



envstats

News and Notes

Environment Statistics Section
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)/DESA

UNSD NEWS:

Expert Group on the Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics

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The Expert Group (EG) on the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) was convened by UNSD following the decision of the Statistical Commission at its 41st session. The first meeting of the EG was held in New York from 8 to 10 November 2010. It was attended by experts from 29 countries and agencies and was chaired by Ms. Iva Ritschelova, President of the Czech Statistical Office.

At the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) active discussions focused on fundamental aspects of the 1984 FDES revision, particularly on the nature and requirements of environment statistics, criteria that should be satisfied by the revised framework, possible theories, approaches that could partially or completely serve as the foundation for or enrich the revised framework, the future core set of environment statistics, and the need for subsequent practical guidance documents.

Considerable progress was accomplished during the meeting, despite the obvious complexities of the task at hand. The EG agreed that there had not yet been concurrence on a single scientific theory upon which the framework for environment statistics could be based. However, there was concurrence that while an agreed scientific theory could provide a robust foundation for a framework, it is not an indispensable precondition to start the revision of the 1984 FDES, nor is it for the establishment of a core set of environment statistics and a suite of the necessary practical guidance documents to help countries develop their environment statistics.

Thus, it was agreed that work should progress in two parallel processes, which should be carried out in close collaboration with one another, in order to promote synergies and cross-fertilization.

UNSD will initiate the revision of the 1984 FDES guided by the agreed scope and criteria, focusing on identifying and developing the dimensions, building blocks and statistical topics that are not, or not fully covered. The analysis and assessment of country practices, existing regional and international indicator sets, data requirements created by major international environmental conventions and agreements, as well as new initiatives on measuring the green economy and well-being should feed into the revision of the FDES and provide a basis for the identification of a core set of environment statistics.

At the same time, Statistics Canada will further elaborate on their proposal to apply the natural capital theory to develop a framework for environment statistics, and illustrate the dimensions, structure and contents (statistical topics) of the resulting framework. It was recommended that other scientific theories that could underpin a theory-based conceptual framework for environment statistics should also be explored, taking into account the FDES and the criteria for a framework agreed upon by the Expert Group. It was suggested that a subgroup be formed by interested Expert Group members to assist Statistics Canada in this work.

The EGM requested that the subgroup led by UNSD produce two documents for the next meeting of the Expert Group in May 2011:

- A working paper discussing the structure, necessary building blocks and missing elements of the current FDES
- A first draft of the core set of environment statistics with the description of the process that was used for its establishment

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UNSD NEWS:

The EG also requested that the subgroup led by Statistics Canada prepare a discussion paper on the elaboration of the natural capital theory in terms of the dimensions, structure and contents (statistical topics) of a resulting framework and on the exploration of other scientific theories that could have the potential of underpinning a theory-based conceptual framework for environment statistics.

UNSD was requested to finalize the Terms of Reference and the detailed Programme of Work of the Expert Group according to the conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting and to present them, together with a progress report, for information at the 42nd session of the UN Statistical Commission in February 2011.

The next meeting of the Expert Group will be held in New York from 4 to 6 May 2011.

For further information about the EGM please visit the Expert Group's website at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/fdes.htm>.

UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics – State of the art

The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics was sent out to 172 countries and territories in April 2010. By mid-December 2010, 87 countries/territories responded, with 82 countries submitting data and five countries with no data available. Response rates varied significantly by region. The best response rates were found in East Europe (78.6%), followed by the Americas (61.9%) and Asia (56.5%). The response rate for Africa was 44.4% and there was no response from Oceania. Among the 82 countries submitting data, 66 countries were able to provide data for both the water and waste sections of the questionnaire, while 16 countries provided data for only one of the two sections.

All questionnaire responses have been through a thorough data validation process. Selected water and waste statistics with relatively good quality and geographic coverage compiled from the questionnaire, complemented by data from OECD and Eurostat, will be published by UNSD through the [UNSD Environmental Indicators](#) webpage and the [Country Snapshots](#) webpage. The complete data and footnotes received from each respondent country will be uploaded to the [Country Files](#) webpage with password protection. Country files are available, by request, for national, regional and international organizations that are involved in the collection of environment statistics. Also, selected water and waste statistics will be updated on [UNData](#).

