ISSUE 31
July 2012

envstats News and Notes

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

FOCUS:

Outcomes of the RIO+20 Conference – Implications for environment statistics

Rio+20 – final outcome document

IN THIS ISSUE

Twenty years after the **1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro** (Brazil), representatives from 191 United Nations member states and observers, 70 Heads of States or Government, and representatives of private sector and civil society convened in Rio de Janeiro, from 13-22 June 2012, for the **Rio+20 - United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.** The negotiations in Rio culminated with the adoption of the final outcome document for Rio+20 on 22 June 2012. This outcome document, **"The Future We Want"**, with its 53 pages and 283 paragraphs, is organized into six sections: Our common vision; Renewing political commitment; Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; Institutional framework for sustainable development; Framework for action and follow-up; and Means of implementation. It is the result of a long process of negotiation that started in early January 2012 with the publication of the first document (The Zero Draft) and continued during the "informal-informal rounds of negotiations" (April-June 2012). As pointed out by the Conference President Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), Rio+20 has been the most participatory summit in history and with its satisfactory conclusion represented a global expression of democracy.

An insight into the document: statistical language of interest

Throughout the long process of negotiations prior to and during the Conference, the need to strengthen the monitoring of sustainable development, through improved data collection and the establishment of indicators, has been stressed. Of the three pillars of sustainable development, monitoring the advancement towards environmental sustainability is the weakest. Therefore, due to the importance of assessing progress in environmental sustainability and to target the achievements in the green economy, the availability and quality of statistics, in particular environment statistics, is of utmost importance. The final document contains various implications to the work of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and specific reference to the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). The following are the main points which have statistical implications.

1. Measurement beyond gross domestic production (GDP)

It is well understood that economic indicators such as GDP are not designed to be completely comprehensive measures of prosperity and well-being. There is a growing need to develop and combine statistics and indicators beyond GDP that are more inclusive of environmental and social aspects in order to cover the full realm of sustainable development. In order to strengthen the measurement of the environmental pillar that would contribute to measuring beyond GDP, comparable and regularly collected environment statistics are required. While large amounts of environmental data do exist, there are still many data gaps. When data are available, they are often dispersed and not systematic, and consequently need to be coordinated and translated into meaningful environmental statistics and indicators within national statistical systems. The Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and the Core Set of Environment Statistics being produced by UNSD (see article below), will provide appropriate tools for assisting countries in this regard. In addition, the

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System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework provides a tool for integrating environment and economic statistics. The UNSC, which is the governing body of international statistical activities, has been requested to play a lead role in identifying measures to complement GDP by including social and environmental aspects.

- In the outcome document, it was noted that "we recognize the need for broader measures to complement GDP in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard we request the UNSC, (…) to launch a programme of work in this area (…)" (*para. 38*).

2. *Strengthening of environmental information, environmental data and indicators*

Mention of data and information, and in particular, environmental data is frequent in the text and some important references are highlighted below. UNSD's work in the development of concepts, methods and classifications, as well as in the collection and dissemination of internationally comparable environment statistics, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), will be of paramount importance in contributing to these requests.

- While addressing the opportunities and challenges, as well as the costs and benefits of green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, "(…) using the best available scientific data and analysis (…)" was stressed (*para.63*).
- With regard to strengthening the institutional framework of sustainable development the delegates resolved to "promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development (…)" (*para.76-g*).
- Under the high-level political forum that is planned to be established, it was noted that the forum could "enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to strengthening ongoing efforts of capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries" (*para.85-l*).
- With regard to text on the environmental pillar, the General Assembly was invited to adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP in several areas. The relevant areas mentioned are: "Promote a strong science-policy interface, building on (...) the Global Environment Outlook (…) aimed at bringing together information and assessment to support informed decision-making" (*para.88-d*); and "Disseminate and share evidence-based environmental information (…) on critical as well as emerging environmental issues" (*para.88-e*).
- Regarding regional, national, subnational and local levels, the Conference "recognized that integrated social, economic and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, is important in decision-making processes" (*para.98*).
- In focusing on action and follow-up, under the thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues (*paras. 104-244*) there was mention in various places (e.g., in oceans and desertification) of the value and importance of monitoring and observation, as well as of the collection, analysis and use of data and indicators.

3. Improving geospatial information

Information about the changing environment can be enhanced when geospatial information is embedded into environment statistics. Geographic considerations are uniquely important to environment statistics because most environmental issues are inherently location-related. Systematic approaches to the collection, organization, dissemination and use of geospatial information are critical for understanding the relationship between humans and the environment in specific locations. The development and promotion of geospatial information is another important area of work carried out by UNSD. The outcome document reflected the Conference's acknowledgment of the importance of geospatial information. The following illustrates references to such information.

- Under the thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues, and specifically with regard to disaster risk reduction, the Conference "recognized the importance of comprehensive hazard and risk assessments, and knowledge- and information-sharing, including reliable geospatial information" (*para.187*).
- In the area of technology, the Conference "recognized the importance of space-technology-based data, in situ monitoring and reliable geospatial information for sustainable development (…)". The Conference also "recognized the need to support developing countries in their efforts to collect environmental data" (*para.274*).

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4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Beyond 2015

The Conference conceded that additional considerations should be directed to the SDGs which are fundamental for pursuing focused and coherent monitoring of sustainable development. The SDGs should be in line with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. The international community will organize itself in a process to determine the SDG goals and targets, while UNSD will contribute significantly to the development of the most suitable indicators. The new process can build upon UNSD's previous involvement in monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in particular with its lead role in managing the MDG indicator database, as well as contributing to the availability of environmental data and statistics to support MDG Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. The related references in the outcome document are below. The Conference recognized that:

- "progress towards the achievement of the goals needs to be assessed and accompanied by targets and indicators (...)" (*para. 250*).
- "there is a need for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development (...)" and "requested the relevant bodies of the UN system, (...) to support the regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort. (...)" (*para.251*).

Looking to the future

Although the political process of the Rio+20 Conference negotiations has not always been easy over the two years of preparation, the results of the outcome document are extremely positive with regard to acknowledging the need to strengthen the production of environment statistics. Indeed environment statistics that are reliable and comparable are at the core of sound policy and decision-making with regard to sustainable development. The role of UNSD in strengthening environment statistics and integrating them with social and economic statistics will be fundamental in future processes since they will contribute to the improvement of monitoring and measuring the environmental pillar of sustainable development.

