



NEWS & NOTES

Environment Statistics

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United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)/DESA

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Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics Oslo, Norway, 14-16 April 2008

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.

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.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE CONFERENCE

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?

Session III: What is the role of official statistics in the measurement of the impacts of climate change?

Session IV: Official statistics and carbon emission trading.

Session V: The assessment of adaptation/mitigation strategies

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

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

Session VIII: Conclusions and recommendations: Agenda for action

RECENT AND ONGOING WORK

UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2008 on Environment Statistics

The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2008 on Environment Statistics will be the fifth round of UNSD's biennial environment statistics data collection mandated by the Statistical Commission. The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire will be sent in Spring 2008 to more than 170 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 will be sent to both National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment in participating countries which are encouraged to nominate a single national focal point for the Questionnaire. In this regard, an announcement letter will be sent to the heads of the respondent organizations in January 2008. As in 2006, the 2008 Questionnaire will consist of two sections: waste and water prefilled with data received from earlier data collections. Each section of the Questionnaire will include a list of relevant definitions and comprehensive guidance to assist respondents with filling the tables. After validation of the responses, the results from the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaires will be disseminated on the UNSD website.

UNSD/UNEP Main Environmental Indicators and Country Snapshots

Selected data sets from the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2006 on Environment Statistics are available on the UNSD Main Environment Indicators website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/qindicators.htm>). The indicators on Water and Waste compiled by UNSD are based on official statistics that were supplied by national statistical offices or ministries of environment in response to the biennial UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire. Data on the European Union and OECD member and partner countries are from OECD and Eurostat. The indicators on Air Pollution, Climate Change and Forest and Agricultural land are compiled from data from UNFCCC, MDG database and FAO. The indicators selected are those of relatively good quality and geographic coverage. Results show that environment statistics is still in an early stage of development in many countries, and data are often sparse. Besides the main environmental indicators, water and waste time series and selected waste indicators at city level are also compiled from UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire responses. We invite all countries to verify their data and to send corrections to envstats@un.org. The next data collection is planned for

March 2008.

Country Snapshots are also available on the UNSD website (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Questionnaires/country_snapshots.htm). Country snapshots provide a selection of national environment statistics, complemented by key economic and social indicators. UNSD is also developing additional context for the snapshots to highlight country data collected through the 2004 and 2006 UNSD/UNEP environment statistics questionnaires, which will be available on the website gradually.

IWG-ENV Subgroup on Water Statistics

The Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-Env) established a Subgroup on Water Statistics (SWS) following the International Work Session on Water Statistics (IWSWS) held in Vienna in June 2005. The objective of the subgroup is to make progress on the recommendations from the IWSWS (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/watersessreport.pdf>).

The subgroup is currently working on 5 projects, including; (i) comparing and harmonising water statistics classifications; (ii) harmonising international data collections and data sharing; (iii) investigating water coefficients; (iv) testing metadata standards; and (v) comparing water quality methods

Progress to date includes: (i) drafting comparisons of international water statistics terms and definitions, with work ongoing on their harmonisation; (ii) a review of data collection activities with special regards to ensuring any unnecessary duplication is eliminated; (iii) collection of water coefficients; (iv) discussion of metadata standards, with recommendations due to be tested by the subgroup in the second half of the year; and (v) drafting of a paper comparing existing water quality statistics concepts and methods.

For more information regarding the subgroup on water statistics please contact UNSD by email at envstats@un.org.

