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**JOINT TASK FORCE OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY AND THE CES ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS IN THE CIS
COUNTRIES TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING**

Paper prepared by the UNECE secretariat

(for information)

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of UNCEEA

New York, 24-26 June 2009

Agenda item 8

JOINT TASK FORCE OF THE UNECE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND THE CES ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS IN THE CIS COUNTRIES TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

Note by the UNECE secretariat

1. The Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has undertaken intersectoral work on **environmental indicators** in cooperation with the UNECE Environment, Housing and Land Management Division to help the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and South-Eastern European (SEE) countries to further strengthen and harmonize environmental data collection and promote comparability of environmental statistics.
2. Environmental indicators are a key tool for environmental assessment, reporting and policymaking. They can show trends and help describe the causes and effects of environmental conditions. They can also help in setting priorities, evaluating environmental policy implementation and assessing compliance with international commitments. Regular data collection on internationally-agreed indicators helps not only in national policymaking and raising public awareness, but also in comparing national environmental situations with those of other countries and data gathering for pan-European environmental assessment reports.
3. The Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 2007) endorsed the UNECE Recommendations on environmental indicators and indicator-based assessments¹ and invited the CIS, SEE and other interested countries to implement the *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators*² prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and other international organizations. The *Guidelines* cover 36 indicators that were evaluated as being the most important from the viewpoint of national and international requirements, the most comprehensible for the public, those best supported by international methodological guidance, and those most compatible with environmental indicator sets available at the international level.

¹ www.unece.org/env/documents/2007/ece/ece.belgrade.conf.2007.11.add.1.e.pdf

² Published in the United Nations publication on *Environmental Indicators and Indicators-based Assessment Reports – Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*. ECE/CEP/140 – Sales # E.07.II.E.9 – ISBN 978-92-1-116961-4 (www.unece.org/env/documents/2007/ece/ece.belgrade.conf.2007.inf.6.e.pdf).

4. A Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators was established and its terms of reference were agreed by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) at its October 2008 meeting and by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session held January 2009. The purpose of the Task Force is to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national reports on the state of the environment in countries of the CIS and SEE countries to improve environmental data collection, further strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region. The Terms of Reference of the Task Force are presented in the Annex to this paper.

5. The first meeting of the Task Force is planned for 31 August-2 September 2009. During the first meeting of the Task Force, a workshop will be organized Jointly with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) (New York) to train environmental experts and statisticians from the CIS and SEE countries in producing environmental indicators. Experts from other UNECE countries and international organizations and institutions dealing with environmental indicators have also been invited to broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches. The following topics will be covered:

(a) Priorities and modalities of cooperation on methodological issues of environmental indicators between environmental experts and statisticians in 2009-2010;

(b) Review in detail of selected indicators covered by the *Indicator Guidelines* to provide practical recommendations on the use of statistical classifications, data collection methods and procedures for the production of indicators;

(c) Exchange of information on international developments related to environmental indicators that may be important but that are currently not included in the *Guidelines* and provide references to available guidance materials;

(d) Discussions on modern presentation formats and tools for effective dissemination of environmental indicators including the use of modern information technologies.

6. At the end of its mandate, the Task Force will submit, through the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Bureau of the CES, a final report on its accomplishments and a proposal for follow-up work, if any, to both UNECE Committees.

ANNEX

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS (according to document ECE/EX/2009/L.6, annex)

I. OBJECTIVE

1. The purpose of the Task Force is to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national reports on the state of the environment in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and interested countries of South-Eastern Europe to improve environmental data collection, further strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region.
2. The Joint Task Force will report to its parent bodies, the Committee on Environmental Policy and the CES, and to their Bureaux. The Task Force will work closely with the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and inform it about the progress made and about the outcome.
3. The Joint Task Force on environmental indicators will:
 - (a) Review the indicators covered by the Indicator Guidelines to provide practical recommendations on the necessary adaptation of statistical classifications and data collection forms and procedures for the production of indicators;
 - (b) Propose additional environmental indicators that may be important but that are currently not included in the Indicator Guidelines (e.g. environmental expenditure, environmental taxes and subsidies, production of and trade in environmental goods and services and hazardous substances, and resource productivity) as well as provide and adapt to the needs of the countries concerned relevant guidance materials that are available at the international level;
 - (c) Recommend modern presentation formats and tools for effective dissemination of environmental indicators, including the use of modern information technologies;
 - (d) Assist in the organization of a workshop on environmental indicators to be jointly organized by UNECE and UNSD in 2009. The workshop will be open to all interested countries so as to broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches. It will provide a forum for presenting the latest developments on relevant methodologies and classifications available at the global level.

II. MEMBERSHIP

4. Members of the Task Force will be nominated by country focal points in the CES and the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The UNSD, Eurostat, EEA, the World Health Organisation (WHO)/ECEH, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the CIS Inter-State Statistical Committee will be invited to designate representatives. The UNECE Statistical Division and the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division will jointly service the Task Force.

III. TIMETABLE

5. The mandate of the Task Force will cover the period from 2009 to September 2010.

IV. OUTCOME

6. The Task Force will submit, through the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the CES Bureau, a final report on its accomplishments and a proposal for follow-up, if any, to both UNECE Committees.

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