



NEWS & NOTES

Environment Statistics

Issue 25-26

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)/DESA

December 2009

Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics

An Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with Statistics Canada, was held in New York from 10 to 12 November 2009. The meeting was attended by 29 experts from 19 countries and five international organizations.

The Expert Group Meeting was convened as a response to the need for a conceptual framework for environment statistics and for the measurement and analysis of emerging policy issues such as climate change, voiced by many countries at different international forums. The objective of the meeting was to review the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES, 1984) in the light of new approaches and current major policy issues, in order to assess the feasibility of revising and developing the FDES into the much needed comprehensive and integrative conceptual framework.

The experts discussed: (i) the role of a framework in the development of environment statistics; (ii) the lessons learned when applying different frameworks; (iii) new approaches including the ecosystem approach; (iv) the FDES in the light of new approaches and policy issues; and (v) the directions of the revision of the FDES and the modalities of the revision process.

The Meeting agreed that an overarching conceptual framework is a necessary tool to define the scope and boundaries of environment statistics and its links with other statistical domains. The FDES was considered a successful framework that has been used by many countries. It was agreed that the FDES should be used as the starting point and revised on the basis of improved scientific knowledge about the environment and new requirements created by emerging environmental concerns and their management.

The ecosystem approach was viewed as a promising conceptual foundation for an environment statistics

framework and it was recommended to be considered when revising the FDES to reflect the advances in scientific and management thinking.

The experts agreed on a set of guiding principles and the suggested contents of the revised FDES. They also agreed that UNSD should set up an expert group to implement the revision process.

The experts recommended that, as a response to the request by many countries, UNSD should also develop, parallel to the revision of the FDES, a minimum set of core environment statistics to provide guidance to countries with very limited resources and at early stages of environment statistics. The core set should include a limited number of statistical variables (accompanied by appropriate methodological description and guidance for their compilation) that will provide national and international policy-makers with the most necessary information about issues of interest to countries and also issues that go beyond national boundaries.

The recommendations of the Expert Group will be discussed at the forty-first session of the UN Statistical Commission from 23 to 26 February 2010.

The EGM documentation is posted at:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/fdes.htm>

BellagioSTAMP – Sustainability Assessment and Measurement Principles

A set of Bellagio Principles for assessing progress towards sustainability was first published in 1996 and was subsequently used in sustainability assessments. Though successful, new assessment methods and sustainability challenges overtook the original Principles. A revised set has, therefore, been prepared – re-establishing the Principles as a fundamental basis for assessment. As with the original, BellagioSTAMP has been established by a group of international experts that met from 6 to 10 April 2009 in Bellagio, Italy. The

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principles are designed to help any group assessing societal progress, considering policy options and advocating change: community bodies, academics, non-governmental organizations, corporations, governments and international institutions.

1. Guiding vision

Assessing progress towards sustainable development is guided by the goal to deliver well-being within the capacity of the biosphere to sustain it for future generations.

2. Essential considerations

Sustainability Assessments consider:

- The underlying social, economic and environmental system as a whole and their interactions
- The adequacy of the governance mechanisms
- Dynamics of current trends and drivers of change and their interactions
- Risks, uncertainties, and activities that can have an impact across boundaries

Implications for decision making, including trade-offs and synergies

3. Adequate scope

Sustainability Assessments adopt:

- Appropriate time horizon to capture both short and long-term effects of current policy decisions and human activities

Appropriate geographic scope ranging from local to global

4. Framework and indicators

Sustainability Assessments are based on:

- A conceptual framework that identifies the domains that copre indicators have to cover
 - The most recent and reliable data, projections and models to infer trends and build scenarios
 - Standardized measurement methods, wherever possible, in the interest of comparability
- Comparison of indicator values with targets and benchmarks, where possible

5. Transparency

The assessment of progress towards sustainable development:

- Ensures the data, indicators and results of the assessment are accessible to the public
- Explains the choices, assumptions and uncertainties determining the results of the assessment
- Discloses data sources and methods

Discloses all sources of funding and potential conflicts of interest

6. Effective Communication

In the interest of effective communication, to attract the broadest possible audience and to minimize the risk of misuse, Sustainability Assessments:

- Use clear and plain language
 - Present information in a fair and objective way, that helps to build trust
 - Use innovative visual tools and graphics to aid interpretation and tell a story
- Make data available in as much detail as reliable and practical

7. Broad Participation

To strengthen their legitimacy and relevance, Sustainability Assessments should:

- Find appropriate ways to reflect the views of the public, while providing active leadership
- Engage early on with users of the assessment so that it best fits their needs

8. Continuity and capacity

Assessments of progress towards sustainable development require:

- Repeated measurement
- Responsiveness to change
- Investment to develop and maintain adequate capacity

Continuous learning and improvement

To learn more about the principles visit the website of the International Institute for Sustainable Development at <http://www.iisd.org>

RECENT AND ONGOING WORK

UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics

The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics will be the sixth round of UNSD's biennial environment statistics data collection mandated by the Statistical Commission. The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire will be sent in April 2010 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 deadline for submitting the completed questionnaires will be 31 July 2010.