UNSD NEWS:

Progress in drafting the revised Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES)

Drafting of the revised FDES has continued following the unanimous approval expressed by the 2012 Statistical Commission on its general direction. In this segment of the drafting process, suggestions that were made during and after the November 2011 Expert Group meeting were taken on board and reflected in the revision of the relevant chapters. Upon completion, the revised version of Chapters 1 -3 were circulated to members of the Expert Group at the end of April. Work on the draft continued with the development of the fourth and fifth chapters that were circulated to the Expert Group in early July for comments prior to the global consultation planned for later this year. Following is a brief indication of the content of the chapters that were circulated.

Content of the new draft

Chapter 1 presents a broad description of the domain of environment statistics, its scope and context, and outlines its usefulness as a tool for policy-makers and specific user groups as well as for the public at large. It also addresses the institutional dimension of environment statistics.

The second chapter introduces the main concepts underpinning the FDES and delineates its structure. At the most basic level, the conceptual foundation is set out as the environment, the human sub-system and the interactions between them. This chapter identifies six major components of the FDES as follows: environmental conditions and quality; environmental resources and their use; emissions, residuals and waste; disasters and extreme events; human habitat and environmental health; and environment protection, management and engagement. Additionally, the chapter traces relationships between the FDES and alternative approaches for understanding and organizing environmental information, such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), the natural capital approach and the Driving forces-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework.

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Chapter 3 details the three-tiered structure of components, sub-components and statistical topics that serves to organize the framework, providing descriptive explanations for each of the categories that is identified.

The fourth chapter presents the Core Set of Environment Statistics which is intended to serve as a comparable minimum set of environment statistics that most countries will be able to produce.

The fifth chapter has been developed to address specific cross-cutting environmental issues. In this chapter selected topics such as climate change, water and energy are explored and schemas for the organization of the related statistics are presented.

Moving forward

The global consultation which is planned for September 2012 will include Chapters 1-5 and embrace all countries. In addition, a pilot of the Core Set will take place with a small group of countries at varying stages of development with regard to their environment statistics programmes. Drafting of the entire document is expected to conclude later this year, in time for presentation at the next meeting of the Statistical Commission in February 2013. UNSD is also developing an implementation plan which will outline steps and provide tools to assist countries in employing the FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics to develop their environment statistics programmes.

UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2012 on Environment Statistics

The UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2012 on Environment Statistics will soon be sent 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). This will be the seventh round of UNSD's biennial environment statistics data collection mandated by the Statistical Commission. 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 first sent to the heads of the respondent organizations.

Following from the previous rounds, the Questionnaire will consist of two sections on 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. The blank questionnaire will be available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.

There will be a few changes from the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire 2010 on Environment Statistics which will be described in the 2012 Questionnaire. 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.

The Statistical Commission addressed environment-related issues at its forty-third session (2012)

The Statistical Commission, at its forty-third session held from 28 February - 2 March this year, addressed a number of issues relating to the environment. The relevant discussions were organized under the agenda items: "Environment statistics", "Environmental-economic accounting" and "Statistics for economies based on natural resources". Following are brief outlines of the outcomes on each of these topics.

Environment Statistics

A report was delivered on the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES). The Commission approved the general direction taken so far in revising the FDES and supported the finalization process that was outlined for the near future. This includes discussion with international experts as well as a global consultation with member States. The Commission also endorsed a pilot process for implementation of the Core Set of Environment Statistics, which forms an integral part of the FDES. Many countries have already expressed willingness to participate in this pilot. Finally, the Commission acknowledged the need for continued capacity building in the implementation and development of environment statistics at the national level.

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In addition to the formal agenda item on environment statistics a side-event was also held on this topic. During this informal session, Ms. Eszter Horvath, Chief of the Environment and Energy Statistics Branch of UNSD, introduced an audience of some 50 Statistical Commission participants to the major elements of the newly developed FDES and responded to questions regarding the details that were presented. This presentation, which was very well received, was chaired by Ms. Julie Haas of Statistics Norway.

Environmental-economic accounting

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework was presented for adoption by the Commission. The Commission agreed to adopt the 2012 SEEA central framework as the initial version of the international standard on environmental-economic accounting, which will be subject to further revision. Additional work must be done on measurements in specific areas of the Central Framework. The Commission requested that a process, including a comprehensive research agenda, be put in place for updating this standard. It also urged the Committee of Experts, charged with the development and review of the SEEA, to forge ahead with laying out a detailed strategy for its global and regional implementation. In support of this implementation programme, it requisitioned international agencies and other donors to make resources available for the technical assistance to advance the basic economic and environment statistics that would make implementation possible. The Commission also took note of the work done in the area of SEEA Energy and encouraged global consultation prior to the finalization of the draft that will be presented for adoption by the Commission.

Ulaanbaatar group on statistics for economies based on natural resources

A joint report was prepared by Australia and Mongolia recommending the establishment of an Ulaanbaatar Group on Statistics for Economies Based on Natural Resources. The setting up of this new City Group was motivated by an attempt to generate better information on activities based on natural resources. The growth in many countries of industries based on natural resources and the associated impact of extractive activities on the environment and society, along with increasing demand for consumption of these natural resources, has stimulated this need for better information.

The immediate objectives of the City Group are to address the statistical issues of monitoring the mining sector, assess its contributions to economic development and its effects on the social and environmental sectors, and evaluate the import and export factors affecting this economic domain. These objectives are to be achieved by providing the necessary guidelines, principles and recommendations for the statistics to be collected, using the most advanced techniques, as far as these are applicable. It is hoped that the City Group will also provide a forum for the exchange of experiences among national statistical offices.

The Commission welcomed this initiative, agreeing with the creation of the City Group. It asked the group to take into consideration the positive and negative impacts on society and on the environment in addition to its task of addressing the contributions of the mining sector. It urged the City Group to provide opportunities for wide participation from countries and international organizations. It also recommended coordination with the work of other city groups such as the London Group on Environmental Accounting and the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, to avoid overlap and duplication of effort.

Recurring theme

The call for coordination and national involvement in the proposed statistical activities was a common thread running through discussions at the Commission. For all three of the topics in this area, the Commission emphasized the need to ensure cooperation and sharing of experiences in the implementation of the programmes that were discussed, whether through the provision of resources, participation in a pilot, global consultation or other means.

UNSD releases two new publications on water statistics and accounts

Two new publications have recently been released by UNSD on the subject of water statistics and accounts. They are the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEA-Water) and the International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS).

