



# envstats

## News and Notes

Environment Statistics Section  
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)/DESA

### FOCUS: IAOS 2010 Conference (Santiago, Chile)

(Contributed by Mojca Suvorov, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia)

#### IN THIS ISSUE

##### Focus

##### UNSD News

##### Regional News

##### Country News

##### Recent Events

##### Upcoming Events

##### Point of View

#### CONTACT US

ENVSTATS  
DC2-1418  
2 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
Fax: 1-(212)963-0623  
E-mail: [envstats@un.org](mailto:envstats@un.org)

The theme of the 2010 Conference of the International Association of Official Statistics (IAOS) is "Official statistics and the environment: approaches, issues, challenges and linkages". The host of the Conference, which will take place from 20 to 22 October 2010 in Santiago, Chile, is the National Statistical Institute (INE) of Chile.

The Conference will start on the day when statisticians all over the world are going to celebrate the first-ever World Statistics Day. At this occasion a special plenary session is also being organized during the lunch break of the Conference. It is dedicated to revisions of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) Declaration of Professional Ethics.

The work at the Conference will be organized in two Plenary Sessions, three Panel Discussions and five Theme Sessions.

In the first Plenary Session - Environmental policy - the new Chilean Minister of the Environment, María Ignacia Benítez will be a keynote speaker. In the second Plenary Session the keynote speakers will talk about the impact of environmental conditions on human well-being.

The panel discussions will provide an opportunity to exchange views on strategic issues, present best practices and innovative approaches to environmental data collection and dissemination, and measuring sustainable development.

The five main themes of the Conference are:

- Compiling environmental statistics – sources, methods and quality
- Challenges and innovations in the dissemination of environmental and related information
- Integration of environmental information – frameworks, standards and classifications
- Environmental and socio-economic linkages – drivers, impacts, adaptation and instruments
- The environment and sustainability

The Standing Committee of Regional and Urban Statistics (SCORUS) Session themes are:

- Regional Energy Supply and the Environment: the Statistical Challenges
- Sustainable Economic Development of Cities and Regions
- Cities, the Environment and Climate Change
- Regional Interaction of Environmental, Social and Economic Statistics
- Assessing the Environmental Quality of Life at the Local Level

All together there will be 20 sessions with 16 invited papers, 41 contributed papers and 17 SCORUS papers. In addition, 12 authors are going to present their work in the poster session. The authors are from 32 different countries and representing all continents. The Draft Agenda and more details about the conference are available at the Conference website at: <http://encina.ine.cl/iaos2010ingles/Home.aspx>

Contact email addresses:

Scientific programme: [iaos2010.surs@gov.si](mailto:iaos2010.surs@gov.si)

Local organization committee: [iaos2010@ine.cl](mailto:iaos2010@ine.cl)

# UNSD NEWS:

## UNSC adopts the International Recommendations for Water Statistics

The International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS) was adopted by the [United Nations Statistical Commission](#) (UNSC) at its 41st session in February 2010. The Statistical Commission further encouraged the implementation of IRWS for official statistics. IRWS was developed in order to help strengthen water statistical systems to provide evidence for policy, including the support of Integrated Water Resources Management. IRWS brings together the experiences and practices of countries and international organisations and was developed in close collaboration with many country and international experts, including the [Expert Group on Water Statistics](#).

The IRWS is organized into two parts. Part I, *International Recommendations*, elaborates the main concepts, definitions, classifications and data items of water statistics. Part II, *Guidance for Implementation*, provides general guidance on data sources, data quality, and strategies for managing collection and dissemination. A number of annexes provide additional reference information, including definitions of data items, links to the [SEEAW](#) standard tables, and related indicators.

UNSD has now started working on companion materials for IRWS, including materials for water statistics training programmes and an online water statistics compilation guidance manual. For more information please contact: [envstats@un.org](mailto:envstats@un.org) or [seea@un.org](mailto:seea@un.org).

## UNSC endorses the work programme for the revision of the FDES

The Statistical Commission, at its 41st session, endorsed the programme for the revision of the United Nations *Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics* (FDES 1984), on the basis of improved scientific knowledge about the environment and new cross-disciplinary requirements created by emerging environmental concerns and their management.