The Questionnaire will be sent to both National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment in participating countries. Participating countries are encouraged to

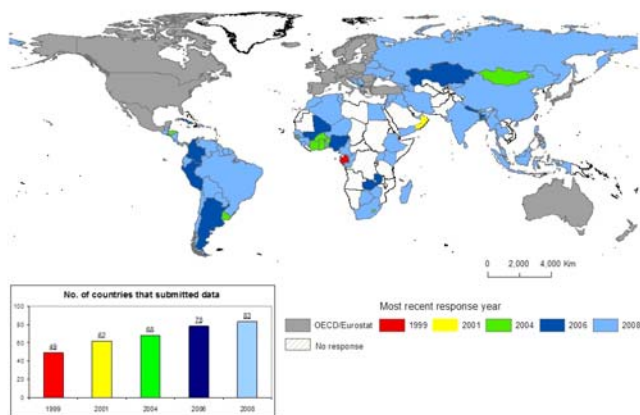
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nominate a single national focal point for the 2010 Questionnaire. In this regard, an announcement letter will be sent to the heads of the respondent organizations in January 2010.

Following from the 2006 and 2008 rounds, the 2010 Questionnaire will consist of two sections: waste and water. 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 through the UNSD Environmental Indicators tables and maps (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/qindicators.htm>) and in Country Snapshots (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Questionnaires/country_snapshots.htm), as well as on UNData (<http://data.un.org>). The published results from the 2010 round are expected to be available early 2011. UNSD appreciates countries' continuing support on the improvement of timely and reliable global environment statistics. The map below shows the most recent information on responses to the UNSD Environmental data collections over the five rounds from 1999 to 2008.

Coverage of UNSD Environment Data Collections



Additional information, including the questionnaires and guidance materials, will be uploaded to the website as they become available. If you have any questions or comments, please send them to: envstats@un.org.

New UNSD Environment Statistics Web Dissemination

UNSD publishes global environment statistics through two main web-based products: the UNSD Environmental Indicators and Country Snapshots. In 2009, the scope of UNSD's online dissemination of environmental indicators was expanded, covering a wider range of environmental themes and data sources. Previously,

indicators compiled from the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics, supplemented by data from UNFCCC and FAO, were the focus of dissemination on the website. Since 2009, UNSD now provides a broader set of indicator themes, which makes use of the increasing availability of internationally comparable environmental data compiled by a variety of international organizations. The objective of UNSD's expanded dissemination of environmental indicators is to provide a global hub for statistics on the environment.

Ten themes have been selected to organize the current set of UNSD Environmental Indicators: Air and Climate; Biodiversity; Energy and Minerals; Forests; Governance; Inland Water Resources; Land and Agriculture; Marine and Coastal Areas; Natural Disasters; and Waste. The themes were selected after an extensive review of the availability of environmental statistics with global scope and comparability. Currently, there are 64 downloadable indicator tables organized within the 10 themes. Indicator tables and charts, along with maps made using GIS, as well as links to other international sources, are available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/qindicators.htm>.

Country Snapshots, which include many of the indicators from the UNSD Environmental Indicators list, in addition to other economic and demographic background information, have also been updated using a new process. Country Snapshots for United Nations member states are now compiled and produced by UNSD using an automated system that allows for improved quality control and more efficient and regular updates. The latest Country Snapshots can be found at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Questionnaires/country_snapshots.htm.

Selected water and waste statistics compiled from the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics, complemented by data on EU and OECD member and partner countries from OECD and Eurostat, are also now available through UNData (<http://data.un.org>).

Inventory of publications on environment statistics and links to national environment statistics compendia

UNSD is in the process of compiling an inventory of national environment statistics compendia and other relevant data publications or methodological documents to include on its website. In this regard UNSD would like to invite countries and organizations to send us hard copies, electronic copies and web links of such publications. These publications are extremely useful for UNSD during the validation process of the data received in response to the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics and for providing missing or

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additional information. The inventory will be made available on the UNSD website to all users and producers of environment statistics.

Please send hard copies to the following address:

UN Statistics Division
Environment Statistics Section
DC2-1416
2 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
USA

Please send electronic copies and links to the following address: envstats@un.org.

International Recommendations for Water Statistics

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) has prepared the draft International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS) with the assistance of the international water statistics community. The IRWS is the first document of its kind for environment statistics, joining a family of “International Recommendations” that include the International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics (IRIS) and the International Recommendations for the Index of Industrial Production 2009 (IRIIP 2009), for example.

