ISSUE 36
December 2014

envstats News and Notes

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

FOCUS:

Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES 2013) Implementation in Countries

IN THIS ISSUE

The FDES 2013 is now being implemented by several countries around the world following its endorsement by the 44th session of the Statistical Commission in 2013 as the framework for strengthening environment statistics programmes in countries. The FDES 2013 was also recognized by the Commission as a useful tool in the context of Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Agreements made by the Expert Group on Environment Statistics (EGES), which convened its first meeting in New York in March 2014, have also contributed to its implementation.

Countries have used the FDES 2013 in different ways as it is a flexible and adaptable tool, prioritizing the development of what is most needed and feasible given each individual country's circumstances. The FDES 2013 has been used independently by countries to assess the state of their environment statistics as well as to plan their future strategies; it has been applied as a basis for capacity building and technical assistance by UNSD and partner agencies, and has also been used by consultants assisting countries, regions, and sub-regions to develop and strengthen environment statistics. Countries more recently developing their environment statistics programmes are using its structure and guidance to organize their own statistical databases and compendia of environment statistics (following the FDES 2013 structure of components, sub-components and statistical topics). The FDES 2013 has been very helpful in providing guidance for countries on how to organize and develop environment statistics that are multi-purpose, providing descriptive statistics and indicators, substantiating reports, and feeding into integrated environmental-economic accounts.

There have now been many cases where the FDES 2013 has been successfully implemented in countries by National Statistical Offices, Ministries of Environment or very often by the two institutions in cooperation with one another as well as with other institutions. In some cases, Workshops with or without the presence of UNSD have aided the implementation process. Examples of countries that have started applying the FDES 2013 for the development of their environment statistics strategies, programmes, publications or environmental indicator frameworks now include Australia, Bhutan, Botswana, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curacao, Ecuador, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, Suriname, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. Descriptions on selected country experiences of the use or implementation of the FDES 2013 are provided below.

Australia: Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP) provides a digestible selection of statistical evidence about how Australians are doing. The range of statistical measures that MAP presents demonstrates change. They are grouped under three broad headings: the society, the economy and the environment. Within these broad domains, several dimensions are addressed, such as biodiversity in the environmental domain. Within the dimensions, a headline indicator is used to tell a story about the extent of progress, supported by contextual measures. The FDES 2013 has been used as one of the sources for the development of components of the environmental dimension. The Tier 1 - Core Set of Environment Statistics was used to highlight possible sets of key indicators, particularly around Environmental Conditions and Quality, and Emissions, Residuals and Waste.

CONTACT US

ENVSTATS
DC2-1418
2 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Fax: 1-(212)963-0623

(Continued from page 1)

Botswana: Statistics Botswana, through its Environment Statistics Unit (ESU), produced its first report on environment statistics in 2000. The areas covered in the report include climate, land, water, forestry, energy, agriculture, wildlife and mining. The 1984 FDES developed by UNSD was used to compile the statistics. The FDES provided the necessary guidance on what sort of data to collect and analyse, and how to organize the statistics. In the process, ESU learnt of the challenges inherent in the production of environment statistics due to its multi-disciplinary nature and it being sourced from a variety of data producers. In compiling the latest statistical reports ESU used the revised FDES 2013. The FDES 2013 was found to be well structured, flexible and easy to use. Its strength lies in the way it organizes statistics into components, sub-components, statistical topics and individual statistics. It also assisted in identifying the main sources of data.

Colombia: The National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE, Colombia's NSO) has used the FDES 2013 as the guidance document for developing their environment statistics and it is coordinating the development of a strategic plan to implement the FDES since 2013. The proposed plan is geared towards meeting the national needs of environmental information for decision-making and monitoring of environmental policies. DANE has disseminated the FDES 2013 among partner national agencies in Colombia, which have been very productive, as these institutions are currently exploring its contents, and are also analysing the Basic Set of Environment Statistics in terms of their priorities, capabilities and institutional organization, in order to incorporate the FDES in the production of environmental data and statistics. The FDES is expected to be an input into the future development of national environmental indicators.

Ecuador: The Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC, the Ecuadorian NSO) has constructed its national System of Integrated Environment Statistics (V Datos Ambientales) based on the guidance and the structure of components of the FDES 2013, so that their system is organized into the 6 FDES components and various sub-components They have complemented this information with indicators prioritized by their National Development Plan (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir). INEC has been working with other agencies for the compilation of environment statistics and continues with the collection of those produced by INEC sources, updating the system periodically. They have also disseminated these environment statistics products with academia thorough national workshops. For further information please refer to the following link: http://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/sistema-integrado-de-estadisticas-ambientales-siea/.

Mexico: Mexico has participated with UNSD in the Expert Group for the revision of the FDES and the development of the Basic Set of Environment Statistics. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) has undertaken a pilot study of the FDES to assess relevance of the statistical topics, the compare its own outputs against the Basic Set of Environment Statistics as a means of identifying gaps in its own data, to identify reasons for any lack of data, and to implement it into the National Statistical and Geographical Information System. INEGI also is leading a regional Public Goods Project together with ECLAC, which is supported by the Inter-American Development Bank to strengthen environment statistics in the region, using the FDES, Basic Set and adapting the Environment Statistics Self-Assessment Tool to serve as main instrument for collecting data in their assessment phase of the project.

Nigeria: Having participated with UNSD in the revision of the FDES 1984 as well in the development of the Core Set of Environment Statistics, Nigeria organized a National Conference of key stakeholders for the application of the FDES 2013 in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Nigeria collated existing data and methodologies, and conducted a self-assessment on the priority of environment statistics, capacities, and data gaps and potential ways forward to fill data gaps. To this end, committees have been formed to focus on both policy and technical matters. Nigeria's experience revealed the importance of stakeholder collaboration and how applying the FDES 2013 is very relevant to Nigeria's sustainable environmental management and socio-economic development.

Philippines: The Philippines has been using the FDES as the framework for their environment statistics programme since 1999 when the Philippines Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics had been initiated. The Compendium of Environment Statistics, also based on the FDES, has been published every second year since 2000. After the adoption by the Statistical Commission of the revised FDES, a training workshop, conducted by UNSD, was organized by the National Statistical Coordination Board in order for the Philippines to fully understand the new elements in the FDES 2013, to use the Basic Set of Environment Statistics and the ESSAT, to identify data gaps and prioritize actions to fill them in, and to test the applicability of the FDES 2013 as a framework for climate change related statistics.

(Continued on page 3)

FOCUS:

(Continued from page 2)

Qatar: In 2012 Statistics Authority (since June 2013 Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics) reviewed its environment statistics according to international standards and to better match them with national and international policy and information needs. The overall goal was to develop a single national source of environmental statistics which can be used for multiple purposes. The FDES played an important role in this process. Qatar was one of the pilot countries for the UN-FDES and feedback on some practical issues was provided to the UN and the Expert Group on Environment Statistics. Based on the FDES, a draft Qatari Framework for Environment Statistics (QFES) was developed, specifying data providers and data collection methods, helping to bridge institutional frameworks and laying down the statistics to be collected on a regular basis. The QFES is continuously further developed in close cooperation with the key stakeholders and to be fully consistent with the UN-FDES. The first data collection process under this new Framework was finished in the first half of the year 2013 and one of the first dissemination products is the Qatari Environment Statistics Report 2013.