The revised Framework will provide the conceptual basis for integrating environment statistics, environmental accounting and environmental indicators. It will:

- Define the scope and boundaries, and lay out the important dimensions of environment statistics;
- Define the relationship between environment statistics and other statistical domains;
- Define the links and relationship with other conceptual and statistical frameworks and analytical models; and
- Establish a core set of environment statistics to provide guidance to countries with limited resources or at the early stages of developing environment statistics for collecting environmental data and reporting on the environment.

UNSD has been requested to set up an Expert Group that will, within two years, produce a short, concise document that:

- Articulates a broad conceptual, comprehensive, integrative and overarching framework that encompasses all aspects of environment statistics;
- Uses the existing FDES as the starting point and revises it on the basis of improved scientific knowledge about the environment and new cross-disciplinary requirements created by emerging environmental concerns and challenges;
- Considers existing environmental and ecosystem approaches as the conceptual foundation of the revised Framework;
- Ensures that the Framework:
  - Has a focus on basic environment statistics that can serve multiple purposes and facilitate better data integration within the environment statistics domain and with other statistical (economic and social) domains;
  - Is relevant for both developed and developing countries;
  - Is flexible in application so as to allow use for different purposes;
  - Includes clear links to other frameworks and analytical models; and
  - Provides the conceptual linkages between data providers and users.

The Expert Group including statisticians as well as representatives of the scientific and user communities from all regions has been convened. UNSD will lead the revision process and ensure coordination with relevant mechanisms such as the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-ENV). The Expert Group will have three face-to-face meetings and will work through an electronic discussion forum. The wider statistical community will be engaged through electronic means including a public website of resource materials. The draft Framework will be presented at upcoming international conferences, meetings and workshops in the field of environment statistics to ensure the widest possible discussion and agreement. The revision of the Framework will be implemented in two years and submitted to the Statistical Commission in 2012.

## UNSD NEWS:

### Invitation for contributions to the knowledge base on environment statistics

At the 41st session of the Statistical Commission, UNSD committed to develop a knowledge base on country practices in developing environment statistics to support the work on revising the *Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics* (FDES) and developing a core set of environment statistics. The proposed knowledge base will serve as a web-based access point for a dynamic and centralized repository of information on methodology and good country practices on the collection, compilation and dissemination of environment statistics. It will provide a global platform for easy and structured access to a wide range of information on environment statistics. The development of the knowledge base needs active participation of countries. Therefore, UNSD is inviting all countries to provide documents of their good practices in environment statistics for inclusion in the knowledge base. The documents can be data compendia, general methodological guidelines or methodological work on a specific environmental topic, as well as descriptions of the organization of environment statistics and institutional frameworks. Please email all electronic documents to [envstats@un.org](mailto:envstats@un.org).

### UNSD/UNEP Data collection 2010 – State of the Art

The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics was sent out on 12 April 2010 to 172 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 (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/questionnaire2010.htm>) was sent to both National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment and asked for coordination within the country. The deadline of submitting the completed questionnaire was 30 June 2010. To date, about 50 countries have responded to the Questionnaire. UNSD has started validating the data, and will contact countries for further information as necessary. A first reminder was sent to all countries that have not yet replied on 21 June 2010. After validation of all responses, the complete results from the 2010 round of data collection will be disseminated on the UNSD website by January 2011. In order to meet this deadline, it is important that countries send their data on time. All countries are invited to take the necessary action to make sure that available data arrives at UNSD as soon as possible.

### Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics

The Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-ENV) held its 10th meeting in Luxembourg on 16 June 2010 with the participation of UNSD, FAO, UNEP, OECD and Eurostat. The Group discussed, among others, coordination issues in international data collection such as questionnaire revisions, harmonization of terms and definitions, country coverage, timetables, data validation and sharing, and further improvement of the IWG-ENV website. It also discussed the role and the tasks of the Group in the revision of the UN Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the core set of environment statistics. Recognising their increasing activity in environment statistics and the related need for coordination, the IWG-ENV co-opted UN ESCWA and UN ECLAC as regular members and agreed on the invitation of the European Environment Agency to join the Group.

