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**REPORT ON THE WORK ON MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS AND
CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED STATISTICS**

Paper prepared by UNECE Secretariat

(for information)

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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REPORT ON THE WORK ON MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS AND CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED STATISTICS

Note by the UNECE secretariat

I. MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. In 2009, the Report on **measuring sustainable development**¹ was issued as a result of the work of the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group. The Report made a breakthrough to reach a common understanding of the principles of measuring sustainability within the capital approach framework. A new Task Force was set up in 2009 to further identify capital indicators to present the long-term dimension of sustainable development. In addition, under each capital indicator, the Task Force reviews indicators to present the distributional aspects of sustainable development. The work focuses on those indicators where further research could bring improved statistical concepts or methods, for example in the area of human and social capital. The work of the Task Force is strongly linked to the work undertaken by other institutions, such as the most recent recommendations in the Report issued by the Stiglitz Commission, the European Commission's initiative "GDP and Beyond", and the OECD project on Measuring the Progress of Societies.

2. The first meeting of the Task Force was held on 23-24 September 2009 in Geneva. Concrete working plan was discussed and a number of issue papers were agreed upon by the members of the Task Force, including in the area of ecosystems (biodiversity), critical natural capital, health, human and social capital. The second meeting of the Task Force will be held on 18-19 November 2010 in Geneva. The Task Force is planning to produce a report to be presented to the CES Bureau in February 2011.

3. In relation to its work on measuring sustainable development, the UNECE follows closely the work of the Sponsorship Group on Measuring Progress of Societies initiated by Eurostat and INSEE, France. The work of the Sponsorship Group will be carried out

¹ <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/03.03f.e.htm>

through Task Forces. The UNECE will be involved in the work, namely on households perspective and distributional aspects of income, consumption and wealth; environmental sustainability; and quality of life measures.

II. PRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

4. In 2009 a Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators² was established by two UNECE Sectoral Committees - the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians. The objective of the Task Force is to **improve environmental data production, further strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe**. The work brings together environmental experts and statisticians, a cooperation that is crucial to ensure improved methodologies and better time series data. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) actively contributes to the work of the Task Force.

5. The Task Force is reviewing the indicators from the *UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia* endorsed by the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in 2007. Many of the indicators are closely linked to climate change related statistics. The Task Force is also discussing additional indicators, which are currently not included in the *Guidelines*, but are however important when conducting environmental policy, e.g. indicators on environmental expenditures, agri-environmental indicators and energy related environmental indicators.

6. At the first meeting (31 August-2 September 2009), the Task Force reviewed 5 indicators from the *Guidelines*, namely: emissions of pollutants into the atmospheric air, greenhouse gas emissions, household water use per capita, land uptake and waste reuse and recycling.

7. At the second meeting (3-4 May 2010), the Task Force presented proposals for changes in the *Guidelines* related to the 5 indicators considered during the first meeting and reviewed 6 more indicators from the *Guidelines*, namely: renewable freshwater resources, freshwater abstraction, protected areas, renewable energy consumption, passenger transport demand, and freight transport demand.

8. The work will continue with the production of indicators on reuse and recycling of freshwater, polluted (non-treated) wastewaters, forest and other wooded land, energy intensity and composition of road motor vehicle fleet by fuel type. The next meeting of the Task Force will take place in early September 2010 in Geneva.

² <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/03.01.e.htm>

III. STATISTICS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

9. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) discussed in October 2009 the proposed CES work on climate change in view of the outcomes of the 63rd UNECE session in February 2009 and the meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) in June 2009.

10. The CES Bureau asked the UNECE secretariat to explore the degree to which national statistical offices are involved in climate change related work and in compiling the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories. In this regard, it was proposed that the UNECE secretariat undertake a small survey among the CES members. The purpose of the survey is to **assess whether the national statistical offices are involved in producing emission inventories and other climate change related statistics, and to identify common concerns and needs to be addressed at the international level.**

11. The UNECE secretariat informed the UNCEEA of the planned work in June 2009. The UNCEEA requested UNECE to coordinate its work on the survey on climate change related statistics with the UNSD's work on Global Assessment on Air Emission Statistics and Accounts. In spring 2010 the UNSD advised the UNECE Statistical Division to go ahead with the organization of the survey. The UNSD is willing to help the UNECE secretariat with reviewing the questionnaire.

12. At its June 2010 meeting, the CES Bureau asked the secretariat to proceed with the work and in cooperation with Eurostat to prepare a short questionnaire on involvement of statistical offices in climate change related statistical work. A draft questionnaire will be sent to the Bureau for electronic consultation before undertaking the survey.

13. Furthermore, the UNECE secretariat undertook work to explore possibilities to contribute to the UNECE climate change activities in cooperation with other UNECE Sectoral Committees in the areas of energy, forestry and housing. In the area of energy, the UNECE secretariat has been in contact with the Statistical Division of International Energy Agency to discuss possible future cooperation on energy statistics in UNECE region as well as possible work related to energy efficiency data.

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