SEEA-Water

The objective of SEEA-Water is to further the standardization of concepts and methods in environmental-economic accounting for water and to enable consistent analysis of the contribution of water to the economy. SEEA-Water is a satellite system of the 2008 SNA and shares some of the definitions and classifications of the SNA in covering the important interactions between the environment and the economy. This publication provides a standard set of tables that countries are encouraged to compile using the concepts and methods that it describes. SEEA-Water elaborates and expands on the guidance that is provided in the SEEA 2003. It can be accessed on the UNSD website at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seeaw/.

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IRWS

UNSD has developed the IRWS in an effort to assist countries to establish and strengthen information systems for water as part of their integrated water resources management. This publication was adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2010. It sets out an agreed list of data items that cover a broad range of the water statistics that are needed for the compilation of SEEA-Water. It also provides new guidelines intended to support the collection, compilation and dissemination of these water statistics, while ensuring their international comparability. Users of this publication are given necessary information to allow them to produce coherent and consistent indicators over time. To ensure that it can be applied widely, care has been taken in its data recommendations to reflect the needs of different communities. The IRWS can be found on the UNSD Website at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/irws.

Collaboration between UNSD and the Land and Water Division, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The Land and Water Division of FAO (NRL) developed AQUASTAT, which is FAO's global information system on water and agriculture (http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/main/index.stm). UNSD has been collaborating with FAO-AQUASTAT for several years in the collection of water statistics with the objective of avoiding duplication and promoting the harmonization of concepts and definitions used.

In 2004, at the request of the Statistical Commission, UNSD established the Inter-secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics. As part of this, a Sub-group on Water Statistics was created in 2005 by UNSD, of which FAO-AQUASTAT was an active member. The mandate of the Sub-group was to foster a close collaboration between the parties involved in the collection and compilation of statistics on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of freshwater resources and their uses.

Within the framework of the collaboration between UNSD and FAO-AQUASTAT particularly, in July and August 2011 several meetings were held between FAO and UNSD staff at UNSD Headquarters in New York. The main focus of the meetings was to discuss, inter alia, the harmonization of data on water statistics (resources, abstraction, use and supply) between FAO-AQUASTAT and UNSD. During the meetings, discussions were held on: concepts, definitions and classifications; actual data received or compiled by the two institutions; and metadata. Henceforth UNSD and FAO have continued the communication through regular exchange of information on methodologies, data and metadata.

This collaboration has led to: a better understanding of the main concepts and definitions underlying water statistics; improved data quality; some revisions in the metadata for the MDG Goal 7 indicator on "Proportion of Total Water Resources Used" for which FAO is the reporting agency; as well as the production of a document on Interagency Water Statistics Harmonization (extended to other organizations active in the collection of water statistics) which is available on the UN-Water Key Water Indicator Portal (http://www.unwater.org/statistics_KWIP.html). It is expected that this very fruitful collaboration will continue and improve the understanding and quality of water statistics between international organizations, which ultimately leads to better data in the countries that are served by the organizations.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS:

UNEP GEO5 and 'Measuring Progress' reports - focus on data gaps

(Contributed by Jaap van Woerden, UNEP)

UNEP's flagship assessment report series – Global Environment Outlook – provides a comprehensive analysis of the state, trends and outlook of the global environment. The latest report in the GEO series – GEO-5 – was launched in Rio de Janeiro on 6 June 2012, right after World Environment Day, and two weeks before the main Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. The GEO-5 report is accompanied by an earlier produced illustrative publication on major changes since the first Rio Conference in 1992 ('Keeping track of our changing environment', see Envstats issue 30), as well as by a new summary report on progress towards global environmental goals: 'Measuring progress – environmental goals and gaps'.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS:

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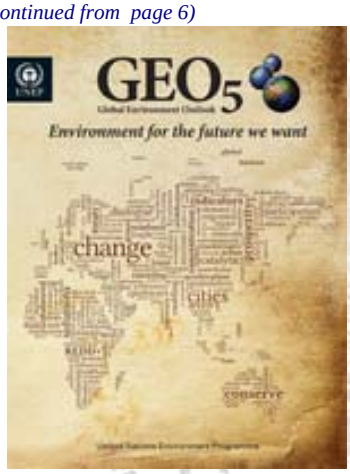
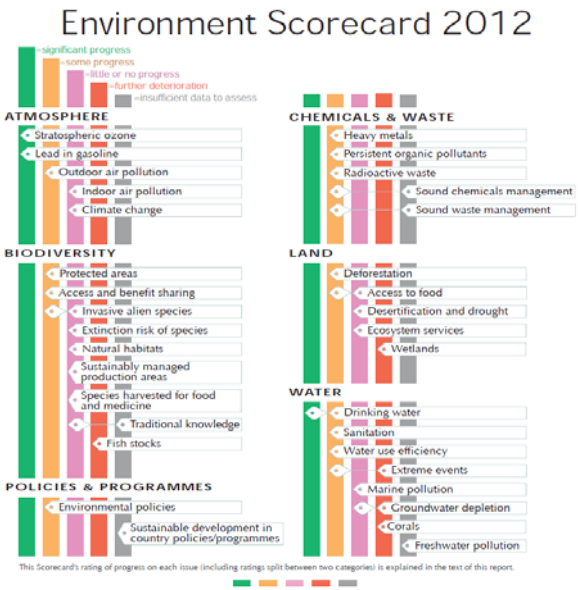


GEO-5 not only provides a comprehensive and up-to-date report on the state of the global environment, but also analyzes major internationally agreed environmental goals and provides examples of promising policy options and responses to help speed-up realization of those goals. The report shows that out of the 90 goals analyzed, some progress was shown in 40 goals, including the expansion of protected areas, such as national parks, and efforts to reduce deforestation. Little or no progress was detected for 24 goals – including climate change, fish stocks, desertification and drought. Further deterioration was posted for eight goals including the state of the world's coral reefs, **while no assessment could be made of 14 other goals due to a lack of environmental data**.