## REGIONAL NEWS:

### ESCWA holds a national workshop on Environment Statistics and Water Accounts in Yemen

(Contributed by Wafa Aboul Hosn, ESCWA)

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized a training workshop on Environment Statistics and Water Accounts that was hosted by the Central Statistical Organization of the Republic of Yemen from 21 to 24 June 2010 in Sanaa. The training was funded from the Development Account Project “Strengthening National Capacities in Environment Statistics, Indicators and Accounts in support of progress toward achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the ESCWA and ECLAC Regions” that was completed at the end of June 2010. The training was attended by 23 participants from the Central Statistical Organization, Ministry of Water and Environment and the Environmental Protection Authority, and four participants from Sudan from the National Statistical Office and the Ministry of Water and Environment. ESCWA provided Yemen with three laptops equipped with the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), a database that allows compilation and reporting of environment and water statistics as well as customized social and economic indicators. The training focused on the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics for Water and Waste in its Arabic version, with the identification of all data gathering agencies in Yemen and Sudan. Several presentations were made on the methodologies to fill the Questionnaire and an overview of the status of completion of the questionnaires was presented by Yemen. ESCWA presented the SEEAW tables with an explanation of the relationship between the Questionnaire and the tables and completed, with the help and data provided by the participants, the supply and use tables of the SEEAW for Yemen. The training concluded with a discussion session aiming at a work plan for Yemen to reinforce the status of environment statistics, data collection and dissemination as well as some recommendations for Yemen and an urgent request to prepare a similar training in Sudan to strengthen their capabilities in environment statistics and accounts.

## REGIONAL NEWS

### Latin American and Caribbean Working Group on Environment Statistics

(Contributed by Kristina Taboulchanas and Rayen Quiroga, ECLAC)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is pleased to announce the creation of a Regional Working Group (WG) on Environment Statistics under the auspices of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. The membership of the WG consists of representatives of the National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela and the regional office of the United Nations Environment Programme. Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography is the Coordinator of the WG and ECLAC is the Technical Secretariat. The WG's goal is to promote the development of environment statistics and their integration into the national statistical systems of Latin American and Caribbean countries. The WG's activities will centre on the: promotion of regional cooperation to strengthen capacities; documentation and exchange of experiences and good practices; development of a minimum set of common environment statistics for the region; and promotion of the use of international frameworks for the development of basic environment statistics in the region. For more information contact ECLAC at [statambiental@cepal.org](mailto:statambiental@cepal.org) or 56-2-210-2633.

### New water statistics and accounts project

With the financial support of GTZ ECLAC is launching a new project to strengthen the capacities of countries to use the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting for Water along with the International Recommendations on Water Statistics to develop and implement water statistics collection strategies. The project will focus on two to three Latin American countries that will be selected through a competitive process. For more information contact Kristina Taboulchanas ([Kristina.taboulchanas@cepal.org](mailto:Kristina.taboulchanas@cepal.org)).

### Online database and publications

Since 2005, ECLAC has been publishing regional environment statistics for its 33 member states in its online gateway CEPALSTAT (<http://www.eclac.org/estadisticas/default.asp?idioma=IN>). Moreover, a list of all publications related to environment statistics can be found at: [www.cepal.org/devype/statambiental](http://www.cepal.org/devype/statambiental)

### Eurostat publications on environment statistics and accounts

(Contributed by Jürgen Förster, Eurostat)

Eurostat has recently issued Statistics in Focus (31/2010) on Environmental Protection Expenditure that contains 2001-2006 data on the 27 EU member states.

([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-10-031/EN/KS-SF-10-031-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-10-031/EN/KS-SF-10-031-EN.PDF))

Eurostat will publish in autumn 2010 a book covering environmental statistics and accounts – it is Eurostat's main reference work within this domain. Its aim is to identify environmental pressures related to production and consumption patterns. The 11 chapters below provide a picture of interactions between the environment and EU society on its way towards sustainable development:

- household consumption patterns
- material flows
- waste
- water
- air emissions
- chemicals
- biodiversity
- land use
- agri-environmental indicators
- forestry
- environmental protection expenditure and environmental taxes

The data are sourced from Eurostat and its partner institutions, for example, the Directorate-General for the Environment of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA).

Please take a look at the Eurostat website at: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/publications/recently\\_published](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/publications/recently_published) where the book will also be made available as pdf file.