The UN Statistical Commission adopts SEEAW as interim international statistical standard

The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 38th Session held in New York from 27 February to 2 March 2007 adopted part 1 of the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting for Water (SEEAW) as an interim international statistical standard, recognizing significant demand from the users' community, and encouraged its implementation in countries. The SEEAW was developed

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in order to standardize concepts and methods in water accounting. It provides the information system for organizing economic and hydrological information in a common framework permitting a consistent analysis of the contribution of the hydrological system to the economy and the impact of the economy on water resources in support of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). The SEEAW is a satellite system of the 1993 SNA, which is the statistical standard used for the compilation of economic statistics, and of the SEEA, thus linking water to the economy and to other natural resources. **Part I** includes internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications, standard tables and accounts covering the framework, physical and hybrid supply and use tables, and asset accounts (Chapters 1 to 6). **Part II** consists of those accounts that are considered of high policy relevance but still experimental because internationally accepted best practices did not emerge (Chapters 7 to 9). It covers quality accounts, the economic valuation of water beyond the market valuation of the 1993 SNA and examples of applications of the SEEAW.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seeaw.asp>

From Manual on Water Statistics to International Recommendations

UNSD has been working on the Manual with the objective to give practical guidance to countries in setting up their water statistics by recommending a core set of variables and indicators and by providing good practices for the collection and compilation of data. With the adoption of the SEEAW as an interim international statistical standard, this work is continuing in two parallel processes: (i) the development of the International Recommendations for Water Statistics that will describe the scope of water statistics, its main concepts and frameworks, the core water data items and their classifications, and general guidance on the collection and compilation of water statistics; and (ii) a web-based live document to provide detailed practical guidance and best practices for water statistics. The international recommendations and the data compilation guidance will assist countries in developing their national water statistics, implementing the SEEAW and filling in the international water questionnaires.

Visit of UNEP to UNSD (New York, 19 June 2007)

The recently appointed Director of the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) of UNEP, made an official visit to UNSD on 19 June 2007. He met with the Director of UNSD to discuss current and planned collaboration between the two institutions in the areas of

data collection, technical cooperation and coordination. It was decided, inter alia, to continue the joint UNSD/UNEP data collection activity, to consider joint data dissemination, to increase joint technical cooperation and capacity building activities, and to consider collaboration in the development of methodological manuals.

RECENT MEETINGS

Third meeting of the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (Geneva, 19-20 April 2007)

The tasks of the working group are to; (i) map common denominators in existing approaches and establishment of facts related to current policy oriented approaches; (ii) carry out methodological work on measurements of sustainability through the capital approach; and (iii) prepare a report on the findings to CES and OECD. The meeting discussed the following substantive issues: (a) reports of the subgroups; (b) capital and development: a conceptual and practical framework for measurement and policies; (c) review of the annotated outline of the final report; (d) human capital; (e) equity issues in the capital approach; (f) natural capital; (g) commonalities in existing indicator sets; (h) social capital; and (i) policy implications of the capital approach.

<http://unece.org/stats/documents/2007.03.sust-dev.htm>

Meeting of the Steering Committee of the project Streamlining Environmental Indicators (SEI) (Luxembourg, 5 June 2007)

The objective of the SEI is to study the different indicator lists used at the EU level, identify their commonalities, harmonize them and streamline the data flows behind their production. The Steering Committee made recommendations for the scope of the project, the inclusion of indicator lists and the criteria, classification and typology for the assessment of existing indicators as well as the consideration of global indicator sets. It discussed the work done so far and gave directions to the project until the end of 2007. UNSD participated in the meeting and reported about a similar exercise initiated at the global level.

Directors Meeting on Environment Statistics and Accounts (DIMESA) (Luxembourg, 6-7 June 2007)

The DIMESA discussed the implementation of the EU work programme in environmental statistics and

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accounts. Based on priorities and shared responsibilities with the European Environment Agency, the European Commission and its Joint Research Center, Eurostat will focus its work in environment statistics on water, waste and chemicals/pesticides. In environmental-economic accounting, priority areas are environmental expenditure accounts, NAMEA air accounts and the economy-wide material flow accounts. The sectoral projects on the environmental aspects of agriculture, transport and energy will continue. UNSD made a presentation on its ongoing and planned activities in environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting at the meeting.

**Meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-ENV)
(Luxembourg, 8 June 2007)**

The member institutions of the IWG-ENV (UNSD, OECD, UNEP, FAO, UNECE and Eurostat) reported on major developments with a focus on potential synergies, collaboration, coordination and harmonization of activities. They followed up on the implementation of the work programme: (i) work of the Water Statistics Subgroup (see page 1); (ii) the revision of the Glossary of Environment Statistics; (iii) harmonized metadata; (iv) land use statistics; and (v) methodological manuals. They discussed data collection activities, questionnaire revisions and data sharing arrangements and certain adjustments of the 2007-2008 work programme. They agreed on the extension of the mandate, work programme and timetable of the Water Statistics Subgroup until the end of 2008. FAO agreed to take the lead in the project on the harmonization of land use and land cover classifications and streamlining land use data flows. Coordination of training and data collection activities has been agreed on by UNSD and Eurostat with regard to the Mediterranean and TACIS countries.

**Meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA)
(Geneva, 12-13 June 2007)**

The meeting discussed the preparation of the Fourth pan-European assessment report on the state of the environment and associated activities with a special focus on: (a) communication and dissemination of the Belgrade assessment report; (b) overview of progress and outcomes of specific activities supporting the preparation of the Belgrade report under TACIS support; (c) related products for the Ministerial Conference; and (d) lessons learned. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) presented the data compendium (as a conference room paper) revised in the light of online consultation with experts from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The

compendium covers selected indicators from the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in EECCA. Participants also discussed how to better link air monitoring with decision making and improve environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises.

(http://unece.org/env/europe/monitoring/8th_mtg.html)

**Training Course on Environment Statistics
(Bonn, 12-14 June 2007)**

The InWent Centre for Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics organized an E-learning course on environment statistics from 3 April to 25 May 2007 as well as a related classroom session that was held in Bonn from 12-20 June 2007. The participants were from national statistical offices and ministries of environment from Anglophone and Francophone African countries. A staff member from UNSD participated in two sessions as a resource person in New York during the E-learning course, as well as for three days (12-14 June) during the classroom session in Bonn.

**2nd meeting of the UNCEEA
(New York, 5-6 July 2007)**

The UN Committee of Experts met to discuss the revision of the SEEA-2003, including the project management framework, the structure of the revised SEEA, the research agenda and harmonization issues. The meeting agreed on an implementation agenda for the SEEA. (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings.asp>).

**Workshop on Environment Statistics
(Addis Ababa, 16-20 July 2007)**

The United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), organized a Workshop on Environment Statistics that took place from 16 to 20 July 2007 at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Workshop trained representatives from national statistical offices and ministries of environment or equivalent institutions from Southern and Eastern African countries on concepts and methods of basic environmental statistics and indicators. The Workshop brought together more than 50 participants from 17 countries and 15 international, regional and subregional organizations. The main objectives of the Workshop were to agree on a core set of regional environmental indicators that combine national and international requirements and to initiate a regional strategy for the development of environment statistics.

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**93rd DGINS Conference
(Budapest, 20-21 September 2007)**

The Director-Generals of the national statistical institutes of Europe met to discuss statistical issues related to the social, economic and environmental aspects of globalization. Session III on measuring the environmental dimension of globalization was chaired by Walter Radermacher, President of DESTATIS Germany and discussed five invited papers from Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Eurostat and the Netherlands. (<http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/eng/dgins/programme.html>)

**Fourth meeting of the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat
Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable
Development
(Bucharest, 8-9 November 2007)**

The meeting discussed the overall structure and the five draft chapters (Introduction; Review of existing approaches to measuring sustainable development; An analytical approach to sustainable development: the capital framework; A capital-based measurement framework; Conclusions, recommendations to countries, and challenges for implementation) of the final report. (<http://unece.org/stats/documents/2007.11.sust-dev.htm>)

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Thirty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission
(New York, 26-29 February 2008)

Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics
(Oslo, April 2008)

Workshop on Environment Statistics (Abuja, Nigeria,
May 2008)

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