The next biennial UNSD environment data collection will take place in 2012.

Invitation for contributions to the knowledge base on environment statistics

At the 41st session of the Statistical Commission, UNSD committed to developing a knowledge base on country practices in developing environment statistics to support the work on revising the *Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics* (FDES) and developing a core set of environment statistics. The proposed knowledge base will serve as a web-based access point for a dynamic and centralized repository of information on methodology and good country practices on the collection, compilation and dissemination of environment statistics. It will provide a global platform for easy and structured access to a wide range of information on environment statistics. The development of the knowledge base will need active participation from the countries. Therefore, UNSD is inviting all countries to provide documents of their good practices in environment statistics for inclusion in the knowledge base. The documents can be data compendia, general methodological guidelines or methodological work on a specific environmental topic, as well as descriptions of the organization of environment statistics and institutional frameworks. Please email all electronic documents to envstats@un.org.

Utilizing NGO and University Expertise to Address Global Water and Sanitation Issues

Mr. Stanley Laskowski, Dr. Christiaan Morssink and two graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) visited UNSD on 19 November 2010. Mr. Laskowski gave a presentation on "Utilizing NGO and University Expertise to Address Global Water and Sanitation Issues" as part of the UNSD Brown Bag Lunch Seminar series. In addition to the seminar, the guests had a discussion with UNSD staff. The main discussion points were: the development of performance indicators for water/sanitation projects in developing countries; the underlying assumptions, strengths and weaknesses of the data collected to track progress toward the MDGs for water and sanitation and anticipated future direction of these goals beyond 2015; a proposal to use both the academic expertise available at UPenn and the on-the-ground expertise of the Philadelphia Global Water Initiative network to train individuals and governments from developing countries on the collection and analysis of statistics; and opportunities for UPenn students to do research for UNSD in the field of environment statistics.

UNSD NEWS:

Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics

The Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-ENV) handled a lot of coordination issues in international data collections, with special reference to geographical coverage by the different organizations to avoid duplication of data collection from countries. This has become more challenging since OECD and Eurostat widened the scope of their data collections beyond their member states (candidate, accession, partner, neighbour country programmes). As the depths of the data collections differ from one group of countries to the other, duplication cases have to be solved on a one-by-one basis requiring continuous coordination and agreements on data sharing.

There will be a major revision of the OECD/Eurostat Joint Questionnaire in 2010-2012 that has to be coordinated with UNSD and UNEP to ensure the compatibility of the questionnaires. OECD will also rethink the periodicity of data collection, with the data necessary for the core indicators collected annually and as part of the annual quality assurance, while other data collected less frequently. There have been meetings between OECD and Eurostat to discuss the sharing of work related to the Joint Questionnaire.

Work on the joint glossary is ongoing, focusing on terms related to water and waste statistics used in the international questionnaires. Further harmonization of terms and definitions will be part of the 2010-2012 questionnaire revision process.

The IWG-ENV will play a prominent role in the revision of the UN Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the development of a core set of environment statistics.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

58th Congress of the International Statistical Institute – Water Theme Day

Water, food, energy, climate change, financial systems and urbanisation are all sources of substantial global challenges. Statistics is central to the understanding of these challenges and to the development of productive responses to them.

The World Statistics Congress – the biennial meeting of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) - is unique in bringing together statisticians and probabilists from across the disciplinary spectrum – official statistics, surveying and sampling, computational & mathematical statistics, probability and stochastic modelling and education. Moreover, it brings together statisticians from both developing and developed nations to share experiences, expertise and challenges.