## COUNTRY NEWS

### Towards the Fourth Compendium of Environment Statistics in Suriname

(Contributed by Andreas Talea, General Bureau of Statistics, Suriname)

It has become a tradition since 2002 in Suriname that the publication of the compendium of environment statistics is preceded by a workshop of the national producers and users of environment statistics. The two-day workshop to discuss the fourth compendium was organized by the General Bureau of Statistics (GBS) in close collaboration with Conservation International Suriname (CIS) in Paramaribo from 11 to 12 May 2010. The objectives were to:

- Present the first draft of the fourth publication on environment statistics to the relevant data providers and other stakeholders and to give the participants the opportunity to provide their comments and inputs on the draft;
- Ensure the commitment on data availability, improve data quality and continuous cooperation;
- Map out all data gaps and potential data sources of indicators not yet covered;
- Present the CARICOM Environmental MDG-Indicators List; and
- Use the findings of the workshop and the follow-up contributions of data providers for finalizing the publication.

Mr. Iwan Sno, Director of GBS and Mrs. Annette Tjon Sie Fat, Director of CIS delivered the opening addresses. The Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, the Honourable Joyce Amarello-Williams, delivered the feature address, thanked the GBS and CIS for organizing the workshop, welcomed the participants, stressed the goals and then officially opened the workshop. 39 relevant organizations responsible for the different environmental areas were invited, of which 30 actually participated in the workshop. In most cases two participants from each organization attended the event.

The topics presented at the workshop and the respective presenters were as follows:

- International and regional environmental statistics and indicators – Ms. Reena Shah – UNSD and Mr. Andreas Talea – GBS Suriname
- The need for/uses of national environment statistics – Ms. Annette Tjon Sie Fat – CIS
- The need for Environment Research and Statistics in Suriname – Ms. Gladys Wesenhagen – ADEK University-Faculty of Technology
- Environment Policy and Statistics in Suriname – Mr. Quan Tjon-Akon – Environmental Authority of Suriname (NIMOS)
- Overview of the contents of the draft publication – Mr. Andreas Talea – GBS

Four working groups were formed to discuss the chapters of the draft publication. A set of questions was used for guiding the working groups as well as an Excel file for collecting meta-data on additional indicators/variables according to different information items.

The data in the draft publication cover the main sectors that can have an impact on the environment in Suriname, namely: Demographic and Socio-economic Background, Air and Climate, Tourism, Transport, Environmental Health and Waste, Fresh Water, Energy and Minerals, Forestry, Coastal and Marine Resources, Land Use and Agriculture, and Biodiversity.

The available data refer to the latest available years. For time series, the GBS has tried to give data for the years 2004 up to 2008 and where available also for 2009. For previous years see the first three publications, namely “Selected Environmental Statistics, November 2002”, “Environmental Statistics, May 2006” and “Environmental Statistics, December 2008”.

The workshop raised awareness and understanding of international concepts and definitions as well as best practices in the field of environment statistics. It helped to collect additional information and relevant suggestions on indicators/variables and also to share experiences and knowledge about methods for dealing with the problem of data gaps. The findings of the workshop will be used to finalize the fourth Suriname Environmental Statistics Publication which is expected to be published in August 2010.

During this workshop there was good media coverage and opportunities to meet with the press to highlight the need for and uses of environment statistics in general, as well as to report on the successful achievements of Suriname and other countries in the CARICOM region in this complex and challenging field of statistics.

The GBS is thankful to all the persons and bodies, especially to UNSD, and all other participants who contributed to this workshop. Special thanks are also due to Conservation International Suriname for sponsoring this workshop.

## COUNTRY NEWS:

### Overview of Environment Statistics in Sweden

(Contributed by Viveka Palm, Statistics Sweden)

The demand for environment statistics is large both nationally and internationally. Ordinances, directives, conventions and research are driving the needs for environmental statistics. Two projects were implemented by Statistics Sweden with the aim to provide an overview of the sources and contents of environment statistics in Sweden. Two reports have been produced in Swedish but with English summaries.

#### Official Environmental Statistics

The first report captures environment statistics within the Official Statistical Act (2001:99). The report describes 12 different areas in official statistics along with a description of cooperation between authorities. It also contains a list of variables included as official environmental statistics.