United Arab Emirates: Following its previous application of the FDES 1984, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has implemented the FDES 2013 as part of a strategic and operational plan. It has prepared a summary of the FDES in Arabic and designed new questionnaires with the use of the FDES 2013. It has already begun disseminating environmental data. This prepared the National Bureau of Statistics of the UAE well for being able to organize a Workshop on the FDES 2013 with Gulf Cooperation Council member states that was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, from 2-6 November 2014. For further information on this Workshop, please refer to the Country News section of this newsletter below.

Vietnam: The application of the FDES 2013 in Vietnam is related to the need for environmental data with a view to improve its National Statistical Indicator System (NSIS). For the review of the environmental indicators within the NSIS, the FDES 2013 was used as the main reference. Given the comprehensiveness of the FDES, including its Core Set of Environment Statistics organized by specific environmental themes, the revision process was greatly enhanced.

Countries are invited to inform UNSD of any experiences gained on the use or implementation of the FDES 2013 for inclusion in future issues of ENVSTATS.

UNSD NEWS:

FDES Implementation Tools: The Manual on the Basic Set of Environment Statistics and the Environment Statistics Self-Assessment Tool

The Manual on the Basic Set of Environment Statistics is progressing

The manual will provide methodological guidance for developing countries with regard to the compilation and collection of environmental data and its transformation into statistics. It is a practical and detailed guide to each of the Basic and Core Sets of Environment Statistics' themes, and includes the following information items: relevance, methodological sources, classifications, definitions, data collection methods and sources of data, quality assurance, presentation and dissemination, links to the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Central Framework and international sources of data. The manual will also include examples of good practices.

Originally the Manual had been planned to cover only the Core Set of Environment Statistics. However, it has become clear that from a methodological point of view it did not make sense to separate the Core from the Basic Set. As the extension of its scope to the entire Basic Set of Environment Statistics has significantly increased the resources and time necessary for preparing the Manual, it was decided that the Manual be published in subsequent volumes, whenever a set of methodology sheets that constitute a complete thematic unit are finalized. The first volume of the Manual is planned to be completed before the end of 2015. It was also agreed that individual methodology sheets should be posted on the UNSD website as soon as they become available.

The target audience is practitioners working in environment statistics programmes or within specific areas of environment statistics. They may work at National Statistical Offices, Environment Ministries or other relevant line ministries at national and sub-national levels. This manual can also serve sub-regional and regional agencies working or planning to work in environment statistics production and dissemination.

This work is being coordinated by UNSD and will be carried out in a collaborative way with the Expert Group on Environment Statistics and other thematic experts from specialized agencies as needed, using a common template. Decision on describing individual variables or grouping them is to be made. From examples elaborated preliminarily by UNSD, the cluster or grouping approach so far seems most suitable.

Since the finalization of the template groups of experts are working on the methodology sheets for clusters of selected statistical topics. The first drafts were circulated within the Expert Group for review and comments. The revised versions will be discussed at the second meeting of the Expert Group (New York, 25-27 March 2015) and submitted to additional peer review before their finalization.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Developments in the Environment Statistics Self-Assessment Tool (ESSAT)

When the 44th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2013 approved the work programme for the implementation of the FDES, its approval included the development of a tool for countries to use in assessing and diagnosing the state of environment statistics in the application of the FDES. The ESSAT was developed through the experience and suggestions of collaborating countries' work in the field of environment statistics, following a process which included assistance from many countries in UNSD's Pilot of the Draft Core Set of Environment Statistics in 2012.

The ESSAT asks the user questions regarding relevance and availability of statistics, the institutions responsible for collecting certain statistics, the quality of data (or possible lack thereof), priority of collecting certain data, etc. The ESSAT provides a menu of statistics against which each country can identify what they need, what they have, who is producing what, enabling them to construct a national development programme for environment statistics through time.

The ESSAT is divided into three parts. Part I, which is a Topic Level Assessment, aims to capture the information at a more aggregated level, specifically up to the environment statistics topic level. Part II, which is a Statistics Level Assessment, goes in more detail and it captures information concerning the whole Basic Set of Environment Statistics, up to the individual environment statistics level. Part III that is currently under development covers the mandate and organization of national statistics and more detailed questions about environment statistics programmes/units.

UNSD/UNEP Data Collection 2013

The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2013 on Environment Statistics was sent out on 17 April 2014 to 172 countries and territories, excluding OECD and European Union members (for which comparable data are collected as part of the OECD/Eurostat Joint Questionnaire on the State of the Environment). The Questionnaire (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/questionnaire2013.html) was sent to both National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment and asked for coordination within the country. To date, about 83 countries have responded to the Questionnaire. UNSD has started validating the data, and will contact countries for further information as necessary. Reminders were sent to all countries that have not yet replied. The last reminder was sent on 7 November 2014. After validation of all responses, the complete results from the 2013 round of data collection will be disseminated on the UNSD website.

First Workshop for Latin American and Caribbean countries of the UN Development Account Project 2014-2015 "Supporting developing countries measure progress towards achieving a Green Economy", Santiago, Chile, 2-5 December 2014

The first regional workshop for the Latin America and Caribbean region of the United Nations Development account project 2014-2015 "Supporting developing countries measure progress towards achieving a Green Economy" took place in Santiago, Chile, on 2-5 December 2014. This workshop was jointly organized by UNSD and UNECLAC in cooperation with UNEP and OLADE. More than 40 participants from 15 countries and regional and international organisations participated in the workshop. The participants were practitioners from the communities of statisticians and policy makers that use and produce indicators of green economy addressed in the project.

The workshop provided an introduction to the topic of the green economy, from both regional and international perspectives, and a more specific overview of the situation and perspective of the region with respect to producing statistics and indicators in the field of green economy (as well as related concepts). The four pilot countries of the region (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) presented in detail their work and challenges they face in the field of data and statistics underlying green economy indicators. Complemented by the experiences from other countries participating in the workshop, a comprehensive overview of the status in the region has been obtained.

The project has developed two tools: the draft reference list of green economy indicators and the assessment questionnaire. The reference list of indicators covers all green economy areas identified by the project. The reference list of indicators is not a single fixed list, but mostly a reference tool that can serve as a menu from which countries can select and complement a national set of indicators that most suits their needs, while still maintaining some degree of comparability across countries. The questionnaire is an assessment tool on the national institutional set up, the demand and supply of relevant (basic) statistics and the advancements and challenges of statistics and indicators related to sustainable development and green economy. In order to improve and finalize them, both tools were presented and discussed in the workshop.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

This workshop served as an opportunity to strengthen national data production and coordinate efforts for improving the underlying environment, energy and other statistics. Moreover, it offered grounds for a more detailed discussion of technical issues in selected areas of statistics that are relevant for the compilation of such indicators in the pilot countries. The workshop therefore significantly shaped the further steps of the project in the region (i.e. the subsequent training workshop and technical assistance missions), outlining the particular priorities for the direct technical assistance to the pilot countries, scheduled for 2015.