In a chapter on data needs, the report concludes that **scientifically credible data on the environment – in particular time series on such issues as freshwater quantity and quality, groundwater depletion, ecosystem services, loss of natural habitat, land degradation, and chemicals and waste are a major handicap** in developing evidence-based policies and the supporting environment statistics. Environment statistics, mostly collected or compiled by national statistical offices, are one of the most important sources of information for assessment reports like GEO-5, but **global and regional reports from the United Nations and other agencies regularly show data gaps, or use old data or estimates. Official environment statistics is still an emerging field and in many countries their production is hindered by deficiencies in the quantity and quality of environmental data, from which environment statistics are produced.** In addition, countries often use different approaches to collect environmental data and process it into official environment statistics, making comparisons difficult. This highlights **the need for capacity development to support the production of official environment statistics and improved regularity in monitoring, especially in developing countries,** to allow comparisons across time, nations and regions. Also of high priority is the coordination at the country level of existing – if fragmented – environmental data; improved accessibility to these data and statistics for a range of potential users, for example on the internet; and **linking these environmental data with official environment statistics that are used for policy making.**

In an accompanying report, called 'Measuring Progress - environmental goals and gaps', UNEP has summarized the progress towards the international environmental goals analyzed in GEO-5, while **indentifying major gaps both in the goals themselves as well as in the environmental statistics and indicators that are needed to track progress towards them**. The fundamental question is why the aims and goals of these policy instruments have often fallen far short of their original ambition and intentions. One possible reason is that many of the goals are simply not specific enough and lack numerical values; the few goals that are specific and measurable appear to have a much better record of success. These include goals to phase out lead in gasoline, ozone depleting substances (ODS) and certain persistent organic pollutants (POPs), specific Millennium Development Goal targets calling to halve the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation, and targets to increase the number and extent of protected areas. Indeed, even when measurable targets have been set but not actually met, they have usually led to positive change and often to significant change. The vast majority of goals, however, lack specific targets and are therefore difficult to track at all. In addition, **many targets lack the environmental statistics and indicators needed to measure progress** - global freshwater quality or chemicals and waste being prominent examples.



FAO News - Database of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture

(Contributed by Carola Fabi, FAO)

Developing countries, where agriculture represents a key driver for development, have limited capacity to report their GHG data and, as a consequence, not enough visibility in the climate policy debate and only limited access to climate finance facilities. Regardless of their limited capacity, they will be obliged to report their GHG emissions to UNFCCC at two-year intervals starting in 2013.

The Climate Change and Tenure Division and the Statistics Division of FAO are collaborating to fill this information gap and support member countries to develop the reports. This was possible thanks to the FAO Monitoring and Assessment of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Mitigation Potential in Agriculture (MAGHG), a project funded by Germany and Norway. The key output of the project is building a global inventory of GHG emissions from all agricultural activities, including crop production, livestock, forestry, fisheries and land use changes.

The new database on GHG emissions is based on data from FAOSTAT and the Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) as well as on information on land-use change officially reported by countries. It applies the simplest, yet robust default Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) methodology (Tier 1) to calculate the GHG emissions associated with every activity from 1990 to 2010. The result is a country-specific database with global coverage, methodologically consistent and continuously updated from FAOSTAT data. Building this activity on FAO data also ensures long-term sustainability with regular updates of the estimates.

The actual work has already progressed considerably. Currently over 75% of global GHG emissions from agriculture including Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) are covered. The database will be disseminated using the new FAOSTAT platform and the launch is planned for the second half of 2012.

For more information, visit: http://www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/en/

Eurostat – Directors' Meeting on Environmental Statistics and Accounts (DIMESA)

A DIMESA Workshop was held in Luxembourg on 23 April 2012 on Environmental Sustainability and Resource Efficiency. The Workshop discussed the various international initiatives related to the measurement of Progress, Well-being and Sustainable Development; the importance of Sustainable Development Indicators; the need for indicators to measure resource efficiency; OECD's work on Green Growth and its headline indicators; and approaches to track the trend in the use of the natural capital base. In separate sessions issues related to productivity, biodiversity, ecosystem and stock measurements were discussed. The Workshop concluded that: (i) the different frameworks in use overlap but they provide opportunity for coherence and synergies to address policy needs; (ii) monitoring productivity under its different aspects is a key challenge for indicators; and (iii) the role of the statistical system should be established in relation with ecosystems, biodiversity and stocks, despite this is going beyond its scope in many cases.

The DIMESA was held in Luxembourg on 24 and 25 April 2012. The meeting discussed plans to extend the Regulation on European Environmental Accounts with new modules on environmental expenditure accounts, environmental goods and services sector accounts and energy accounts. Participants discussed issues related to: the overall quality of environment statistics and possible improvements; progress in streamlining environmental indicators; and thematic issues related to waste, forestry, agro-environmental statistics, regional and spatial information. The first draft of the 2013 work programme was also presented to the participants. The meeting was informed about the activities of OECD, EEA and UNSD in the field of environmental statistics and accounts.

The DIMESA was informed about progress made on the revision of the UN Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and the Core Set of Environment Statistics that is being carried out by UNSD with the help of an Expert Group. Eurostat, EEA and seven senior experts from the EU Member States actively participate in this work. The participants welcomed the framework approach and agreed that the FDES will help establish networks of producers of environmental information and structure the dialogue between the producers and users of environment statistics. The FDES was considered a framework to identify sectoral (agriculture, energy, transport, trade, health etc) statistics that are important for deriving environment statistics. Eurostat will remain actively involved in the FDES revision process.

CARICOM continues to support the development of environment statistics

(Contributed by Philomen Harrison, CARICOM Secretariat)

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat continues to support the development of environment statistics in its member countries. Following a Training Workshop that was held in September 2011 and which was supported by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the CARICOM Secretariat continued to collect data for its third regional publication on CARICOM Environment in Figures 2009. Data have been requested from member countries as well as from regional organizations that compile relevant data in areas such as tourism and health.

The CARICOM Secretariat is also receiving support for the compilation of environment statistics under a Project entitled "Caribbean Hub Capacity Building - Multi-lateral Environment Agreements/ African Caribbean and Pacific" (MEA/ACP). The focus of this project is on the monitoring of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The CARICOM Secretariat will be able to visit selected countries in the Community that are party to this convention with the primary aim of strengthening of inter-agency coordination to fill the gaps in environment statistics in the area of biodiversity measurement.

However, based on the Action Plan that was produced out of the Training Workshop of September 2011, the CARICOM Secretariat will be following up the activities included in this action plan as a means of encouraging countries to continue working to fill the data gaps across all topics in environment statistics. The CARICOM Secretariat will also receive support from the European Union to develop environment statistics under the Tenth European Development Fund, which is scheduled to commence in July 2012. The region looks forward to continued support from UNSD in its efforts to strengthen capacity in its member countries to produce basic data on the environment.