The areas of official environmental statistics cover the following topics:

- Emissions (SEPA)
- Waste (SEPA)
- State of the environment (SEPA)
- The adaptation of environmental law (SEPA)
- Chemicals, sales and use (KemI)
- Environmental accounts (SCB)
- Sustainable development (SCB)
- Fertilizers and lime (SCB)
- Land use (SCB)
- Water use (SCB)

#### A wider perspective

In the second project statistics that lies outside the official environmental statistics are presented. Besides what the ordinance 2001:100 classifies as environmental statistics there is a whole range of additional statistics and information that are related to the environment and natural resources, such as fish statistics, energy statistics and transport statistics. It also investigates some of the statistics that are produced by other actors than authorities.

#### Water statistics

Within the area of water statistics and information (such as water chemistry, water use, waste water, groundwater and hydrology) the main actors are foremost the hydrological institute SMHI, Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU), the agricultural university SLU, SCB, SEPA, the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control (SMI) and the Swedish Water & Wastewater Association.

#### Biodiversity statistics

Different types of bird inventories are conducted by, among others, the Swedish Association for Ornithology, the Swedish Bird Survey and the Wild Animal Injury Centre. SLU is including in their database called Artdatabanken species close to extinction (so called red listed species). SLU is also responsible for the National Forest Inventory.

#### Human health and environmental damage

The Institute of Environment Medicine (IMM) is researching effects in human health related to environmental damage. KemI, the Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SSI) and SGU are all investigating different forms of chemicals and radiation in the natural environment. A database on pesticides is also available through the SLU web-site. The National Institute of Economic Research is researching how environmental damage affects the economy.

#### Dissemination of environment statistics

Environment statistics is diversified, with many areas and many statistical producers. For users it is not easy to get an overview and sometimes the data are not easy to access. All the different actors present their statistics or information differently. Common ways to present the information is through maps, PDF, text, or sometimes by Excel. An improvement of the current situation would be to collect and link statistics and its documentation to a joint website.

#### References

Source: Statistics Sweden, Background Facts, Regional and Environment Statistics 2008:2

*Environmental statistics in Sweden, an overview. An overview of environmental statistics according to ordinance 2001:100.* [http://www.scb.se/Pages/PublishingCalendarViewInfo\\_259923.aspx?PublObjId=8946](http://www.scb.se/Pages/PublishingCalendarViewInfo_259923.aspx?PublObjId=8946)

Source: Statistics Sweden, Background Facts, Regional and Environment Statistics 2008:3

*Environmental statistics in Sweden, an overview. A wider approach – Environment related statistics outside the boundaries of official environmental statistics.* [http://www.scb.se/Pages/PublishingCalendarViewInfo\\_259923.aspx?PublObjId=8947](http://www.scb.se/Pages/PublishingCalendarViewInfo_259923.aspx?PublObjId=8947)

## RECENT EVENTS

### **Training Course on Environment Statistics (Bonn, Germany, 11-20 January 2010)**

UNSD has a well established collaboration with the InWent Centre for Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics in Bonn, a publicly funded Capacity Building Center in Germany. The specific area of UNSD and InWent collaboration is the provision of training and capacity building in basic environmental statistics and indicators for African countries. At the invitation of InWent a staff member from UNSD participated as a resource person for four days (11-14 January) during the classroom training on “Statistical Indicators for Environmental Policy in Africa 2009/2010” that was held in Bonn, Germany from 11 to 20 January 2010. The discussions focused, inter alia, on: the use of international data sources for environment statistics; challenges of international and national data collection in environment statistics; frameworks, definitions and classifications of environment statistics; harmonization of environmental indicator sets; and the establishment of environment statistics programmes at the national level.

### **Visit of Delegation from Niger to UNSD (New York, 27 January 2010)**

A delegation from Niger, led by the Director General of the Institut National de la Statistique, visited UNSD on 27 January 2010. Two staff members from the Environment Statistics Section met with the delegation. During the meeting, the delegates were briefed on UNSD’s ongoing work in the area of environment statistics. They also briefly introduced their work with the African Development Bank on developing environment statistics, and mentioned the newly formed Environment Statistics Unit in the Ministry of Environment. The Director General emphasized the importance of environment statistics and the many difficulties they are facing in developing environment statistics. The delegates requested technical assistance on environment statistics from UNSD.