Besides the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the project covers, also the region of Asia and the Pacific with the four pilot countries: Bhutan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Viet Nam. As in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the first regional workshop for Asia and the Pacific will focus on strengthening the national capacities for data production in the relevant areas, relating its work to the assessment tools of the project, and on identifying the national priorities for the subsequent technical assistance phase. The regional workshop will take place in Bangkok, Thailand, on 20-23 January 2015.

The two regional workshops conclude the first phase of the project, i.e. the assessment phase. The subsequent phase will focus on capacity building in the pilot countries, starting with a training workshop in each of the regions, tentatively scheduled for April/May 2015, followed by direct technical assistance missions to each of the pilot countries between June and September 2015. The project is expected to be concluded in December 2015.

All project activities and documents can be accessed on the project's website at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/greeneconomy/.

UNSD attended the Meeting of the OECD Working Party on Environmental Information (WPEI) - Paris, 18-20 November 2014

The meeting discussed recent indicator outputs, advances made and planned developments in environmental and green growth indicators such as the natural resource index, environmentally adjusted multifactorial productivity or demand based measures of carbon and carbon productivity, material flows, material productivity, as well as economy-wide nitrogen balances and indicators. It discussed the use of different sources (national and international) including geospatial and geo-referenced data for their production, with a special emphasis on headline and core indicators. One of the main considerations was how the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework in countries can contribute to produce these indicators in an integrated manner.

Significant time was devoted to issues related to data collection and treatment, including the linkages between the OECD/Eurostat Joint Questionnaire on the State of the Environment and the UNSD/UNEP Joint Questionnaire on Environment Statistics and relevant international coordination and joint work in the field of methodologies, data collection and dissemination.

The templates of the 2014 OECD Questionnaire on the State of the Environment (SoE) and the Annual Quality Assurance (AQA) of environmental reference were distributed to the OECD countries in September 2014.The SoE questionnaire is an important part of the OECD work programme on the environment. It is an essential tool for collecting and harmonising national environmental data at international level, and publishing the OECD online Compendium on Environmental Data and the OECD Core set of Environmental Indicators. It also contributes to the further development and updating of the OECD set of green growth indicators, and supports the OECD country Environmental Performance Reviews. The 2014 collection focuses on the sections Air (concentrations only; non-EU countries only); Inland waters, Waste (non-EU countries only), and Environmental protection expenditure and revenues.

Environmental reference data are checked, updated and documented by countries on an annual basis. These data are used to update the annual brochure on OECD Key Environmental Indicators, as well as online environmental country profiles, and online datasets available through the new OECD data portal. The 2014 AQA focuses on air and greenhouse gas emissions), municipal waste generation and treatment (EU countries only), the use of forest resources, and threatened species. The data collection for EU countries on inland waters, municipal waste and environmental protection expenditure and revenues is done jointly with Eurostat.

The WPEI was updated on recent and future publications (Environment at a glance, Green Growth Indicators, Key Environmental Indicators) and developments in the OECD concerning the dissemination of, and access to environmental and green growth data and indicators (including data and indicators in the OECD Statistical System, policy highlights, country profiles, and the data portal).

The WPEI was followed on 21 November by a one-day meeting of the OECD Task Force on the Implementation of the SEEA Central Framework which had air emission accounting, natural asset accounting and valuation of natural assets on its agenda.

UNSD staff from environment statistics and environmental economic accounting attended and made contributions to the meetings.

FAO NEWS

NEW update of the FAOSTAT Emissions database

(Contributed by Francesco N. Tubiello, Christophe Duhamel and Paulina Prasuła, FAO)

With an aim to support national processes toward improved agricultural and rural statistics, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) released global estimates for the agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU) sector for the year 2012. The new estimates are available in the FAOSTAT Emissions database, accessible free of charge at

http://faostat3.fao.org/faostat-gateway/go/to/download/G1/*/E (Agriculture)

http://faostat3.fao.org/faostat-gateway/go/to/download/G2/*/E (Land Use)

This is the second update since the database was launched in 2012, and is the first release in the world of such data. The database contains global, regional and national coverage from 1961 to 2012 for the AFOLU sector, with projections for the years 2020 and 2050. The data are accompanied by metadata information in English, French and Spanish, detailing the estimation procedures with reference to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines.

FAO employs these data products in capacity development (http://www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/78840/en/) at regional and national level, to support Member Countries to identify, build and access the minimum set of activity data needed for GHG estimation, in support of their UNFCCC reporting requirements. An example of this support is the recent publication: **Estimating Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Agriculture. A Manual to Address Data Requirements for Developing Countries** (http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4260e.pdf).

Recently released estimates confirmed that emissions from the agriculture (crop and livestock production) sector have been increasing steadily, reaching 5.4 billion of CO_2 equivalent in 2012, which was 2.7 billion tonnes more than in 1961. However, the emissions from land use continue to decrease, due to decreased deforestation in several countries. The global average of emissions growth rate for the AFOLU sector slowed slightly in 2012 in relation to the period 2001-2010 by 0.2 %.

The estimates show that the highest growth occurred in the increased use of synthetic fertilizers, which in 2012 rose to 5.6% in relation to 3.8% in the period 2001-2010. The continent contributing the largest share of emissions from this activity in 2012 was Asia (8%) followed by Europe (3%). Furthermore, a significant decrease was observed in crop residues (-2.0%).

The largest emissions in 2012 came from enteric fermentation (40%), followed by manure left on pasture (16%) synthetic fertilizer (15%), paddy rice (10%), manure management (7%), and burning of savannahs (5%). Hence, the largest regional emissions occurred in Asia, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa. These estimates indicate that while AFOLU emissions are not growing as fast as those from fossil fuels globally, they are still the dominant source in many developing countries. Furthermore, comparing emission trends to 2030 and 2050, which are also part of the FAOSTAT data, estimates for 2102 indicate that the pace of current growth in agriculture is already above business-as-usual scenario projections.

The FAOSTAT Emissions database is a global knowledge good, having served as a reference for the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report, WGIII AFOLU chapter. It is a useful tool for countries to assess, identify and report their emissions, and allows them to define effective mitigation actions, including Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions Plans (NAMAs). Its importance as a global repository of data and as a resource for the preparation of the GHG emissions inventories was highlighted during the second **FAO-IPCC-IFAD expert meeting: Emerging activities to combat climate change – use of FAO data and IPCC GHG inventory guidelines for agriculture and land use** (http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-events/fao-ipcc-ifad/en/), held in Rome, Italy on 13-14 November 2014.

In addition, data available in the FAOSTAT Emissions database is used as a reference by several organizations, including among others: IPCC, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the World Resources Institute, and the Global Trade Analysis Program (GTAP).

