations should be prepared by the end of 2007.

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON STATISTICS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WGSSD)

BACKGROUND

1. At the second meeting of the 2005/2006 CES Bureau, 24-25 October 2005, Washington D.C., the creation of a joint OECD/UNECE Working group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (WGSSD) was approved (ECE/CES/BUR/2005/12/Rev). To facilitate the operations of the WGSSD, an informal meeting of experts that took place in December 2005 in New York recommended that a Steering Committee be created. The members of the Steering Committee will be identified from among those countries and institutions participating in the full working group.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

2. The main objectives of the Steering Committee are:

- to assist the Chair in operational planning for the WGSSD (e.g. identifying meeting dates and locations; preparing meeting agendas);
- to propose a programme of work for the WGSSD for approval by the full group;
- to periodically review the programme of work and recommend changes as necessary for approval by the full group;
- to oversee and, as necessary, contribute to the programme of work to ensure that the group is progressing effectively toward its objectives;
- to ensure, to the best of its ability, that the WGSSD is able to garner sufficient support from countries and institutions to complete its mandate.

COMPOSITION OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

3. The Steering Committee will include representatives from Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UNECE, Eurostat, OECD, UN Statistics Division, UN Division for Sustainable Development and (possibly) World Bank.

MEETINGS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

4. The Steering Committee is expected to meet face-to-face two or three times per year during the WGSSD's mandate. Meetings will normally be held in Paris and occasionally in New York, Geneva or Ottawa. The first meeting will take place in Paris on 13 March 2006. Work between meetings will be carried out electronically.

OUTPUTS

5. The main outputs of the Steering Committee will be:

- a proposed programme of work and timetable for the WGSSD;
- coordination of the work of the WGSSD with the aim of ensuring that the group meets its objectives within the timeframe of its mandate.

TIME FRAME

6. The Steering Committee will be operational during the full two-year mandate of the WGSSD.