An innovation in 2011 will be a special Theme Day, during which all papers will address, from various statistical perspectives, “*Water, quality and quantity*”. The Water Theme Day has the objectives of highlighting the important contributions statistics can make to the solution of water quality problems and quantity challenges facing the world; and identifying statistical research challenges that arise. UNSD and Eurostat are co-organizing four sessions for the Water Theme Day in the following subject areas:

- Improving coverage, data quality, and institutional arrangements for water statistics
- Challenges in compiling water quality statistics
- Experiences with water accounts
- Water statistics, policy and Integrated Water Resources Management

The sessions will provide opportunity, among others, to discuss experiences with the International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS) and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEA-W). For more information please visit <http://www.isi2011.ie/content/scientific-programme/water-day.html>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UNEP GEO-5

(Contributed by Ashbindu Singh, UNEP)

The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) is the flagship assessment process of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which helps to deliver the best available scientific findings to policy makers to assist them in informed decision making on how to respond to environmental challenges. The output of this process is a comprehensive report of the world environment containing an assessment of the state and trends of the global environment in relation to internationally agreed goals.

The publication Global Environmental Outlook-5 (GEO-5), due in 2012 with the recommendations of the world's leading scientists, environmental experts and key policymakers, will highlight how countries can respond on a policy level, giving key recommendations in line with global environmental trends.

GEO-5 Regional Consultations were held in the beginning of September 2010 and the First Production and Authors Meeting (PAM) took place from 8 to 10 November 2010 in Cairo, Egypt. The aim of this meeting, among other things, was to achieve a common understanding of the GEO-5 scope, objectives, process, and roles and responsibilities for the various expert working groups. Each chapter working group established key storylines, and developed an annotated chapter outline. In addition, working groups developed and agreed on a detailed timeline and production schedule and work plans for their chapters, including roles and responsibilities for Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors, and Contributing Authors.

The Data and Indicators Working Group Meeting is scheduled to take place in early March 2011 and will likely be hosted and funded by the European Environment Agency in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Data and Indicators Working Group will provide core data to support the assessment process including through national Governments, interagency cooperation and collaborating centres and help keep the state of the environment under continual review by building on an existing set of GEO indicators and strengthen the existing GEO data portals.

FAO Pesticides Trade and the Rotterdam Convention

(Contributed by Robert Mayo, FAO)

The monitoring of the trade in pesticides and industrial chemicals listed in the Rotterdam Convention has begun in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Rotterdam Convention covers pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted for health or environmental reasons by Parties and which have been notified by Parties for inclusion in the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure.

With trade data on Rotterdam Convention pesticides and industrial chemicals becoming available (from 2007), the FAO Statistics Division has commenced the collation of the trade data into the FAOSTAT database. The dataset is available by country on the import values and export values of the items in the Convention. The database covers two types of information: (a) Mixtures, Preparations containing Substance in value; (b) Pure Substance in quantity (Net Weight (kg)) and value (1000 USD).

The Rotterdam Convention was initiated by FAO and UNEP in 1989 and entered into force on 24 February 2004. The Convention establishes a legally binding obligation to enable countries to decide which potentially hazardous chemicals they want to import / export and to exclude those they cannot manage safely. At June 2010, there were 134 parties to the Rotterdam Convention.

For more detail please visit: <http://faostat.fao.org/site/423/default.aspx#ancor>
<http://www.pic.int/home.php?type=t&id=29&sid=30>

Challenges and solutions for data on agricultural greenhouse gas emissions

(Contributed by Robert Mayo, FAO)

IPCC Guidelines provide the methodological guidance to countries for reporting their annual inventories of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and removals to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The methods contained in the IPCC Guidelines differ in their complexity ranging from the simplest Tier 1 method, based on globally or regionally applicable default parameters, through Tier 2 methods based on country specific data, to Tier 3 methods involving more detailed modelling and/or inventory based approaches. The IPCC category Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) presents a unique challenge to the inventory- compilers, especially from developing countries, due to the lack of national data.

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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has long maintained global datasets on agriculture and forestry that constitute an extremely valuable resource for compilation of inventories of greenhouse gas (GHG) for the AFOLU sector as noted in the IPCC Guidelines. However, these datasets cater to a wide range of information needs and may differ from the data required for GHG compilation in certain key respects. In addition, GHG-related data are needed by an ever-increasing stakeholder community for a number of purposes. Assessing the environmental impact of agricultural products through life-cycle assessments (LCA), for example, is becoming a key requirement in both the public and private sectors. To meet the new needs of stakeholders requires a broader set of data at a finer resolution.