More information on FAO work on GHG Emissions can be found at http://www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/ghg/en/ together with a set of emissions infographics:

Global http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/271780/

Asia http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/271649/

Africa http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/271720/

Latin America and the Caribbean http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/271778/

COMESA NEWS

Implementation of the Framework for Development of Environment Statistics (FDES 2013) in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

(Contributed by Themba Munalula, COMESA)

Background

The environment and climate change constitute major development challenges of the 21st century. Development sustainability requires harmonious natural resource management. With this requirement, developing countries are faced with a paradox: conserving natural resources and combating climate change on the one hand, and addressing, with economies heavily dependent on natural resources, urgent poverty and infrastructure problems compounded by population growth on the other hand. However, the extent of destruction of their natural resources and ecosystems observed since the last decade and their severity in the medium and long terms have raised the awareness of their governments on environmental challenges. Also, with the mobilization of technical and financial partners supported by the global nature of environmental issues, developing countries now pay special attention to these issues given that a number of these countries have ratified the various related Environmental Agreements.

The issue of climate change has become a political commitment of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. This is testified by the Declaration of Sharm El-Sheikh in June 2008 on "Sharm El-Sheikh Commitments for accelerating the achievement of water and sanitation goals in Africa". This political will is strengthened by the establishment of a high level Committee of Heads of State and Government on Climate Change. The high level Committee is actively involved in various negotiations on climate change (COP18, UNFCCC, etc.).The management of environmental information is a relatively recent activity in Africa and, in particular, sub-Saharan Africa. Countries in the region are finding it increasingly difficult to sustainably implement effective information systems in this field. Despite the progress made over the past five years and the varying situations from one country to another, the availability of environment statistics is overall still relatively inadequate in these countries as evidenced by high rates of non-response to the surveys organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) every two years. This finding was confirmed during the workshop on environment statistics and accounts organized from 7 to 9 March 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

At the regional level, the COMESA Treaty and specifically Articles 122-126 provide the policy context for sustainable development and cooperation of the environment. The Treaty further expects that the monitoring of sustainable development will fall under the ambit of a regional statistical system that monitors all aspects of regional integration and cooperation (Article 140).

COMESA Assessment of Environment Statistics

The COMESA program undertook an assessment of the status of environment statistics within COMESA member states. This assessment looked at the following areas:

- Coordination of environment statistics
- Environment Information System (EIS) and Environment-Economic Accounts
- Status of environmental statistics by core topics (biodiversity, soil, air, atmosphere, coastal and marine resources, water, waste, forestry and wood and energy)

The assessment categorized COMESA countries in three groups; Strong environment statistics (ES), medium ES and weak/poor ES. The countries that participated in the assessment noted the following challenges:

- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of human resources
- Lack of technical capacities
- Lack of tools/instruments for data collections
- Lack of institutional coordination

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Roadmap for implementation of the FDES 2013

Following the assessment a roadmap for implementation of the FDES 2013 was drafted. The Sixth Meeting of the COMESA Committee on Statistical Matters (CCSM) approved a recommendation for adoption of the roadmap which was subsequently approved by the thirty-fourth COMESA Council of Ministers.

The roadmap will guide implementation at the Member state level and will include:

- Building of partnerships with UNSD, other sub-regional agencies and key agencies in the development of environment statistics.
- Capacity building at regional and national level.
- Developing the institutional dimension of environment statistics through identification of all stakeholders in the data production process.
- Under existing national statistical laws, promote advocacy for clarity on the definition of mandates and competencies of institutions responsible for each sector of environment statistics.
- Enhancement of inter institutional collaboration.
- Comprehensively addressing institutional challenges and constraints in finance, human resource, technical capacities and coordination.
- Sector Assessments for both existing and non-existing environment statistics in Member states.
- Compilation and publication of national environment statistics reports.

Specifically the stages for implementation of the FDES 2013 will include:

- Preparatory Stage -Team building, Institutional arrangements, Legal framework and national policy priorities, national strategy for establishing an environment statistics programme; methodological resources.
- Foundational Stage - Assessment; building capacities, inter- and intra-institutional collaboration mechanisms; defining the environment statistics product(s).
- Operational Stage - Adapting the FDES to the country's needs and priorities; Environment statistics to be produced at the national level; Developing data compilation and collection instruments; Carrying out data validation; Developing metadata; Preparing publications; Preparing launch events; Disseminating environment statistics products; Obtaining feedback.
- Consolidation Stage - Institutionalizing and strengthening of environment statistics units; Formalizing national inter-institutional collaboration platforms; Allocating budget and staff resources dedicated to environment statistics; Connecting with and participating in regional and global expert groups, networks and resources; Maintaining and further developing environment statistics' coverage and timeliness; Ensuring statistical quality (Source: *UNSD Blueprint for Action for the implementation of the FDES 2013*).

In most countries, the national statistical offices, which normally oversee the national statistical system and coordinate these platforms, must have adequate authority, resources and capacities to lead the multi-stakeholder processes. Depending on the institutional set up, in many COMESA countries the coordination of the national environmental information systems lies with the environmental ministry or equivalent institution. The program takes into account that in different countries the leading/responsible institution for environment statistics and for leading the described inter-agency platforms or committees could rest upon the national statistical office, the ministry of environment, or be a joint effort.

A first activity is the planned Workshop on Environment Statistics in Support of the Implementation of the FDES 2013 being organized by UNSD and COMESA for the COMESA member states to be held in Balaclava, Mauritius from 26 to 29 January 2015.

ECA NEWS

Training on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting

(Contributed by the African Centre for Statistics, ECA)

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with GIZ and the United Nations Statistics Division, launched a training program on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework for African countries. At this first stage, the training program is designed in English and is a combination of online course, on-site training, and a follow-up phase. The purpose of the training program is to help participants acquire knowledge and skills to deepen the understanding of the accounting principles and basic data needs for compiling environmental-economic accounts according to the SEEA Central Framework; to facilitate experience sharing among African countries; and to support countries to set up a strategy and work plan for the SEEA implementation.

The SEEA Central Framework was adopted as the initial version of the international statistical standard on environmental-economic accounts by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2012. It provides the related concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting system and methodology to guide the data collection, compilation, and analysis for the measurement and a better understanding of environmental-economic interactions. The SEEA has been also identified as one of the useful frameworks for the purpose of monitoring and reporting for the UN post-2015 development agenda in support of an inclusive and people-centred sustainable development.

The on-line training course ran from October and December 2014. More than 35 people registered for the training course and around 15 to 22 people were actively participating in the online lecturing, homework assignments, virtual meetings and discussions. As a follow-up an in-person face-to-face phase of the Training Program on the SEEA Central Framework for Africa will be organized at ECA UN Conference Center at the beginning of February 2015. It will provide a unique opportunity for participants who had already acquired an understanding of basic SEEA concepts to improve their knowledge through practical exercises and discussions on implementation issues. More than 20 participants will be invited from those that have already completed the on-line training course.

