

United Nations Nations Unies

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
STATISTICS DIVISION (UNSD)**
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
TWO UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, DC2-1670, NEW YORK, NY 10017
TELEPHONE NO: 1 (212) 963-4598; FAX NO: 1 (212) 963-9851
Internet location: unstats.un.org/unsd

STAT 110

11 January 2008

Dear Colleagues,

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and Statistics Norway, is planning to convene an international conference on climate change and official statistics. The output of the conference would be an agenda for action by the official statistics community. This agenda would then be submitted to the 40th session of the UN Statistical Commission for discussion in 2009. The proposed dates are 14-16 April, 2008, and the conference will be held in Oslo, Norway.

Climate change is high on the political agenda at all levels. The official statistics community presently engages in the global agenda of climate change in an ad hoc manner. Some national statistical offices are heavily engaged and provide all official estimates required in the monitoring efforts. Some engage only in analytical efforts, principally to investigate the effects of mitigation protocols on national economy or the impact of climate change in planning scenarios. Many others have no activities at all related to this issue.

There is a need to discuss how official statistics can contribute to the measurement and monitoring of the different aspects of climate change and to bring together all current activities into a coherent framework. This conference is therefore designed as a forum for the exploration of ideas and to set the agenda for future work.

As statistics related to climate change cut across many, if not all, branches of official statistics, we would like to have national statistical offices (NSOs) to be represented at the conference by the Director Generals or high level officials. This is not a conference only for statisticians specialized in environment statistics. We plan to invite speakers from NSOs that already have statistical programmes in this area as well as outstanding experts from the user (scientific and policy making) community, who will help us better understand the underlying scientific and policy framework.

At this point we would like to solicit your feedback to these ideas. Attached for your information is a provisional list of issues to be covered by the conference. Please indicate as soon as possible whether you are interested in attending the conference and contributing to one or more issues on the agenda with discussion or background papers.

We look forward to receiving your positive feedback to this important global statistical initiative. Let me also take the opportunity to wish you and your colleagues a happy and successful new year.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Cheung
Director
Statistics Division/DESA

Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics

PROVISIONAL LIST OF ISSUES

- Session I:** Setting the scope: Understanding the demand for statistics created by the scientific and policy framework of climate change and the role of official statistics in satisfying this demand.
- Session II:** Greenhouse gas emission calculations as part of official statistics: are our sectoral statistics adequate? What should be the role of NSO-s in the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and in informing adaptation and mitigation strategies?
- Statistics underlying the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions encompass and feed primarily on energy statistics, but also on a wide spectrum of statistics on basic activities such as, production of industrial commodities, agriculture, forestry, transport, international trade, land use, waste-water, wastes, etc. Detailed statistics on physical flows in these activities are needed for development of greenhouse gas emission inventories. Emissions (and removals) of greenhouse gases are calculated/estimated on the basis of activity data with the help of emission factors. The development of the methods of calculation/estimation and the establishment of the emission factors is usually outside the scope of official statistics. However, as these calculations require a large amount of official statistics, and the reliability of the calculations depend on the quality of these statistics, the NSO-s should be involved in the process (i) to understand better the special needs for statistics (ii) to make the other players (environmental ministries, research institutes etc) better understand the role of statistical standards, classifications and the advantage of their use.*
- Session III:** What is the role of official statistics in the measurement of the impacts of climate change?
- Measurement of the impact of climate change is to a large extent based on sources outside the statistical system. They include meteorological and hydrological information, physical environmental data and data from scientific research. Impact analysis is usually outside official statistics and belongs to the field of modeling. While driving forces and pressures are local, their impact can be felt at different levels, from global through regional and national to local, depending on the type of the impact. In order to assess the impacts of climate change and the consequent adaptation and mitigation measures, however, this information has to be linked with existing statistics on the population, on human/economic activities and on the environment (exposure, vulnerability or adaptive capacity). Impacts on the economy, the society and the natural environment have to be assessed. Statistical offices have a role in the integration of the different data sets with official statistics with the objective to describe the vulnerability or adaptive capacity of a country to impacts of climate change.*
- Session IV:** Official statistics and carbon emission trading.
- What is the role of NSO-s in monitoring the carbon market? How can NSOs examine the implication carbon trading on the economy and economic growth? How useful are the I-O Tables for such analysis?*

Session V: The assessment of adaptation/mitigation strategies

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

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

Statistics used as input: population, economic growth and income, energy structure and other driving force statistics.

Session VII: Bringing all together: Possible frameworks for climate change statistics

Statistics to describe and monitor all aspects of climate change are manifold and come from multiple sources. There is a need for frameworks that integrate statistics related to climate change and link official statistics with other information. . How useful is the SEEA for measuring those aspects of climate change related to the economy and the environment? How to integrate social aspects?

Session VIII: Conclusions and recommendations: Agenda for action