### **Workshop on Environment Statistics (Accra, Ghana, 29-31 March 2010)**

The Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in collaboration with UNSD, organized a Workshop on Environment Statistics that was held in Accra, Ghana from 29 to 31 March 2010. The Workshop was attended by participants from National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment from 14 Member States of the ECOWAS region, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d’Economie Appliquée (ENSEA), ECOWAS, UNSD and two consultants. The main objectives of the Workshop were to: (a) carry out an in-depth review of selected methodology sheets for the set of environmental statistics and indicators adopted by the UNSD/UNEP/ECOWAS Workshop on Environment Statistics that was held in Abuja, Nigeria in May 2008; (b) discuss the outcomes of the missions that the two ECOWAS consultants carried out to assess the situation of environment statistics in selected ECOWAS Member States; and (c) discuss plans for the implementation of the Regional Environment Statistics Programme, including the finalization of the selected set of methodology sheets discussed at the Workshop, the further development of the remaining methodology sheets, and the plans for the preparation of an ECOWAS regional compendium on environment statistics.

The principal outcomes were that the Workshop: (i) adopted the methodology sheets for the majority of the indicators and identified those indicators where further work was needed to improve the methodology; and (ii) agreed on a core set of indicators for a pilot data collection to test the applicability of the indicators. A detailed work programme was developed for the planned activities and outputs after the Workshop which include: the finalization of the methodology sheets for the core set of indicators for which data collection will take place in 2010; the development of the methodology sheets for the non-core set of indicators; the establishment of a Regional Technical Committee on Environment Statistics; and the organization of a follow-up Workshop towards the end of 2010 to finalize the activities and discuss the preparation of a Compendium of Environment Statistics for the ECOWAS Region.

### **Meeting of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (Geneva, Switzerland, 3-4 May 2010)**

The Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators has been established to foster collaboration between national statistical offices and environmental ministries/agencies in the improvement of environment statistics for the production of environmental indicators in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South East Europe (SEE). The meeting, organized jointly by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UNSD, continued the review of the [Guidelines](#) on the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Discussions focussed on statistical classifications and definitions, data collection methods and procedures, effective models of inter-agency cooperation, and dissemination approaches. The participants selected the indicators for in-depth review at the next meeting of the Task Force in September 2010. The indicators will be used for reporting on the state of the environment in the EECCA and SEE countries for the next Pan-European State of the Environment Report.

For more information on the meeting and for copies of papers prepared by Task Force members see: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.05.envIRON.htm>.

## RECENT EVENTS

### European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Helsinki, Finland, 4-6 May 2010)

Data quality issues are a major concern in the field of environment statistics. One staff member from the UNSD Environment Statistics Section attended the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics held in Helsinki, Finland from 4 to 6 May 2010. The Conference consisted of three key speaker sessions, 39 contributed paper sessions with more than 170 papers presented and a round table. It covered various quality-related topics and issues: such as quality management frameworks, quality assessment, reporting on quality, communicating quality to users and satisfying user needs, perspectives and challenges for statistical quality, etc. The Conference was attended by more than 450 participants from 48 countries and many regional and international organisations.

The Conference offered participants an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences regarding various quality mechanisms developed for improving the collection and dissemination of national and international data and the opportunity to learn about and discuss current trends and new developments in statistical dissemination. The knowledge obtained from the Conference will help the UNSD Environment Statistics Section to improve the quality of its data collection and dissemination.

### Eurostat Directors Meeting on Environmental Statistics and Accounts (Luxembourg, 14-15 June 2010)

The Directors of Environmental Statistics and Accounts of the EU and EFTA countries met from 14 to 15 June 2010 in Luxembourg to discuss how to respond to new requirements created by recent communications and reports such as GDP and beyond, the Stiglitz Commission's report, the White Paper on Adapting to Climate Change, the Communication Europe 2020 and the European State of the Environment Report 2010. The new requirements have been considered a good opportunity to increase the understanding of the importance of environment statistics and get more support for ongoing and new programmes such as the improvement of basic data, the development and streamlining of environmental indicators, regional and spatial environment statistics, statistics on ecosystems and biodiversity, and environmental accounting. Reports were presented and discussed on progress made in the implementation of: (i) the Shared Information System; (ii) the Environmental Data Centres; and (iii) streamlining environmental indicators. The European Commission presented its work on composite environmental indices. The European Environment Agency summarized the EU 2010 Biodiversity Baseline Project. Presentations were made on statistical developments in the environmental domain and on the 2011 Eurostat work programme in the area of environment and related statistics.