CARICOM NEWS

CARICOM Continues to Focus on Improving Environment Statistics

(Contributed by Philomen Harrison, CARICOM Secretariat)

At the recently concluded Thirty-Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) and the Fifteenth Meeting of the Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS), both of which were held close to the end of October in Georgetown, Guyana, the CARICOM Secretariat presented on the current status of the Environment Statistics data collection/compilation, the challenges experienced and the next steps.

The meetings were informed of the CARICOM Workshop on Environment Statistics which was convened during the period 7-8 April 2014 in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This workshop was supported by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) which, inter alia, provided an overview of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES). The outcomes of the workshop included the delivery of training to staff working in this area of statistics, the identification of best practices and recommendations for improvement in the collection of data and metadata on specific themes, the creation of a work plan for 2014/2015 and a recommendation to form a Technical Working Group (TWG) in Environment Statistics. The meetings were also informed of the participation of the CARICOM Secretariat at the Seminar on Environmental-Economic Accounting that was held in Saint Lucia in February 2014.

The Thirty-Ninth SCCS Meeting was also informed that over the years the CARICOM Secretariat has spearheaded a number of capacity building activities in collaboration with international development partners with the aim of developing the area of Environment Statistics in CARICOM countries. In order to assess the impact of the capacity building activities the CARICOM Secretariat has commenced a review of the environment statistics data submitted by countries from the inception of the UNSD/CARICOM Environment Statistics Project (2000) to the present period. This review is to obtain evidence on the results of the capacity building that have been executed.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

A sample of the preliminary assessment which is being undertaken was presented on two themes, Tourism and Environmental Health. The assessment revealed that there was an improvement in the data available at the Secretariat for Tourism over the period 2000-2009, which was as a result of the collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) as well as data submitted by countries, for three of the five core indicators under this theme. Data under the theme Environment Health showed fluctuations in the data availability by countries for the three core indicators. It is hoped that interactions with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and collaboration with the Ministries of Health in the respective countries could see an improvement in the collection of statistics under this theme.

The conclusions and recommendations in Environment Statistics from the Thirty-Ninth SCCS Meeting include the following:

1. Endorsement of the CARICOM Secretariat's Work Programme for 2014/2015 in Environment Statistics;
2. Recognition of the work conducted in this area by countries during 2014 including publication/dissemination of statistics by countries such as Suriname (publication forthcoming before the end of 2014) and Bahamas, published data on their website in 2014 based on an Environment Statistics Report for 2013;
3. Recognition of challenges experienced by countries relative to limited capacity and lack of dedicated staff in this area of statistics, as well as difficulties in obtaining data from agencies external to the National Statistical Offices (NSOs);
4. The request for Technical Assistance by countries to strengthen Environment Statistics;
5. Recommendation on the continuation of the collaborative approach (specifically inter-agency collaboration nationally and among regional/international organisations) with regard to the development of Environment Statistics; and
6. Recommendation that countries should produce National Compendium on Environment Statistics.

It is expected that the CARICOM Secretariat would continue to provide technical assistance within countries and would facilitate the activation of the TWG that was recommended out of the April workshop.

UNECE NEWS

(Contributed by Vania Etropolska, Michael Nagy and Anu Peltola)

Conference of European Statisticians' Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development feed into the Process of Setting up Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators

In June 2013 the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), held under the auspices of UNECE in Geneva, endorsed the **CES recommendations on measuring sustainable development**. The Recommendations were developed by a joint Task Force of UNECE, the Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat) and OECD. They take into account various initiatives undertaken by the United Nations, Eurostat and OECD, as well as by individual countries, and provide analyses of current measurement frameworks. The Recommendations were published in the beginning of 2014 and are available at: http://www.unece.org/publications/ces_sust_development.html. A Russian version is currently being prepared and will be published in the beginning of 2015.

The CES Recommendations are a key step towards harmonising the measurement of sustainable development. The proposed indicators are an important input to the current process of establishing the sustainable development goals, targets and indicators. Furthermore, the UNSC Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress considers the CES Recommendations a useful starting point for the global statistical community in developing an indicator framework for measuring SDGs.

A pilot testing of the indicators from the CES framework was conducted in 2014. The aim was to map the 95 CES indicators with the countries' sustainable development indicators sets in order to identify data gaps in the national measurement frameworks. Eight countries: Australia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine pilot tested the recommended indicators. The results show that all of the participating countries produce the majority of the CES indicators. Russian Federation,

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

Slovenia, Italy, Mexico and Kazakhstan produce two thirds and Australia produces 80% of the CES indicators. The countries further informed that they could easily produce some of the CES indicators currently not produced and that they plan to introduce selected CES indicators in their national measurement frameworks in the near future. The pilot testing identified a number of areas for improvements, e.g. need for clear definitions and methodological guidance on several of the CES indicators.

ECE Statistical Division is launching work to support SEEA implementation in the ECE Region

The UNECE Statistical Division is launching activities to support the SEEA implementation in the ECE region. It is planned to organise a seminar on the SEEA implementation and a back to back SEEA training workshop for countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) in autumn 2015.

The seminar will be organised jointly with OECD. It will offer a forum for sharing experience and knowledge among producers of environmental-economic accounts on the SEEA implementation and its use for various policy needs. The seminar will also inform about developments in Ecosystem Accounting and give room for discussion of other emerging issues related to SEEA.

The SEEA training workshop will be organised in cooperation with EFTA targeting countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia (EECCA) and Mongolia. The objective of the workshop is to assist countries in SEEA implementation, based on the identification of priorities, key-stakeholders, data sources and data gaps for selected SEEA modules. The workshop will also identify the need for targeted country visits.

The seminar and the training workshop will help to identify the need for future ECE support regarding SEEA implementation in the region.

Improving Production and Online Sharing of Environmental Data and Indicators

Close attention to environmental issues has increased the demand for high quality statistics to strengthen environmental monitoring in the UNECE region. A Joint UNECE Task Force on Environmental Indicators was set up by the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and the Conference of European Statisticians in 2009 to support countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe in improving environment statistics and producing a common set of environmental indicators. The work aims, through a close cooperation between environmental experts and statisticians, to strengthen the environmental reporting and make environmental statistics available and comparable throughout the UNECE region. The work is carried out with strong support from the European Environment Agency (EEA) and in close cooperation with other international organizations such as the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Energy Agency (IEA), Eurostat, etc.

The Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators continued its work on the indicators from the *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia* (Indicator Guidelines), focusing on their production and sharing through the Internet. In this context, a series of thematic workshops is planned to be undertaken to support the work of the Joint Task Force and address specific challenges encountered in the production process in terms of quality and availability of data, data comparability and consistency, methodological differences, use of definitions, and other related issues.