The FAO is beginning work on addressing these major challenges with the aim of filling the data gaps in the agricultural sector for the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as support for national inventory compilers and other stakeholders. A paper addressing this topic was recently presented at the International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-V) that took place from 13 to 15 October 2010 in Kampala, Uganda. see: <http://www.icas-v.org/>

FAO will be advertising fixed term and consultancy positions for environment statisticians during January 2011. Please refer to the FAO Employment site at <http://www.fao.org/employment/project-vacancies/en/> for details.

EEA

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has released its fourth Environment State and Outlook report (SOER 2010), a comprehensive assessment of how and why Europe's environment is changing, and what we are doing about it. SOER 2010 concludes that a fully integrated approach to transforming Europe to a resource-efficient green economy can not only result in a healthy environment, but also boost prosperity and social cohesion. The report shows that global demands for natural resources to feed, clothe, house and transport people are accelerating. These mounting demands on natural capital are exerting increased pressure to ecosystems, economies and social cohesion in Europe and elsewhere. However, SOER 2010 confirms that well-designed environmental policies continue to improve Europe's environment without undermining Europe's growth potential.

Eurostat

What share of fresh water resources is being abstracted each year? How has the number of wild birds changed over the last 20 years? What share of GDP do environmental taxes account for? In which Member State is the most waste per capita generated? How much fertilizer is consumed in agriculture? These questions and many others on environmental issues can be answered by consulting the publication "Environmental statistics and accounts in Europe" from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. The publication has a special focus on the various impacts that European households have on the environment.

One of the priorities of the European Commission is a better environment for everyone. Statistics are increasingly important for the definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of environmental policies, in particular the "Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". This publication covers key environmental statistics available at Eurostat, the Directorate-General for the Environment of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency.

REGIONAL NEWS

UN-ECA

The African Climate Policy Centre and ClimDev-Africa

(Contributed by Jeremy Webb, UN-ECA)

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) is a hub for demand-led knowledge and activities on climate change in Africa. The Centre is addressing the need for greatly improved climate information for Africa and the strengthening of the use of such information for decision making, by enhancing analytical capacity, knowledge management and dissemination activities. The ACPC is an integral part of the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme, which is a joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). ClimDev-Africa has been mandated at regional meetings of African Heads of State and Government, as well as by Africa's Ministers of Finance, Ministers of Planning and Ministers of Environment.

As many readers of this newsletter will be aware, the issue of Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) was featured at the climate change negotiations held recently in Cancun. MRV is a cross cutting issue and how MRV will be implemented remains a topic of discussion and will feature again in upcoming climate change negotiations. In particular, MRV has implications for the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) programme and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The ACPC, along with its partners, will be investigating MRV in the context of Africa as part of its work programme including relevant concepts, methods and data sources. For more information on the ACPC please contact Jeremy Webb: jwebb@uneca.org

UN-ECE

Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

(Contributed by Mikhail G. Kokine, UN-ECE)

At its meeting held in Geneva on 1 and 2 September 2010, the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators completed its two-year long mandate. It reviewed in total 20 of 36 indicators covered by the UNECE "Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators". The Joint Task Force discussed the use of statistical classifications, data collection methods and procedures for the production of these indicators. Useful information was collected on data availability and on problems in producing the indicators in individual countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe (SEE). The texts of five indicators were revised to facilitate their practical application in the countries. In addition, the Joint Task Force prepared texts of the indicators of environmental expenditures, final electricity consumption and gross electricity production that were not included in the above Indicator Guidelines.