UN ECLAC - Strengthening environmental statistics and indicators in the Caribbean

(Contributed by ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean)

Since 2011, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, with the assistance of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), has been implementing a research project entitled "Development of Economic Frameworks in Support of an Assessment of the Economic and Social Impacts of Climate Change in the Caribbean". The research, which is regional in scope, involves collecting national level data from sixteen countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. This data will then be used to conduct regional econometric analyses on six themes: agriculture, coastal and marine environment, energy, health, tourism and water.

The data collected will also be used by ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean to further strengthen and enhance existing regional databases on environmental statistics, particularly CEPALSTAT – the ECLAC managed statistical database. CEPALSTAT houses social, economic and environmental statistical data and indicators pertaining to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

There is a pressing need to address existing data gaps and improve access to Caribbean-specific statistics, both within and outside of CEPALSTAT. As such, data collected from the climate change research will serve to populate the Caribbean data in CEPALSTAT. ECLAC Subregional Headquarters is committed, through its subsequent work, to continue updating the region's environmental statistical database. It recognizes that access to national level data is essential to informing policy makers on the most appropriate action to take in addressing the sustainable development needs of Caribbean Small Island Developing States.

EEA-ESCWA-UNSD Workshop on Water Accounts and Statistics for Mediterranean Countries

(Contributed by Wafa Aboul Hosn, UN-ESCWA)

In the framework of the European Union (EU) funded project "Towards a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the European Neighbourhood" (ENPI-SEIS project) implemented by the European Environment Agency (EEA), and the follow up on the implementation of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) project on building capacities in environment statistics, indicators and accounts (2007-2010), the EEA, UNSD and UN-ESCWA held a Workshop on Water Accounts and Statistics for Mediterranean Countries at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon, 20-22 March 2012. Four Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) attended the meeting, with four participants from each country representing the National Statistical Offices and the Ministry of Environment and Water.

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The goals of the workshop were to explain how water accounts and statistics can be used for fact based policy making and to provide guidance to the participants, through hands-on examples, on how to implement water accounts and statistics in their countries according to SEEA-Water and IRWS, as well as using the SEIS principles. Using available data provided by the countries, the workshop also focused on how to establish and/or strengthen the coordination mechanisms for the implementation of water accounts and statistics in the countries; and to identify the key steps in the preparation of a statistical programme to complete water accounts and statistics.

At the end of the workshop, countries agreed on the importance of completing the water accounts in their countries due to their importance, and established a work plan with a schedule for each country on how to complete the accounts. The last day of the workshop entailed a field visit to the water treatment plant in Lebanon that treats and disinfects potable water that feed Beirut. Participants and organizers were able to gain knowledge on the different steps of the water treatment process and have access to water-related statistics.

Additional information about the workshop is available on the ENPI-SEIS Website at: http://enpi-seis.ew.eea.europa.eu/project-activities/data-and-indicators/eea-unsd-un-escwa_workshop-water-statistics-and-accounts/ and on the ESCWA website at: http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1766e

UN-ESCAP - Plans in environment statistics

(Contributed by Hitomi Rankine, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP)

Improvement of environment statistics will be one of the issues for discussion by leaders of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific at an upcoming meeting. More specifically, the Committee on Statistics of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the highest level forum of official statistics in the region, will review recent developments in the area of environment statistics at global, regional and national levels, including the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, at its third session scheduled to take place from 12 to 14 December 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Committee will also consider approaches to strengthen environment statistics in the region taking into account policy challenges such as resource constraints and climate change.

Joint UNECE/EUROSTAT/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development

(Contributed by Vania Etropolska, UN-ECE)

In 2009, the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group 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 further develop the framework.

The Task Force is currently finalizing the report. Progress has been made in several main directions. First, along with monitoring the economic, environmental, human and social capital left to the future generations, the report also takes into account the well-being of 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.

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 entitled "Measuring the Progress of Societies".

The final report will be consulted with the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) member countries in spring next year and is planned to be submitted to the CES plenary session in June 2013.

[1] http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/03.03f.e.htm

REGIONAL NEWS:

UNECE Activities on Production of Environmental Indicators to Further Strengthen Environmental Reporting

(Contributed by Vania Etropolska, ECE Statistical Division)

Close attention to environmental issues has increased the demand for high quality environment statistics to strengthen environmental monitoring. In response, the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians launched a Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators in 2009. 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).

Two meetings of the Joint Task Force are planned this year. The first one took place on 4-6 July 2012 in Geneva. The meeting reviewed 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 www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.07.environ.html. The second meeting will also take place in Geneva from 29 October to 1 November 2012.

The UNECE has implemented a UN Development Account project on environmental sustainability early this year. Four workshops are planned to be organized under the project. The first workshop, organized jointly with Eurostat and the EEA, was held on 11-13 April 2012 and focused on how to produce high-quality, harmonized and timely statistics on waste in the EECCA countries. In particular, countries 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 on the UNECE website at: www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.04.environ.html.

UNECE Task Force on Climate Change Related Statistics

(Contributed by Vania Etropolska, ECE Statistical Division)

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 the international level. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) supported the work.

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 emissions inventory producers for source data from national statistical systems. More information about the Task Force is available at: www.unece.org/stats/ToS.html.

The Task Force includes 15 members from the European Environment Agency (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.

Towards a Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS) in the European Neighbourhood - the ENPI SEIS Project

(Contributed by Cecile Roddier-Quefelec, European Environment Agency)

The 2012 work plan, organised around the three pillars of a Shared Environmental Information Systems (content, infrastructure and governance), supports the SEIS developments in both ENPI East and South regions through country specific and regional capacity building activities. Following the round of ENPI-SEIS country visits held in 2011, the Country Reports, (most of which are now available on the ENPI-SEIS portal) support EEA in identifying further regional, sub-regional as well as country specific activities and help to measure each country's progress towards SEIS implementation. In addition, comparative regional overviews, focusing on SEIS developments in both East and South regions, are under preparation and will be published on the project website in the near future. Agreement on development of regional core sets of indicators for both regions in line with the revised EEA Core Set of Indicators is a priority action for 2012, as well as support to a trial delivery of data.