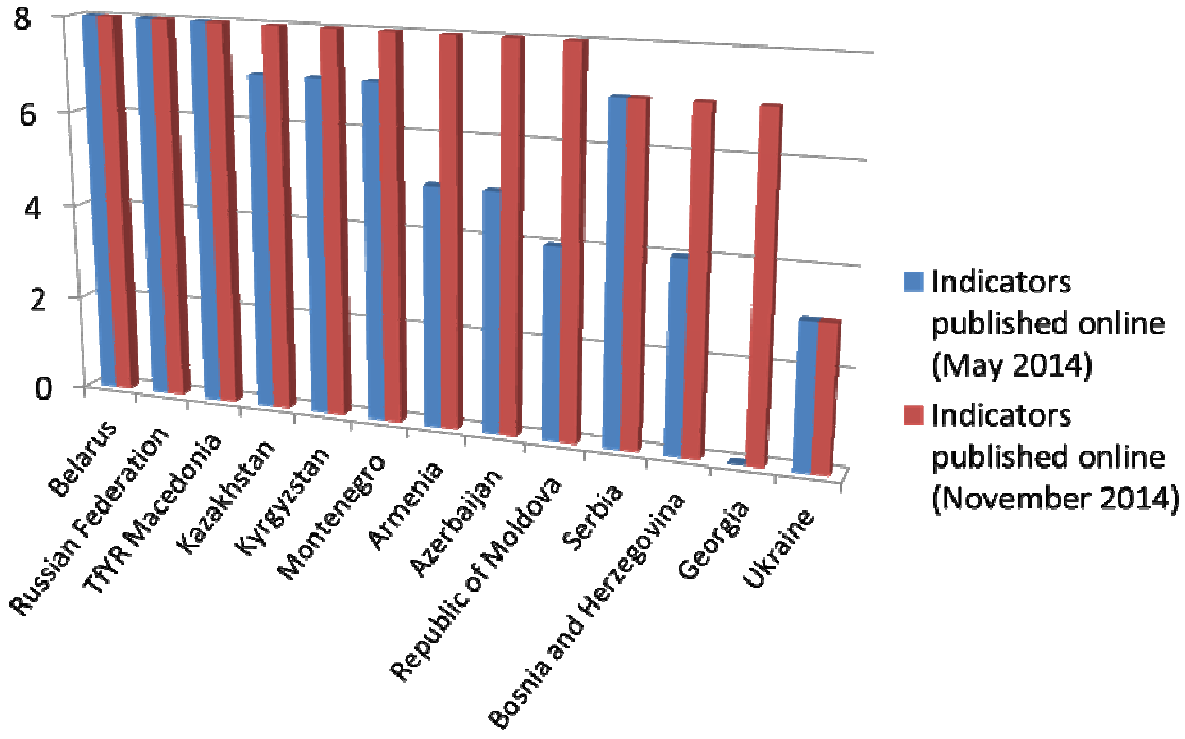
The first thematic workshop was held on 3 November 2014. It discussed four of the initial set of eight core indicators from the Indicator Guidelines related to air quality and air emissions. The workshop focused on quality assurance and quality control of air related data that are used as the basis for the production of these indicators.

During its ninth session on 4-5 November 2014, the Joint Task Force reviewed the progress made by the countries since May 2014 on production and online sharing of the eight core indicators. Given the progress achieved (see graph below) it was agreed to expand the core set of indicators. Further indicators to be reviewed were selected based on the two guiding themes of the forthcoming "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in 2016, green economy and air quality, as well as the availability of data in the target countries. The Joint Task Force added the following six indicators to the core set: Renewable freshwater resources, Freshwater abstraction, Total water use, Threatened and protected species, Fertilizer consumption and Passenger transport demand. Data on all the 14 indicators are planned to be available by the end of 2016. The aim is to use the indicators in the regional environmental assessments carried out jointly with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Environment Agency (EEA), in the preparation of UNEP's 6th Global Environmental Outlook publication and the next "Environment for Europe" Conference in Batumi, Georgia in 2016.

(Continued on page 12)

(*Continued from page 11)*

Graph: Progress made between May and November 2014 on the eight core indicators from the Indicator Guidelines to monitor air, water, protected areas and waste generation.



The next meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in May 2015. More information about the work of the Joint Task Force on environmental indicators is available at: http://www.unece.org/stats/environment.html.

UNECE releases the Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics

UNECE just released the first ever ***Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics***. The Recommendations are aimed at improving existing official statistics to support climate change analysis and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto Protocol. The focus is information needed for analysing climate change, its causes and impacts rather than scientific or meteorological data describing changes in weather and climate. Over 60 countries and international organisations endorsed the Recommendations at the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2014. The Recommendations provide guidance for national statistical offices on how to better use the wide range of existing environmental, social and economic statistics for climate analyses and emission inventories. National statistical offices should start improving climate change-related statistics gradually based on their key competencies and work more closely with greenhouse gas inventory producers to ensure that official statistics meet the needs of greenhouse gas inventories.

The recommendations are a result of three years of dedicated work by the Task Force on Climate Change-Related Statistics comprising Canada (Chair), Finland, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Qatar and the United Kingdom and a number of international organisations, including European Environment Agency, Eurostat and the Directorate-General on Climate Action of the European Commission. The work was done in close collaboration and with valuable input from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). **An important outcome of this work is the constructive cooperation built up between the statistical and climate communities**.

(Continued on page 13)

(*Continued from page 12)*

The upcoming post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals call for "promoting mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management" needed for "taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts". This has increased the pressure to provide better information to support analysis of climate change. The wide range of official environmental, social and economic statistics that exist today could be much better utilized for climate change policy and analysis. The new Recommendations will help countries to improve the usefulness of existing statistics for climate change analysis by highlighting areas where official statisticians can contribute with concrete actions. While the Recommendations represent useful next steps, further international work will be required to support their implementation.

As the Conference of European Statisticians discussed the way forward, countries underlined the need for follow-up activities and guidance in implementing the Recommendations. UNECE is now launching follow-up work with newly established:

- **Steering Group**, composed of a few countries and key partners, **to advance the work on climate change-related statistics**, organise an expert forum for users and producers of these statistics, and promote coherence between greenhouse gas inventories and official statistics.
- **Task Force**, with 20 members from different countries and organisations, to define an internationally comparable **set of key climate change-related statistics** and indicators to be derived from the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and other sources.

Experts from the statistical and climate communities will be invited to an expert forum to discuss how to respond to the call for better data on climate change-related issues, tentatively scheduled for autumn 2015.

More information about the UNECE work in climate change-related statistics is available at: www.unece.org/stats/climate.html.

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY NEWS

EEA indicators supporting environment and climate policies

(Contributed by Roberta Pignatelli)

To fulfil its mandate to provide timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy-makers and the public, over the past two decades the European Environment Agency (EEA) has published indicators on most European environmental issues. Today the Agency maintains an extensive set of 136 environmental indicators across 13 environmental themes[1], all accessible at the EEA website[2]. Most of these indicators are explicitly designed to support environmental policies and are based on statistics from international organisations and EU partners as well as on national data.

By drawing indicators from the different themes, a Core Set of Indicators (CSI) was established in 2004 and approved by EEA member countries. The CSI aims to provide a manageable and stable basis for EEA indicator reporting, prioritise improvements in the quality and coverage of data flows, and streamline EEA/Eionet contributions to other international indicator initiatives. Many of the CSIs are used in other international indicator processes being implemented elsewhere, notably at the European Commission, OECD, WHO and UNECE and the set is often taken as a model for indicator sets at country level.