The Committee on Environmental Policy and the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, the parent bodies of the Joint Task Force, agreed in November 2010 to extend the mandate of the Joint Task Force for two more years. The latter should continue assisting national statistical offices and institutions responsible for the production of national state-of-the-environment reports in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE to further improve environmental statistics, strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region. It will: (i) review further the indicators covered by the Indicator Guidelines; (ii) provide guidance on primary data collection; (iii) propose additional environmental indicators to be included in the Indicator Guidelines; (iv) continue strengthening, in cooperation with the European Environment Agency and other relevant institutions, the capacity of the countries concerned to produce environmental data and indicators through the provision of technical assistance and training; (v) provide and adapt to the needs of the countries concerned relevant guidance materials available at the international level; and (vi) maintain a network of environmental experts in statistical offices and government agencies dealing with environmental assessments to further broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches.

Environmental Monitoring and Assessments in UNECE

(Contributed by Mikhail G. Kokine, UN-ECE)

The meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, held on 2 and 3 September 2010 in Geneva, reviewed progress made in the implementation by Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of recommendations on environmental monitoring and information management emanating from environmental performance reviews (EPRs) of these countries.

The Working Group agreed on the text of the draft guidelines for developing national strategies to use water-quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool. The guidelines aim at helping countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as interested South-Eastern European countries, to revise their water-quality monitoring programmes to make monitoring a practical tool for environmental policy development, target setting and pollution abatement strategies.

For further information visit: http://www.unece.org/env/europe/monitoring/11th_mtg.html

REGIONAL NEWS

Joint UN ECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development

(Contributed by Vania Etropolska, UN-ECE)

The Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development, established by the Conference of European Statisticians, has been working to further advance the conceptual framework based on the capital approach, in particular in areas like human and social capital. The Task Force decided to broaden the conceptual work to present the distributional aspects of sustainable development or the measurement of current well-being. The Task Force follows up on work done by a previous Task Force on developing a sustainable development framework based on the capital approach published in 2009.

The work has progressed in several directions. The Task Force reviewed the first draft of the report at its meeting on 18-19 November 2010. The report highlights the importance of both the present and the future aspects of welfare. In terms of measurement this led to the proposal to also include indicators on the quality of life, in order to take into account the needs of the present generations. The Task Force closely follows the work undertaken by other institutions, such as the most recent recommendations in the Report issued by the Stiglitz Commission, the European Commission's initiative "GDP and Beyond", and the OECD project on Measuring the Progress of Societies.

The Task Force plans to finalize its report in 2011. The next meeting is planned for 19-20 May 2011.

UN-ECLAC

Environmental Indicators Online

(Contributed by Kristina Taboulchanas, UN-ECLAC)

The United Nations Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is pleased to announce the publication of an online compendium on environmental indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean. The publication presents key environmental indicators that show important trends such as the increase in the proportion of protected areas from 9.5% in 1990 to 19.5% in 2009. In contrast, between 1990 and 2007, a setback is observed with the proportion of land covered by forest decreasing from 48.8% to 44.9%, representing a loss of approximately 78 million hectares of forest.

For more information visit: http://websie.eclac.cl/cuaderno_38/index.htm

Training Workshop on the Construction of Core Environmental Indicators for the Caribbean

The workshop was organized and hosted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 6 to 10 December 2010 and comprised 29 participants from 16 states. UN ECLAC Statistics Division in Santiago, UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), and UNSD acted as collaborating partners.

The objective of this training workshop was to develop and strengthen technical and statistical capacities of public officials at the national level in the production, processing, systematization and dissemination of environmental indicators in the Caribbean subregion. The workshop built on a series of ECLAC courses on Statistical Methods for Building National Environmental Indicators and made use of the Handbook for Constructing Environmental Indicators recently translated into English. It combined a session devoted to main concepts, methodologies and the regional and international work on environmental statistics, a *hands on* work training session (consisting of working groups), and a plenary session of presentation and assessment of the indicators' methodological sheets completed by the groups. The organizers selected 12 **common environmental indicators**, taking into account the Millennium Development Goal 7 indicators, the ILAC environmental indicators and the CARICOM list of environmental indicators. The working groups actually calculated some of these indicators using official data series and the statistical tools provided by the organizers. All training materials, as well as the presentations and the results of the group work will be available on-line at: <http://www.eclac.cl/portofspain/default.asp?idioma=IN>