The IRWS is designed to assist countries in the establishment and strengthening of an information system for water in support of integrated water resources management. Like other International Recommendations, the draft IRWS is organized into two main parts: Part I forms the international recommendations and provides the main concepts on water statistics, including definitions and classifications of statistical units related to water and a list of recommended data items that countries are encouraged to compile; Part II provides general guidance on the collection and compilation of water statistics. A number of annexes provide additional reference information in particular on supplementary data items, links of the data items with the standard tables of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEAW), links of the data items with commonly used water related indicators and links of the data items with international water questionnaires.

The structure of the IRWS is the following:

Introduction

Part I

Chapter I - Scope of water statistics

Chapter II - Main concepts and frameworks

Chapter III - Statistical units and classifications

Chapter IV - Water data items

Part II

Chapter V - Data collection strategy

Chapter VI - Data sources and methods

Chapter VII - Metadata and data quality

Chapter VIII - Data dissemination

Annexes

The IRWS has been through a rigorous drafting process and consultation process, including extensive review and discussion with international and national experts and a global consultation. The process included: a review of the first draft of Part I of the IRWS by a reference group (July-August 2008); a review of a revised draft of Part I and first draft of Part II by the Expert Group on Water Statistics (November 2008); a review of selected issues identified by the Expert Group Meeting (first half of 2009); a review of the revised and complete draft of the IRWS by the Expert Group (July-August 2009); and a global consultation of the draft IRWS by National Statistics Offices, the Expert Group on Water Statistics and other interested parties from the water community (October-November 2009).

The global consultation ensured the widest possible review of the draft text. This consultation process concluded on 30 November 2009. For the global consultation, the draft publication, a template for comments and background supporting documents were provided on the UNSD website and letters sent to all National Statistical Offices and other interested parties. From the global consultation, feedback on the draft IRWS has been overwhelmingly positive especially regarding the scope and content of the IRWS. Other comments focus on specific changes or additions to the text and these will assist UNSD greatly in editing the final draft of the IRWS.

The final draft IRWS together with the summary of the feedback from the global consultation will be submitted to the forty-first session of the UN Statistical Commission in February 2010.

For more information regarding the IRWS please see the UNSD website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/irws/>) or contact UNSD at envstats@un.org.

COORDINATION

Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-ENV)

The IWG-ENV met in June 2009 in New York (back-to-back with the fourth meeting of the UNCEEA) and in November 2009 (back-to-back with the meeting of the OECD WGEIO). The members of IWG-ENV discussed (i) issues related to the revision of the group’s mandate;

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(ii) progress of work; (iii) plans for 2010-2011; and (iv) contents of the report for the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission in February 2010. Work in 2010-2011 will focus on the revision of the questionnaires, the development of a core set of environment statistics to support countries with limited resources and at early stages of environment statistics; improved metadata; land use/land cover data; and joint training and capacity building.

RECENT MEETINGS

Technical Workshop on the Preparation of Water Accounts in Latin America (Santiago, 1-4 June 2009)

UNSD and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) conducted a technical workshop in Chile regarding the compilation of water accounts. The workshop was well attended with 31 people representing 8 countries participating in the workshop. It brought together the producers of water-related information from statistical offices, water and environment ministries and central banks. Countries presented the work they have done on water accounts and water information systems. The importance of institutional arrangements and a strong high level support were recognized as key factors for the ability of Latin American countries to fully implement the accounts. The key steps identified by countries for implementing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEAW) were:

- Mapping the water accounts to the objectives of the national water plans or water policy goals of countries
- Explaining the usefulness of water accounts to policy-makers and strategic planners
- Developing water accounts in phases focusing on particular accounts (Physical-Supply use tables, Hybrid accounts and Asset accounts)
- Building capacity in countries (e.g. training, learning by doing, sharing experiences with other countries)
- Identifying additional information needs (e.g. water rights, valuation of water, ecosystem services)

For more information on the workshop please visit: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/workshops/chile2009/lod.htm>.

Fourth Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) (New York, 24-26 June 2009)

The Meeting discussed the contribution of the statistical

community to global initiatives related to climate change, the green economy, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity and ecosystem services. It reviewed progress made in the revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), the implementation of the SEEAW and monitored the progress of work of various technical groups and city groups working under the auspices of the UNCEEA. More information is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings.asp>

CARICOM Workshop on Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics and Indicators (St. John's, 20-24 July 2009)

The Workshop was organized by the CARICOM Secretariat and UNSD provided a resource person on environment statistics. The Workshop focused on the following activities: (i) refined the core list of statistics and indicators, including the revised MDG indicators; (ii) reviewed the metadata for the indicators and the data submitted by the CARICOM Member States; and (iii) developed an action plan for a new round of data collection at the regional level. UNSD implemented a Development Account Project for "Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Statistics and Indicators for Conference Follow-up in the CARICOM Region" in 2000-2003 in the areas of social/gender and environment statistics, which culminated in the production of two regional publications. It was noted that much progress has taken place in the region since the inception of this project. In this regard CARICOM and its Member States voiced their appreciation for the continued support of UNSD in these areas of statistics.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Study Visit to UNSD (New York, 14 August 2009)