The CSI has recently been revised, to reflect new policy priorities. It now comprises 42 indicators structured into six thematic areas, and includes a longer term perspective providing for the implementation of the entire set by 2018. Underpinning data will either come from established processes or from recent policy initiatives, e.g., the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

[1] Air pollution, biodiversity, climate change, energy, environmental scenarios, fisheries, green economy, household consumption, land, soil, transport, waste and wáter

[2] http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/#c5=&c7=all&c0=10&b_start=0

(Continued on page 14)

(*Continued from page 13)*

Core Set of Indicators 2014-2018, by thematic area

Theme	Indicators
Air pollution, transport and noise	Emissions of main air pollutants; Exceedance of air quality limit values in urban areas; Exposure of ecosystems to acidification, eutrophication and ozone; Passenger and freight transport demand; Use of cleaner and alternative fuels; Pollutant releases to air, water and waste from industrial facilities; Population exceeding ambient noise limit values (for road traffic).
Climate change and energy	EU and national total greenhouse gas emission trends and projections; Atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations; Production, consumption and emissions of fluorinated gases; Global and European temperature; Cryosphere trends for European glaciers and sea ice; Overview of European energy system; Share of renewable energy in final energy consumption
Freshwater resources	Use of freshwater resources; Trends in ecological status; Oxygen consuming substances in rivers; Nutrients in freshwater; Bathing water quality; Climate change impacts on water; Pressures on water
Marine and maritime	Nutrients in transitional, coastal and marine waters; Chlorophyll in transitional, coastal and marine waters; Hazardous substances in marine organisms; Status of marine fish stocks; Fishing fleet capacity; Sea surface temperature; Global and European sea level rise
Biodiversity and ecosystems	Species and habitats of European interest; Designated areas; Abundance and distribution of selected species; Land take; Fragmentation of habitats and ecosystems; Agricultural areas under Natura 2000; Forest: growing stock, increment and fellings and deadwood
Waste and resources	Waste generation; Waste recycling; Diversion of waste from landfill; Household environmental pressure intensity; Total primary energy intensity; Decoupling of resource use from environmental pressures; Decoupling of resource use from environmental impacts

European environment and climate policies have evolved over the years and are currently formulated with reference to short and mid-term perspectives[3] plus a 2050 societal transition perspective for long-term visions and targets. Until 2020 these policies are guided by the 7th Environment Action Programme (7EAP)[4], entered into force in January 2014, which also includes a long-term vision centred on ecological limits, a circular economy, and society's resilience. To move towards this vision, nine priority objectives are defined and progress towards them will be monitored in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy's regular monitoring process, to which the EEA contributes with its environmental indicators. The 7EAP is also the basis for EU involvement in global agendas[5] and for wider European activities, which are increasingly framed in a 2050 perspective.

The long-term, comprehensive scope of the programme provides a useful overall framework within which to consider policy demands for environmental data, accounts and indicators; there is in fact a need to accelerate the adaptation of environmental information flows and assessments to better support transition objectives, while maintaining and improving the knowledge base supporting established and developing policies across the policy cycle.

One of the nine objectives is to improve the knowledge and evidence base for EU environmental policy. This is also the ambition of the EEA Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2018, significantly entitled "Expanding the knowledge base for policy implementation and long-term transitions". This means that excellence in data provision, indicator development, and reporting on the comprehensive set of thematic policies will constitute the core of the EEA activities in the coming years.

[3] Europe 2020 and the Resource efficiency roadmap, Climate and energy package 2020, EU Strategy for adaptation to climate change, Biodiversity strategy to 2020.

[4] Decision 1386/2013/EU on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 "Living well, within the limits of our planet"

[5] Such as Rio+20, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

(*Continued on page 15)*

(*Continued from page 14)*

The EEA's five-yearly "European environment: state and outlook" reports (SOER) assess the evidence base needed to inform policy implementation and facilitate a longer-term transition dynamic; the 2015 edition will serve as a useful support to the 7EAP and broader knowledge base considerations. The EEA also works in close partnership with the Directors' Meeting on Environmental Statistics and Accounts (DIMESA) to provide data, statistics, accounts and indicators to reply to policy demands for numerical knowledge.

Current environmental indicators reflect environmental policy concerns over the last decades. Well-established indicators tend to relate to policy challenges of the 1980s and early 1990s such as air and water pollution, waste generation and nature conservation. Since the late 1990s, recognition of more diffuse policy challenges resulted in the development of indicators focused on the integration of environmental considerations into sectoral domains with the greatest environmental impacts, e.g. energy, transport, agriculture and industry.

Our understanding of environmental challenges and their underlying causes has evolved over time. More complex, systemic challenges (such as climate change impacts and adaptation, biodiversity loss, ecosystem resilience, resource scarcities and synergistic effects on human health) have created demands for more integrated indicators across the DPSIR chain. However, the time period involved in developing new indicators, establishing their use in policy and decision-making, and current resource constraints have resulted in existing indicators being revisited and reused, and assessed in terms of how they can meet these new demands.

The revival of the annual publication of an EEA indicator-based cross-cutting assessment has taken this approach. The Environmental indicator report series has focused on measuring progress towards a green economy. The 2012 Environmental indicator report focused on key aspects of the transition to a green economy, i.e. resource efficiency and ecosystem resilience, assessed through the best available indicators (mainly pressure and state indicators) used as proxies, in the absence of established indicators for monitoring progress towards a green economy. The 2013 Environmental indicator report extended the analysis of the green economy to focus on the environmental pressures associated with resource use patterns and their impacts on human health and the environment. The 2014 Environmental indicator report 'Resource-efficient green economy and EU policies' - published in July and presented at the Informal Council of Environment Ministers organised under the Italian Presidency in Milan in July, 2014 - focuses on the environmental impacts of production and consumption systems in Europe. As with the previous indicator reports, most of the indicators being used for the 2014 report are proxies for addressing the integrated, systemic dimensions of the impacts of production and consumption systems and their transformation in a green economy.

Different types of indicators are required by the new emerging policy demands, such as sustainability, effectiveness, credibility and globalisation, as well as new or extended data sets and different approaches. On the one hand, the demand for additional indicators can be met by making new uses of existing data flows and reference data sets for indicator development, thus minimising the requirement to collect new data to underpin them. On the other, improving data flows so that they provide a stronger foundation for indicators requires action in a number of areas, including geo-referencing of data to enable analysis based on ecological units and improving the timeliness of data. Improved accessibility and sharing of data sets will also improve the timeliness and relevance of indicators.

ESCAP NEWS

Environment statistics and indicators in the Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014

The Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific, released in December 2014, is an electronic file only, available at http://www.unescap.org/resources/statistical-yearbook-asia-and-pacific-2014. The 2014 edition of the Statistical Yearbook consists of (i) short analytical texts on 32 selected diverse topics, such as population, education, health, poverty and inequalities, gender, economy, environment and connectivity in the region and related key messages as well as relevant data tables, and (ii) country profiles of main development indicators for each of the 58 regional member countries/areas of ESCAP.