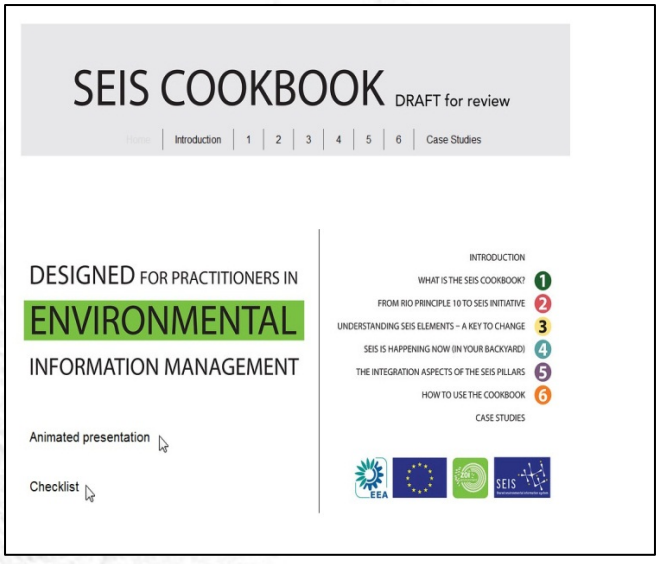
SEIS Cookbook

(Contributed by Cecile Roddier-Quefelec, European Environment Agency)

As reiterated at the ENPI-SEIS events, SEIS is aiming to improve the collection, exchange and use of environmental data and information. It is a unifying concept that offers a model, process, methods and tools to take advantage of new technical opportunities. Through use of available data for multiple purposes, SEIS allows for a reduction in data collection costs as well as in the administrative burden of the reporting process. It also helps to support national and international reporting obligations and keep the public informed. It is more than just an electronic information system – it is a long-term process for improving the sharing and re-use of environmental information. SEIS is based on seven principles stating that environmental information should be:

1. Managed as close as possible to its source.
2. Collected once, and shared with others for many purposes.
3. Readily available to easily fulfill reporting obligations.
4. Easily accessible to all users.
5. Accessible to enable comparisons at the appropriate geographical scale, and citizen participation.
6. Fully available to the general public, and at the national level in the relevant national language(s).
7. Supported through common, free open software standards.

The 'SEIS cookbook' is a guidance document aiming to gather in a systematic way the latest developments and initiatives in the field of access and sharing environmental information taking place, at both country and organisations levels (EU, EEA, Eionet, ENPI countries).



A draft on-line version is available at the following address: http://seiscookbook.net .

The 'SEIS cookbook' is organised around different sections including introduction, background to the cookbook, history of the development of SEIS, explanation of the elements and structure of SEIS and practical examples on how to implement the concept of Shared Environmental Information System.

The bulk of the 'cookbook' is devoted to case studies which show national and international implementation of SEIS elements, including at the EEA. These examples were collectively used to identify an emerging set of common trends, methods, tools and lessons which then have been integrated into the 'SEIS checklist'. The checklist can be used as a self-assessment tool to measure progress and identify areas that need further development.

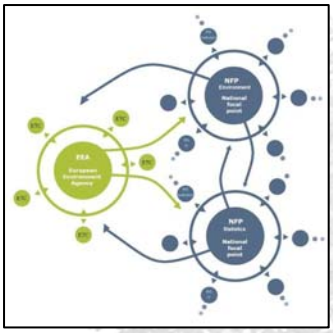
The 'SEIS cookbook' is an electronic, living document, and will be continuously updated with new examples as technology develops and new systems to support sharing of environmental information are introduced.

The draft is open for review and once finalised the 'cookbook' will be translated to French, Russian and Arabic. We welcome any further good practice examples from countries as well as comments on the guide itself. If you have any input to the 'cookbook', please contact us at: enpi-seis@eea.europa.eu.

REGIONAL NEWS:

ENPI-SEIS Working Groups on Environmental Indicators and Information Technology

(Contributed by Cecile Roddier-Quefelec, European Environment Agency)



Working groups on Environmental Indicators and Information Technology for both ENPI South and East regions were established in early 2012 with a view to gather specific knowledge and make progress in the environmental data, indicators and IT infrastructure. The ENPI-SEIS National Focal Points have coordinated the nomination of the representatives for each of the Working Groups. These include one participant from the statistical and one participant from the environmental community from each country.

The objective of the **Working Group on Environmental Indicators** for the ENPI South countries is, whilst focusing on selected indicators at the heart of the countries' pilot exercises to advance on SEIS developments, to also identify and develop an articulated list of potential indicators which could provide a consistent baseline of information from across the region to measure and compare progress made under the Horizon 2020 initiative thus supporting the process of regular reporting on the Mediterranean. The first meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Indicators took place on 18 April 2012 in Barcelona, Spain and agreed on some key indicators that will support the process of regular reporting on the Mediterranean.

As part of the Horizon 2020 initiative to depollute the Mediterranean, the **3rd H2020 Review, Monitoring and Research** subgroup took place on 4-5 June 2012 in Copenhagen, Denmark, gathering around 30 experts from the Southern Mediterranean and West Balkan partner countries. The RMR validated the indicator development process and the outcomes of the Working Group on Environmental Indicators, and expressed support to the work of the WG on Environmental Indicators in assessing the data availability and the development of detailed indicators factsheets.

The aim of the **Working Group on Information Technology** is to facilitate the future dataflow, by working in close cooperation with the National Focal Points and the members of the Working group on Environmental Indicators. The Working Group on IT would have a key role in assessing the situation in the countries, specifying possible problems in accessing necessary data for the core set of indicators (CSI) being developed by the Working Group on Environmental Indicators and agreeing on technical solutions for access to data in a sustainable common structure and format in line with SEIS principles. Two meetings of the Working Group on IT already took place:

A calendar of upcoming events and more information on the ENPI-SEIS Project is available at http://enpi-seis.ew.eea.europa.eu

COUNTRY NEWS:

Developments in environment statistics in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

(Contributed by Khamis Raddad, National Bureau of Statistics, UAE)

The National Bureau of Statistics of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has recognized the importance of environment statistics since its establishment, and it has adopted in its organizational structure a department spe-cialized in Agriculture and Environment Statistics. This department promotes knowledge and awareness of environment statistics among practitioners in the field of environment within the UAE and develops methodologies for environment sta-tistics which fit the UAE situation. In addition, it collects environmental data from administrative records and through field surveys in order to provide information and statistical data for decision makers, planners, researchers and those who are interested in environment affairs.