UN-ESCWA

ESCWA holds a Workshop on Environment Statistics in Sudan

(Contributed by Wafa Aboul Hosn, ESCWA)

ESCWA organized a training workshop on Environment Statistics and Database from 2 to 4 November 2010 in Khartoum. The training, hosted by Sudan's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), was attended by 30 officials from the CBS, the Sudanese ministries of environment, water and irrigation, industry, petroleum, mineral resources, agriculture, health, Wilayat Al-Kahrtoom, the Environment Research Institute, the Remote Sensing Center, and the University of Khartoum.

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REGIONAL NEWS

The training focused on the data collection and methodologies for water and waste statistics, air pollution, land cover/land use and biodiversity statistics, and the system for environmental economic accounting for water (SEEAW). ESCWA provided CBS with two laptops equipped with ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), a database that allows compilation and reporting of environment and water statistics as well as customized social and economic indicators.

Recommendations were made on organizing environmental data that are highly scattered in the different departments, establishing coordination mechanism through strengthening the role of the Higher Council for environment, and the establishment of a coordination committee on environmental statistics with the CBS as a main player in official environment statistics.

CARICOM

Workshop on Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics and Indicators

The workshop, held in Paramaribo, Suriname, from 13 to 17 September 2010, was a follow-up to review the compilation of Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics and Indicators for the third *CARICOM Environment in Figures Report* as well as a report on *Women and Men in the Caribbean Community*. The workshop was organized by the CARICOM Secretariat and was attended by representatives from 14 CARICOM Member and Associate Member States. Two staff members from UNSD participated in the workshop to assist as a facilitator and resource persons on environment statistics.

The workshop focused on: 1) reviewing core Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics and indicators submitted by countries; 2) reviewing the submission of the metadata, used in the production and compilation of these core indicators; and 3) identifying existing data gaps and the challenges in collecting the data and how these can be approached. The workshop provided a good forum for the member countries to share country experiences and best practices in developing social/gender and environment statistics. The information interchange also clarified issues and problems on the data compiled and submitted. It helped to identify gaps in the data compiled and to strengthen capacity in the bridging of the existing gaps.

Third CARICOM Publication on Environmental Statistics and Indicators – Commencement of New Round of Data Collection in 2010

(Contributed by Philomen Harrison, CARICOM Secretariat)

In June 2010, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat commenced a new round of data collection and compilation of core environment statistics and indicators for the third CARICOM Environment in Figures Report. This report will contain data for the period 2005 to 2009.

Ten Member States and one Associate Member have so far submitted data across 11 themes on which the core statistics and indicators are based. Among the themes for which data are being collected are: Population and Households, Tourism, Environmental Health, Natural Disasters, Energy and Minerals, Land Use and Agriculture, Coastal and Marine Resources, Biodiversity, Forest, Air, Waste and Water.

The core indicators include Caribbean Specific Indicators that have been identified as being of relevance to the CARICOM Region in measuring the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These Caribbean Specific MDGs (CSMDGs) were adopted by the Seventeenth Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in November 2008 in Georgetown, Guyana.

To support this new round of data collection the CARICOM Secretariat convened an Environment Statistics Workshop from 13 to 17 September 2010 in Paramaribo, Suriname to discuss the data collected to that point. The workshop was funded by the European Union under the Caribbean Integration Support Programme (CISP), Ninth European Development Fund (9th EDF). The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) supported the workshop through providing the services of two of its staff members to assist with the facilitation of the workshop (see separate article on the Workshop on Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics and Indicators).

The backdrop to this third round of data collection dates back to a project that commenced in 1999 which was jointly executed by the CARICOM Secretariat and UNSD on “Strengthening of Capacity on the Compilation of Statistics and Indicators for Conference Follow-up in the CARICOM Region”. One of the main outcomes of this project was the publication “The CARICOM Environment in Figures 2002”.

This initial project led to the formation of an Advisory Group and the development of an Environment Statistics Programme for the region; the identification of a core list of indicators, the production of national reports or compendia on the environment in several countries and efforts at inter-agency collaboration. In addition, to date just about five countries in the region have been able to produce two or more publications on this area of statistics.