A delegation from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) visited UNSD on a study tour. Two staff members from the Environment Statistics Section met with the delegation. During the meeting, UNSD briefly introduced its activities in the field of environment statistics. Delegates from BBS informed UNSD about their work on environment statistics, which includes publishing the Bangladesh Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and three Compendiums of Environment Statistics. During the discussion, the delegates from BBS stressed the importance of environment issues in Bangladesh and noted that although Bangladesh is the most vulnerable country to the impact of climate change, timely sound environmental information for policy making is normally lacking. In this regard, the delegates requested technical assistance on environment statistics from UNSD.

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ISI 2009 (Durban, 16-22 August 2009)

The 57th session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) was organized under the theme: "Statistics: Our Past, Present & Future", and included special events for the ISIBalo Capacity Building Programme for Africa and in support of increased representation of women in statistics. The Conference schedule included many sessions on environmental statistics topics, as well as climate change and official statistics, economic-environmental accounting for food and agriculture, and indicators for biodiversity and sustainable development. For more information on the 57th session and abstracts of the invited papers, visit: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/isi2009/Default.aspx>.

The 58th session of the ISI to be held in Dublin, Ireland from 21 to 26 August 2011 will have a Theme Day dedicated to Water. The Water Theme Day has the objectives of: (i) highlighting the important contributions statistics can make to the solution of water quality problems and quantity challenges facing the world; and (ii) identifying statistical research challenges that arise. UNSD is on the ISI Water Theme Day Steering Committee and the planning of sessions is underway. The Water Theme Day will include seminars co-organized by UNSD and Eurostat on improving national statistics on water quality and on filling data gaps for water statistics. UNSD also plans to organize pre-conference training workshops on the International Recommendations for Water Statistics and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEA). For more information please visit: <http://www.isi2011.ie/pages/scientific-programme/water-theme-day.php>, or contact UNSD at envstats@un.org.

Joint UNSD/UNECE Meeting on Environmental Indicators (Geneva, 31 August – 2 September 2009)

The Meeting, jointly organized by UNSD and UNECE, and supported by Eurostat and the Russian Federation, was the first to bring together statisticians and experts from environmental ministries/agencies in the region. The Meeting: (i) critically reviewed 10 out of the 36 indicators included in the UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators, provided practical guidance on the use of statistical classifications, data collection methods and procedures for the production of the indicators, and discussed experiences with the application of the indicators in the countries; (ii) exchanged information on national and international developments in the field of environmental indicators;

(iii) discussed effective formats and tools for the communication and dissemination of environmental indicators; and (iv) discussed and adopted the terms of reference and work programme of the newly established joint task force on environmental indicators. For further information please visit:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/UNSD_ECE_Geneva%20workshop.htm

Eurostat's Working Group "Statistics of the Environment"- Sub-Group "Water Statistics" (Luxembourg, 17-18 November 2009)

UNSD participated in a meeting of Eurostat's Working Group "Statistics of the Environment" - Sub-Group "Water Statistics". The meeting was well attended and included 29 countries, three international agencies, and one non-governmental organization. Europe continues to improve its water statistics and progress reported back from pilot projects was also encouraging. Amongst other things, the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) was discussed. This provides a range of water statistics and other information regarding water in Europe (<http://water.europa.eu/>) and may be of special interest to water data users. More information regarding this meeting is available at: http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/envirmeet/library?l=/statistics_17-181109&vm=detailed&sb=Title.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Forty-first session of the Statistical Commission (New York, 23-26 February 2009)

The Commission will discuss, among others, a report on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics and the report of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. For more information see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission_41st_session.htm

Second Meeting of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (Geneva, 26-27 April 2010)

The meeting will review six further indicators from the ECE Indicator Guidelines and will consider the latest developments regarding the production at the international level of important indicators that are currently not included in the Guidelines.

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**IAOS Conference on Official statistics and the Environment: Approaches, Issues, Challenges and Linkages
(Santiago, 20-22 October 2010)**

The 2010 Conference of the International Association of Official Statistics will focus on environment statistics and will be organized around the following five themes:

I. Compiling environmental statistics – sources, methods and quality.

II. Challenges and innovations in the dissemination of environmental and related information

III. Integration of environmental information – frameworks, standards and classifications

IV. Environmental and socio-economic linkages – drivers, impacts, adaptation and instruments

V. The environment and sustainability

For more information about the conference see <http://www.ine.cl/iaos2010/eng/index.html>

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