The National Bureau of Statistics published the first Compendium of Environment Statistics for the UAE. The main topics covered by this compendium are:

- General Information including Climate and Demographic Characteristics
- Water Resources, Water Reserves, Water Production from Special Authorities, Ground Water, Desalinated Water and Water Demand
- Air Emissions and Air Quality Statistics, and Transportation Statistics
- Waste Statistics
- Natural Reserves and Natural Resources
- Electricity Statistics

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The next steps are to: continue producing an annual compendium and improve it according to the revised Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics being developed by UNSD, adopt environment statistics manuals for the Gulf region; spread the knowledge on environment statistics in the country; conduct a new assessment study for the environmental situation and prepare new strategic plans for environment statistics; and develop energy statistics in the UAE.

A practical test for the UN draft FDES: Implementing Environment Statistics in the State of Qatar

(Contributed by Michael Nagy, Environment Statistics Expert, Qatar Statistics Authority)

In the State of Qatar environment statistics is still in its infancy, but recently several steps have been undertaken to extend the National Statistical System with environment statistics. This includes the creation of a Section on Environment Statistics within the Department of Demographic and Social Statistics of the Qatar Statistics Authority (QSA), the formation of an inter-institutional working group on environment statistics and the hiring of an environment statistics expert at QSA who commenced work beginning of May 2012.

The need for better environment statistics is directly linked with the information needs of the Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016 (QNDS), which is the strategic foundation to sustainably develop Qatar into an advanced country which provides a high living standard for its people by maintaining its Islamic values. The four pillars of the QNDS are 'Human Development', 'Social Development', 'Economic Development' and 'Environmental Development'. The latter sets the environmental strategy of Qatar, which is 'to ensure harmony among economic growth, social development and environmental protection'.

The QNDS and the Qatar Environmental Sector Strategy identify a number of priority environmental issues, which define policy objectives and policy targets to be achieved by 2016. Environment statistics have to provide the foundation for evidence-based policy and decision making to achieve those goals and targets, but also to contribute to raising awareness concerning environmental issues.

In the beginning environment statistics of the State of Qatar are supposed to provide the needed information concerning the following priority environmental topics:

- Cleaner water and sustainable use
- Cleaner air and effective climate change responses
- Reduced waste, more recycling and more efficient use
- Nature and natural heritage conserved, protected and sustainably managed
- More sustainable urbanization and a healthier living environment

a At a later stage, environment statistics of the State of Qatar should cover all components as identified in the UN FDES and its relevant sub-components and topics.

Environment statistics in the State of Qatar should not only serve the national needs as defined in the QNDS but also provide the information basis for other national and international purposes related to environmental information in a coherent way. This includes the regional activities of the Arab League and UNEP ROWA related to environmental indicators and regional State of the Environment Reports, but also the reporting under various UN Protocols and Conventions (e.g., UNFCCC, Basel Convention) and a timely response to the UNSD questionnaires on water and waste with data of high quality. On the national level, there is also an urgent need to implement environmental-economic accounts (i.e., water accounts, energy accounts, air emission accounts) as there is an increasing need to better understand and to measure the interdependency of the environment and the economy. To achieve this, a National Framework on Environment Statistics is needed, which provides the conceptual basis for environment statistics in line with international standards, and clearly identifies roles and responsibilities within the National Statistical System. It also aims to avoid duplication of data flows and address the users' information needs in an efficient way.

a) It was necessary to define a vision for environment statistics of the State of Qatar in order to set the frame for the implementation strategy. This vision is derived from the "Objectives of Environment Statistics" as defined in the UN draft FDES but in addition addresses the issues of becoming part of the National Statistical System and being fully in line with international standards, as follows: '*Environment statistics provide the foundation for evidence-based policy and decision making as well as for awareness raising concerning environmental issues. The Qatar Statistics Authority maintains the National Statistical System which provides the official environment statistics of the State of Qatar on a regular basis and according to international classifications and quality standards. Environment statistics serve multiple national and international purposes in a coherent way. The National Statistical System involves all relevant national producers of environmental data and reviews the information needs of the data users continuously.'*

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b) The action plan for implementation of environment statistics is based on national environmental priorities. The UN draft FDES was used to map the priorities as identified in the QNDS with the 6 components (and sub-components) of the FDES, thus 'translating' the framework of the QNDS (including its terms and definitions) into the conceptual framework of international environment statistics. Applying the FDES structure to the policy objectives of the QNDS and the Qatari Environmental Sector Strategy, the current priorities for official environment statistics of Qatar were identified and structured as follows:

- **FDES component 1 - Environmental conditions and quality:** air quality; groundwater quality; marine water quality
- **FDES component 2 - Environment resources and their use:** groundwater resources; mineral and energy resources
- **FDES component 3 - Emissions, residuals and waste:** emissions to air; wastewater generation, treatment and discharge; generation and management of solid waste
- **FDES component 4 - Disasters and extreme events**: Currently no priority
- **FDES component 5 - Human habitat and environmental health:** water and sanitation; exposure to ambient pollutants
- **FDES component 6 - Environment protection, management and engagement:** environment protection and management expenditures

c) The diagrams of the UN draft FDES were used to discuss the role of environment statistics and its relation to non-statistical data, environmental-economic accounts, indicators and the various analytical frameworks such as MDG or DPSIR etc. It was also important to show that an action plan towards sound environment statistics and environmental-economic accounts can be generated by a combined top-down / bottom-up approach: What are the policy questions (and their information demand) – top-down; what is the data already available from statistical and non-statistical sources – bottom-up. Combining these approaches it is possible to produce and disseminate a first set of environment statistics soon (e.g., for water statistics) whereas for other areas data gaps exist which have to be overcome.

The recently initiated activities to develop a Qatari Framework for Environment Statistics and to implement it as part of the National Statistics System are great steps forward to measure the progress towards sustainable development and to increase the awareness of the Qatari society concerning environmental issues. The UN draft FDES has provided great guidance to set the frame of environment statistics in the State of Qatar, to link the information needs of the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 with statistical concepts, to derive an action plan for implementation and to identify data gaps which need to be overcome. Work is still in progress.

A draft of the Qatari Framework for Environment Statistics will be available by end of this year. The first data dissemination under the new framework is already planned for the second quarter of 2013 (e.g., water statistics and water accounts and other "low hanging fruits").

Suriname - Fifth Environmental Statistics Compendium Workshop

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

This workshop was organized by the General Bureau of Statistics (GBS) in Paramaribo, Suriname, in collaboration with Conservation International Suriname on 18 April 2012. The intention was to present the draft of the fifth environment statistics publication to the relevant data providers. The objectives were to:

- Give the participants the opportunity to present their comments on the draft publication in order to finalize it
- Ensure the commitment on data availability, improve data quality and continuous cooperation
- Discuss the data gaps and potential data sources of indicators not yet covered
- Use the findings of the workshop to finalize the publication.