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REGIONAL NEWS

The development of the Environmental Statistics Programme led to the production of a second environment statistics report, “The CARICOM Environment in Figures 2004”, with data up to 2004 and with a few data series up to 2005. Support for the review of this publication was received from UNSD. This publication is found on the CARICOM Statistics website www.caricomstats.org. In support of capacity building in the region the CARICOM Secretariat also convened a Workshop on Environment Statistics and Indicators in Antigua and Barbuda in 2009 with funding from the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building.

While more data are available on environment statistics in the region than 10 years ago, this area continues to require capacity building. One reason for this is staff changes at the national level. This situation implies the need for continuous training; the establishment of a knowledge base in this area that new staff can access; inter-agency collaboration at the national and regional levels to enable greater collaboration of agencies engaged in activities that can yield statistics on the environment; the establishment or activation of a Technical Working Group for CARICOM countries that can enable the sharing of best practices on methods, approaches and applications of concepts in the measurement and computation of the environment statistics and indicators. The CARICOM Secretariat looks forward to the commitment of countries of the region as well as the support of regional and international organisations and agencies towards the production of the third CARICOM regional publication in 2011. It is hoped that the production of these regional publications would strengthen the production of data at the national level.

COUNTRY NEWS

Environmental Statistics and Indicators in Ghana – the Environmental Protection Agency and Ghana Statistical Service collaborating towards efficient information management

(Contributed by Helen Asiamah, Deputy Director, Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana)

Due to the increasing need to obtain reliable and timely statistics on the state and quality of the environment, the Environmental Protection Agency of Ghana and the Ghana Statistical Service have been collaborating towards developing efficient and effective environmental statistics and indicators. It is essential that reliable and timely data are available to enable accurate decision making. Data being collected by the Ministries, Departments and Agencies are inconsistent, incoherent and do not cover a significant time period. In order to engage all relevant stakeholders in this process it was decided to organize a national workshop in Accra, Ghana, from 21-22 October 2010 with 40 participants from various institutions that are involved in the production and use of environment statistics. Resource persons were from the United Nations Statistics Division and the ECOWAS Commission.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- Establish a National Consultative Network on Environmental Statistics in Ghana
- Build a National Database on Environmental Indicators and Statistics
- Compile a National Compendium of Environmental Statistics
- Respond to the UNSD /UNEP Questionnaire of Environment Statistics.

Several presentations were made to the workshop by the resource persons on various issues related to methodology, data collection and technical cooperation in environment statistics. The workshop was later divided into two working group sessions where each group answered questions in four thematic areas. The first session focused on the selection of environmental priority areas and indicators using the core set of ECOWAS environmental indicators that have been agreed upon at the regional level. This enabled the workshop to decide on the environmental issues and indicators to be used for Ghana while at the same time ensuring harmonization with regional and international initiatives already underway. The second session focused on the metadata underlying the indicators, where the definitions, data sources, periodicity, etc. were reviewed for each indicator to determine if the indicators were measurable and readily available.

There was excellent participation in the working group sessions and each group then presented their comments to the plenary. The comments provided were very constructive which demonstrated the commitment and involvement that the various stakeholders have in the whole process.

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COUNTRY NEWS

A second workshop was held in November in Accra and the following roadmap for environmental statistics was agreed upon:

1. Establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the EPA and the GSS
2. Inaugurate an Environmental Statistics Working Group (ESWG)
3. Establish a secretariat at the EPA Head Office for environmental statistics
4. Build and maintain a database on environmental statistics
5. Organize the sub-groups to meet four times in a year (once every quarter) with the ESWG meeting twice in a year
6. Source funds from the EPA, the GSS and other multilateral agencies to meet the budget of about six hundred thousand US dollars (US\$600,000)
7. Create or identify a web site for the dissemination of information on the environment statistics
8. Designate participants as focal persons for environmental statistics in their various organizations.