The Yearbook contains a wide array of environment statistics under the following topics: access to water and sanitation; atmosphere and climate; biodiversity, protected areas and forests; water availability and use; energy supply and use; and natural disasters. The country profiles also include a set of environmental indicators relating to air pollution and climate change, water, energy, biodiversity and natural disasters.

The Statistical Yearbook is accompanied by an online statistical database that contains approximately 630 data series and updates twice a year in March and in September (http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/statdb/DataExplorer.aspx); and by data visualization tools that offer alternative ways for data users to manipulate data through a choice of interactive tools to generate time-animated statistical charts and maps (http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/visual/sp/index.html).

The United Arab Emirates organizes a Regional Forum on the FDES 2013 for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries

(Contributed by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE))

The NBS of the UAE organized a five day Regional forum on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES 2013) for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries that was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 2 to 6 November 2014. The NBS invited two experts from the Environment and Energy Statistics Branch of UNSD to serve as overall resource persons and make presentations on the FDES 2013 that was endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session in 2013 as the framework for strengthening environment statistics programmes in countries. The NBS experts and its strategic partners shared in this activity. About 40 experts and specialists participated in this forum.

In his Opening Remarks, the Director General of the NBS of the UAE noted, inter alia, the importance of strengthening environment statistics in the GCC region through the implementation of the FDES. The Director General also indicated that the UAE, represented by the NBS, was a member of the Expert Group on the Revision of the FDES, as well as of the newly formed Expert Group on Environment Statistics formed after the endorsement of the FDES 2013 by the Statistical Commission, and he mentioned that the NBS has shown interest in implementing the FDES since it was approved.

The Executive Director of the Environmental Science, Information and Outreach Sector of the Environment Agency of the UAE, described several of the major environmental issues raised in the region and expressed his support to the FDES noting in particular that he appreciated seeing the clear linkage between the FDES and the DPSIR model, the latter currently being used by the Environment Agency.

The Forum was organized into 14 sessions covering the needs of environment statistics, an overview of environment statistics, an introduction to the FDES (including its Basic/Core Set of Environment Statistics and the Environment Statistics Self-Assessment Tool (ESSAT)), the six components of the FDES, the use and application of the FDES, cross-cutting issues and the FDES, the FDES tools, and training opportunities and the way forward.

Some of the important points in the Forum include the following:

⇒ During the first session on the Needs of Environment Statistics and Indicators, the representative of the Statistical Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC Stat), described the planned activities in environment statistics for the GCC countries and indicated, inter alia, that the FDES is an important framework already being used in the UAE and Qatar and that they planned to assist their member states further with the implementation of the FDES.

⇒ In the second session on the Overview of Environment Statistics, a presentation was made by the World Wildlife Federation on UAE's Ecological Footprint.

⇒ For the sessions focusing on the detailed presentations on the six components of the FDES several issues were raised by participants which led to very interesting discussions. Each presentation was followed up by Group Work during which the ESSAT was used to guide participants to respond to a series of questions about the statistics in each of the components, thereby comparing the statistics in the FDES with those available at the national level. UNSD also provided guidance to the participants about several international environmental data sources to illustrate international data availability, often unknown to the participants.

⇒ A session was organized on the experience on the use and application of the FDES and the UAE described in detail how they are implementing the FDES at the national level, involving all major stakeholders and promoting inter-agency collaboration and interest. They also explained that what they now have on their website is organized according to the components of the FDES.

⇒ Several presentations were made on cross-cutting issues and the FDES, e.g., in water, agriculture, land, and climate change, which were seen as very useful to demonstrate how the FDES can be applied to themes or issues and how all the relevant statistics from the various components can be brought together to illustrate the issue at hand.

The Regional forum was very well received by the participants who found it extremely useful in providing them with guidance towards the implementation of the FDES in their countries. The country participants expressed their readiness to implement the FDES and noted that it is an excellent tool given that it is comprehensive and holistic in nature. Some participants in their presentations, mentioned their use already of the FDES (and its Basic Set) and that they appreciated it very much, given, inter alia, its hands-on nature, its practicality and flexibility. The participants look forward to using the ESSAT in their countries and to receiving further methodological guidance, including the Methodological Guidance Manual for the FDES Core Set of Environment Statistics, to establish or strengthen their work programmes in environment statistics.

Suriname - Launch of the Sixth Environmental Statistics Publication

(Contributed by Anjali DeAbreu-Kisoensingh, General Bureau of Statistics, Suriname)

On the 4 December 2014, the Sixth publication on Environment Statistics produced by the General Bureau of Statistics (GBS) in collaboration with Conservation International Suriname (CIS) and our new partner, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was launched in Hotel Torarica in Paramaribo, Suriname. This publication that deals with environmental matters, marks 12 years of Environmental Statistics in Suriname and is presented as one of the outputs emanating from the UNSD/CARICOM Project (Now: CARICOM Program): "Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Statistics and Indicators for Conference Follow-up in the CARICOM Region". Data collection was guided by the CARICOM Core Indicators and the FDES 2013 Basic Set of Statistics.

The publication covers 13 major sectors and mainly contains data for the years 2009-2013. The relevant sectors are: Demographic and Socio-economic Background, Climate and Natural Disasters, Tourism, Transport, Environment and Health, Water, Energy and Minerals, Forestry, Coastal and Marine Resources, Land use and Agriculture, Biodiversity, Air and Waste. Thanks to the Census of 2012 and the increasing participation of various institutions, the number of tables and graphs increased significantly compared to the 2012 publication.

In total 63 guests from different organizations attended the launch, including 8 members of the press. A total of 90 relevant organisations (inter alia: line ministries, large enterprises, unions and institutions), who provided data and helped with the analyses received a hard copy as appreciation for their substantive contribution to the publication.

The opening speeches were delivered by the following officials: Mr. Armstrong Alexis, The Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Mr. John Goedschalk, Director of Conservation International Suriname (CIS); Mr. Iwan Sno, Director of the General Bureau of Statistics (GBS); and Mrs. Henna Uiterloo, Permanent Secretary for Environment on behalf of the Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment.

Also the following presentations were given by the GBS, namely a presentation of the Sixth publication of Environment Statistics delivered by Mrs. DeAbreu- Kisoensingh and a devinfo presentation containing the Draft EnvironmentInfo made by Mrs. Giovanna Amatsoeran.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

First workshop for the Asia and Pacific region of the United Nations Development account project 2014-2015 "Supporting developing countries measure progress towards achieving a Green Economy" (Bangkok, Thailand, 20-23 January 2015)

Workshop on Environment Statistics in Support of the Implementation of the FDES 2013 organized by UNSD and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) for the COMESA member states (Balaclava, Mauritius, 26-29 January 2015)

46th session of the Statistical Commission (New York, 3-6 March 2015)

Second Meeting of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics (New York, 25-27 March 2015)

envstats is produced by the Environment Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

Comments and contributions for inclusion in future issues should be sent to:

ENVSTATS

DC2-1418

2 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017

Fax: (1-212) 963 0623

E-mail: envstats@un.org