A total number of 32 relevant organizations (inter alia: line ministries, large enterprises, unions and institutions), which were supposed to cover certain environmental areas or make a substantive contribution to the pertinent workshop, were invited.

In total 93 participants of the different organizations, including guests and 8 members of the press have registered. At the opening of the Workshop, 2 Ministers were present, namely the Minister of Labour Technological Development and Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources. Also 2 members of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Suriname and 3 members of the Statistics Commission (The Board of the GBS) were present. A brief remark was sent by the CARICOM Secretariat as a contribution.

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The draft publication covers 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, Freshwater, Energy and Minerals, Forestry, Coastal and Marine Resources, Land Use and Agriculture, and Biodiversity. The presented data refer to the latest available years. For time series, data are given for the years 2007 up to 2010 and where available also for 2011. For previous years, see the first four publications, namely "Selected Environmental Statistics, November 2002", "Environmental Statistics, May 2006", "Environmental Statistics, December 2008" and "Environmental Statistics, July 2010".

The workshop raised awareness and understanding of international concepts and definitions as well as best practices in the field of environmental statistics. It helped to collect additional information 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 fifth Suriname Environmental Statistics Publication, expected to be published in July 2012.

The participants agreed that instating a steering committee for environment statistics in Suriname is of utmost importance. This steering committee should be a fact in 2012. Four bodies have already confirmed their participation and a concept Terms of Reference is being developed. It was also agreed that in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment a joint "State of the Environment for Suriname" report will be published in 2014. Participants also noted that attention should be paid to the collection of environment statistics that would be used to compile integrated environmental and economic accounts for Suriname in the near future.

Technical Assistance Mission on Environment Statistics to Costa Rica (San José, 22-25 May 2012)

(Contributed by Fabio Herrera, National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), Costa Rica)

This UNSD mission built upon the national work developed by INEC and the Environment Ministry of Costa Rica, together with key national and sub-national institutions working to develop national environmental statistics and indicators. Both leading institutions have participated actively in the regional environment statistics work, coordinated the ILAC Environmental Indicators Working Group (regional UNEP secretariat) and fully engaged in the work of the Environment Statistics Working Group of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (with UN ECLAC secretariat). UN ECLAC has technically supported the work of environment statistics of Costa Rica.

The main objective of the mission was to explore national sources for the production of environment statistics and share methodological tools in this field with the participants from the various institutions for use in their data collection and dissemination, and to develop a way forward for executing planned activities

The mission consisted of the following elements:

a) Working meetings with the national counterpart Comisión de Enlace (INEC and MINAET, in charge of the System of Environment Information, [SINIA]) that are jointly developing the national environmental indicators and underlying statistics,

b) Work sessions with INEC staff in charge of on-going statistical processes that yield or can potentially yield significant data sets for environment statistics, such as censuses and surveys.

c) A meeting with the new Director and Sub-Director of INEC, together with the former sub-Director and other INEC officials, in order to discuss the main findings and recommendations of the mission.

d) A work session with SINI´s Module of Environmental Indicators nodes, including practitioners from 15 national agencies.

e) A work session with the national interagency commission of hydrology and meteorology, with agency teams and national directors coming from five national agencies responsible for water and meteorological statistics. Issues of data availability and collection, relevant to their domain were examined in detail.

f) A work session with the interagency node in charge of waste statistics, including staff from the Health Ministry coming from different sections of environment health, epidemiology, climate change, and waste.

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In the exploration of ongoing statistical processes within INEC (point b above), and through the discussions with the area and global INEC directors (point c above), a profound support for the development of environment statistics was evident. Through the technical meetings, a thorough understanding of both the data collection processes, and the Questionnaires that Costa Rica uses regularly, was attained. Current instruments such as the Household Survey and latest Census contained central environment statistics questions, and it was identified that both the agricultural survey and the directory of establishment surveys show potential for including future modules containing such questions.

During the work sessions with INEC, MINAET and partner agencies, the latest methodological developments in the field of environment statistics were presented, and the detailed tables of both the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaires of Water (in e) and Waste (in f) were discussed. The country expressed high interest in participating in its best capacities in the upcoming 2012 round of global data collection. Additionally, the participants showed keen interest in the forthcoming global consultation on the FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics.

INEC and MINAET also briefed participants on the overall advances and challenges in the development of the environmental indicators module of Costa Rica's SINIA. They presented their analysis of problems and solutions to further engage in this work.

Progress and outlook

a) During the last two years, Costa Rica's INEC and the Ministry of Environment (in partnership with other relevant agencies organized under SINIA) have advanced considerably in developing environmental statistics and indicators. They aim to develop their national set of environmental indicators using a rigorous protocol and nationally adapted methodological sheet format. They have also adapted and installed the software donated by regional UNEP to help them in the dissemination of these indicators.

b) With regard to the environmental indicators module of SINIA, substantive progress has been attained, particularly in the coordination and operation of the SINIA interagency commission, effectively engaging their focal points, developing proper collaboration mechanisms and in the organization of the thematic modules of work which engage different institutions).

c) INEC has advanced in the collaboration with inter-institutional bodies and in motivating full participation of focal points. INEC has published water and sanitation coverage statistics as part of the environment statistics on their website. They included environmentally-related questions, in both the 2011 Census and in their Household Survey, and are exploring other opportunities to include environment statistics modules in their ongoing processes.

d) Regarding the development of the national environmental indicators set, the agencies have regular meetings and have produced and agreed upon a rigorous protocol for the population of a nationally validated methodological sheet (MS). The different thematic nodes are currently populating the indicators using the MS. The interagency platform has agreed to select a core set of environmental indicators to be finalized and then disseminated. Publication of a first core set of environmental indicators is perceived as a high priority among participants and supervisors.

e) The country's environmental statistics and indicators production is presented with the challenge of advancing both towards institutional strengthening and specialized capacity building. This includes much needed stable resource and staff allocation and the formalization of environment statistics operations within their annual work plans. Also, high level outreach among agency directors to help develop and consolidate environment statistics programmes within annual work plans in other partner agencies is very important. With regard to capacity building, the country has expressed interest in hosting a national workshop on methods of environment statistics collection, validation and production which is needed as soon as possible.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sixth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (Geneva, 30 October - 1 November 2012)

Meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 1-2 November 2012)

Fourth Expert Group Meeting on the Revision of the FDES (New York, 5-7 November 2012)

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.

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