A conceptual framework and information of national concern in Mexico

(Contributed by Adriana Oropeza Lliteras and Ricardo Andrade Pacheco, Instituto Nacional del Estadística y Geografía, and Arturo Flores Martínez, Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales)

In Mexico, the generation of information regarding the environment, inventories and use of natural resources, as well as emissions generated by economic activities is distributed among several agencies across the government. Traditionally each of these agencies, in compliance with its legal and institutional frameworks, has produced information with a particular approach and objective, and has integrated it into different National Sectoral Information Systems (NSIS) such as Agriculture, Water, Forestry, Waste, Energy, etc. Moreover, environmental information has been generated under several initiatives or frameworks. For example: the Pressure-State-Response framework is used to report the country's environmental assessment to OECD and also to structure the set of basic national environmental indicators within the National Environment and Natural Resources System (SNIARN); at the same time, the System of Integrated Environment and Economic Accounts has been developed; and other information is produced to comply with international reports such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Forest Resource Assessment and the Greenhouse Gases Inventory.

In 2006, a legislative change established the National Statistical and Geographical Information System (SNIEG), linking it to the National Planning System. It is ruled by its own law (LSNIEG) enacted in April 2008. The objective of this System is to coordinate the agencies to provide timely, accurate, reliable and relevant statistical and geographical Information of National Concern (INC)¹ for policy design, analysis and evaluation or international reports. The System enables the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) to assess agencies' information development and mandates that INC should have a higher priority for resources allocation. SNIEG is divided into four Subsystems: Socio-demographics, Economics, Environmental and Geographical, and Judiciary.

Working under this scheme and in order to provide the information needed to support national environmental policies, including natural resources management and environmental protection, INEGI and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) decided to work on a framework, both for statistical and geographical information, which could also be linked to economic activities, to the National Accounts System, to SNIARN and also to other SNIEG Subsystems. The first step was to define its high level objective: characterize physical and environmental conditions, characterize natural resources and identify and monitor environmental changes. The proposed dimensions of the framework include:

¹INC will be official and of mandatory use to the Federal Government, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities.

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- (a) Physical and environmental features: this dimension is intended to describe and define the features of the country's territory such as atmospheric, topographic (terrestrial and marine), infrastructure, geological and edaphological conditions, etc.
- (b) Natural resources: this dimension is intended to define and measure stock levels in a comprehensive list of natural resources, both renewable and non renewable, and it is also intended to generate information about their quality.
- (c) Environmental changes: this dimension will provide a follow up to relevant environmental changes, either in a global and local scale, such as changes in the atmospheric ozone concentrations, greenhouse gases and criteria pollutants; or land cover changes; waste generation and management, etc.

These three dimensions will be supported by a set of reference frameworks that consist of catalogs, geodetic reference systems, geostatistical frameworks, metadata structures, etc. The use of these frameworks within SNIEG will make information comparable and compatible among different users and producers. Once the dimensions have been assembled into a spatial data infrastructure, they can be used to describe a wide series of complex relations in different ecosystems, and furthermore different relations between environmental phenomena and economic, socio-demographic or even judiciary variables.

The aim of this framework is to organize the generation of national environmental information classified as INC by: avoiding duplication of data flows with distinct results; identifying and bridging information gaps that no institution is covering nowadays; updating and standardizing catalogs and definitions in different topics; and fulfilling specific information requirements such as generating information at local scale or with a higher frequency, among others.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Forty-second session of the Statistical Commission (New York, 22-25 February 2011)

ECOWAS Workshop on Environmental Indicators (Abuja, March 2011)

Meeting of the GEO-5 Data and Indicators Working Group (Copenhagen, March 2011)

Third session of the ECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (Geneva, 4-5 April 2011)

Second Expert Group Meeting on the Revision of the FDES (New York, 4-6 May 2011)

Meeting of the Joint UN ECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development (19-20 May 2011)

Sixth Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts in Environmental-Economic Accounting (New York, 15-17 June 2011)

Fifty-eighth Congress of the International Statistical Institute – Water Theme Day (Dublin, 24 August 2011)

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