UNSD participated in the meeting and presented its ongoing and planned activities in environment statistics and accounts, including the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and the revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA), and their synergy with European activities.

### Fifth Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (New York, 23-25 June 2010)

The Committee reviewed the progress made in the revision of the SEEA, with a focus on Volume I, which will be submitted to the Statistical Commission for its endorsement as an international standard in 2012. It discussed the relationship between the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the SEEA. It considered the application of the SEEA to respond to new challenges such as the measurement of issues related to climate change, green economic growth and other major policy initiatives.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- UNECE Joint Task Force (Geneva, Switzerland, 1-2 September 2010)
- CARICOM Workshop on Environment Statistics (Paramaribo, Suriname, 13-17 September 2010)
- IAOS Conference (Santiago, Chile, 20-22 October 2010)
- 16<sup>th</sup> London Group Meeting (Santiago, Chile, 25-28 October 2010)
- Expert Group Meeting on the Revision of the FDES (New York, 8-10 November 2010)



## POINT OF VIEW

### The user perspective: sustainable development and environment statistics

[Agenda 21](#), the global action plan on sustainable development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit, dedicated 14 (out of its 40) chapters to various environmental themes: atmosphere, land, forests, deserts, mountains, agriculture, biodiversity, biotechnology, oceans, freshwater, chemicals, and wastes. For each of these themes Agenda 21 outlined the basis for action, defined goals and objectives, and recommended necessary policy responses. In a certain sense, the structure of Agenda 21 contributed to the development of the statistical framework for collecting environmental and related socioeconomic indicators that was adopted by the Statistical Commission in 1995 for international data collection.

To measure progress towards achieving agreed objectives, define remaining hurdles and make informed decisions, high-quality statistics is needed. Indeed, this was noted in the final chapter of Agenda 21: [Information for decision-making](#).

The Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) is a part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs responsible for normative and analytical work, and technical cooperation with Member States in the field of sustainable development. For DSD's normative work environment statistics produced by UNSD is important in, for example, the ongoing activities on [indicators](#) of sustainable development.

Recent analytical work of DSD produced reports on themes that all had important environmental components: chemicals, mining, waste management, climate change, transport, renewable energy, or the small island developing states. DSD colleagues involved in analytical work faced a few common problems that mostly stem from the fact that the available data does not often meet the criteria of high quality statistics.

“DSD makes use of a variety of statistics, including environment statistics, in producing its biennial Trends in Sustainable Development reports to inform the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development”, said David O’Connor, Chief of DSD’s Policy, Analysis and Networks Branch. “We use those statistics to represent visually - through graphs, charts and maps - trends in key indicators which shed light on progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and subsequent intergovernmental decisions on sustainable development. One of the main challenges faced is in finding databases which are user-friendly, have reliable and consistent time-series data and at the same time have near-universal country coverage. There is no single source of data which can satisfy all needs for producing such an ambitious report, and once one begins relying on multiple data sources new problems arise - especially with respect to the definition of regional groupings. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that no two data sources are alike in their regional definitions. Finally, data are generally least available and least reliable for those countries for which a proper understanding of the sustainable development challenges faced is most important, namely, the least developed countries”.

According to Ms. Elena de Jesus, from DSD’s Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Unit, “SIDS have an ongoing problem with the statistical data collection and analysis necessary to present a clear and comprehensive account of their vulnerabilities, challenges, and achievements to the international community. For example, the SIDS Unit has produced a Secretary-General’s report for the Mauritius Strategy Review, which made substantial use of environment statistics, and we are in the process of completing a graphical publication, ‘Trends in Sustainable Development: Small Island Developing States,’ which focuses on climate change, natural disaster management, energy, tourism, and natural resources. For this report we have used several online statistical databases, including the World Bank Development Indicators, the UN MDG Database, FAO, IUCN, and EMDAT. It was particularly difficult to find data on climate change and its impacts, such as invasive species, area of coral reef ecosystems and percentage live cover, effects of sea level rise, and impacts on agriculture. Many other indicators had no data or large data gaps, especially with regard to renewable energy data”.

**envstats** is produced by the Environment Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).  
The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

Comments and contributions for inclusion in future issues should be sent to:

ENVSTATS

DC2-1418

2 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017

Fax: (1-212) 963 0623

E-mail: [envstats@un.org](mailto:envstats@un.org)