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**Seventh Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on
Environmental-Economic Accounting
Rio de Janeiro, 11-13 June 2012**

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

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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Note by the UNECE secretariat

I. MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. In 2009, the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group (WGSSD) published its work on **measuring sustainable development**¹. The Report contributed to reaching a common understanding on the principles of measuring sustainable development within the capital approach framework. A new Task Force for Measuring Sustainable Development was set up in 2009 to develop the framework further.
2. The Task Force is currently finalizing the report. Progress has been made in several main directions. First, along with the monitoring the economic, environmental, human and social capital left to the future generations, the report takes into account also the human well-being of the current generations and its distributional aspects. Second, in an increasingly globalised world, the relationships between countries become more and more important. The report, therefore, discusses the international dimension and highlights how a country in its pursuit for well-being of its citizens may affect the well-being of the citizens of other countries. Finally, the report provides an overview of the measurement issues and, where possible, advances them. Examples of sustainable development indicators are presented based on a thorough screening of existing datasets on sustainable development, focusing on the commonalities in the various approaches.
3. 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.

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

4. The main messages and a short narrative of the report will be presented to the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) to be held on 6- 8 June 2012. The final report will be consulted with the CES member countries in spring next year and is planned to be submitted to the CES plenary session in June 2013.

II. PRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

5. Close attention to environmental issues has increased the demand for high quality statistics to strengthen environmental monitoring. In response, the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians launched in 2009 a Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators. The main objective is to improve environmental data production and promote comparability of **environmental statistics** in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE). In 2012 and 2013, the Joint Task Force will continue to review methodologies and produce time series of selected environmental indicators from the *UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*. The work brings together environmental experts and statisticians, a cooperation that is crucial to ensure improved methodologies and better time series data. The work is carried out in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

6. Two meetings of the Joint Task Force are planned this year. The next meeting will take place on 4-6 July 2012 in Geneva. The meeting will review six indicators: Emissions of pollutants into the atmospheric air, Greenhouse gas emissions, Household water use per capita, Water losses, Land uptake and Fertilizer consumption. Further information is available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.07.envIRON.html>. The second meeting will take place on 4-6 November 2012, also in Geneva.

7. Since 2012, the UNECE is implementing a UN Development Account project on environmental sustainability. Four workshops are planned to be organized under the project. The first workshop, organized jointly with Eurostat and the EEA, focused on how to produce high-quality, harmonized and timely **statistics on waste** in the EECCA countries. In particular, it discussed practical challenges and problems in producing statistics on waste generation and waste management, including recovery and disposal of waste. The workshop aimed at national experts from Ministries of Environment and National Statistical Offices. Experts from international organizations and institutions were invited to share experience and broaden the exchange of knowledge and best practices. All documents for the workshop are available online at the UNECE website: www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.04.envIRON.html

III. CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED STATISTICS

8. The CES Bureau established a Task Force on climate change related statistics in 2011. The Bureau decided that the Task Force needs to define the scope of climate change related statistics and assess the gap between user needs and available statistics. The UNECE was asked to take stock of the current state of work on climate change related statistics in the national statistical offices. A survey was carried out in 2011 to explore the extent to which national statistical offices are involved in producing climate change related statistics and to identify issues of common concern for further work at international level. The survey was also undertaken at the request of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. The UNSD supported the work.

9. In total, 47 national statistical offices replied to the survey. They called for international work to consider how the data available in the statistical systems could be made more useful for the purposes of climate change analysis and policy making. The main objective of the Task Force, therefore, is to identify practical steps to support future development of climate change related statistics to meet user needs, and to explore the needs of the greenhouse gas emission inventory producers for source data from national statistical systems. More information about the Task Force is available at: www.unece.org/stats/ToS.html

10. The Task Force includes 15 members from the EEA, UNECE, the EU Directorate-General for Climate Action and Canada, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Norway and United Kingdom. It mainly works via electronic tools, such as conference calls and wiki technology. The first Task Force meeting took place in Geneva, on 16-17 April 2012. It analysed six research topics: (1) the scope of climate change related statistics, (2) user needs towards climate change statistics, (3) existing related data and statistics of national statistical offices, (4) the relationships of national statistical offices with other agencies, (5) current practices of national statistical offices in climate change related statistics and (6) the infrastructure requirements of climate change data. A Conference on Climate Policy Making and Statistics, open to a wider audience, is planned to be held on 19-20 November 2012.

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