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**Natural resources and environment statistics:****Environment statistics****Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on  
Environment Statistics****Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics. The report is transmitted to the Commission for information in accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fifth session.<sup>a</sup> The Commission is requested to take note of the work done in 2004 and the plans for 2005/2006.

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\* E/CN.3/2005/1.

<sup>a</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 4 (E/2004/24), chap. I.A.*

## Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics

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## I. Introduction

1. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics<sup>1</sup> was established in 2003, following the decision of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fourth session.<sup>2</sup> The objectives, terms of reference, organization of work and work programme of the group were endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fifth session in 2004.<sup>3</sup>

2. The objective of the group is to firmly anchor environment statistics as part of official statistics by improving and strengthening basic environmental data. That objective is accomplished by enhancing cooperation and by pooling the knowledge bases and resources in the areas of methodological work, data collection and dissemination, training and capacity-building, and the organization of joint events.

3. The present report concerns the work done by the Working Group in 2004 and its plans for 2005 and 2006 in the areas mentioned in paragraph 2.

## II. Methodological work

4. According to the work programme of the Working Group, the focus of joint methodological work in 2004 was on water statistics. A water statistics manual was developed by Eurostat to support the water chapter of the joint Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Eurostat Questionnaire on the State of the Environment. The manual was tested in the 2004 data collection and will be reviewed on the basis of the feedback from countries. The United Nations Statistics Division (with support from the United Nations Environment Programme) is launching its project on a complementary manual of water statistics, with the objective of providing hands-on guidance to developing countries in the development of water statistics and the completion of the United Nations Statistics Division/United Nations Environment Programme questionnaire. The manual will build upon the Eurostat handbook to ensure consistency of concepts, methods and definitions. As the manual will also complement ongoing work on the forthcoming handbook on integrated environmental and economic water accounting (by the United Nations Statistics Division, Eurostat, and the Division for Sustainable Development), consistency with the requirements of the water accounts is sought.

5. The joint work session on water statistics (20-22 June 2005; see para. 13) will provide substantial input to the manuals. An expert group meeting to be held at the end of 2005 will discuss the first draft of the United Nations Statistics Division manual.

6. In 2006, joint methodological work will focus on waste statistics. Work is ongoing on waste statistics and on material flow analysis and accounting at Eurostat and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Eurostat is preparing a waste statistics handbook as part of Regulation (EC) No. 2150/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2002 on Waste Statistics (Waste Statistics Regulation). The United Nations Statistics Division has also started preparations for the compilation of a complementary manual on waste statistics that would help non-European Union countries to develop their statistical system on wastes.

7. The harmonization of the classifications and terms used by different sources of land use and land cover statistics is also on the agenda of the Working Group. That work will be initiated in close collaboration with agricultural statisticians, and with lead organizations engaged in related work, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

### III. Data collection

8. 2004 was the year for biennial data collection. The United Nations Statistics Division questionnaire on environment statistics was sent to more than 150 countries in March, for the first time jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme. The joint OECD/Eurostat questionnaire was sent to 39 OECD and European Union member/candidate/partner countries in June and July. A core set of variables for the two questionnaires is identical, but the questionnaires differ in scope and detail to adjust to the capabilities of countries at different levels of development. Data validation is ongoing. The table illustrates the response rates expected for the questionnaires.

#### Expected response rates to the environment statistics questionnaires

<i>Region</i>	<i>Countries that received 2004 questionnaire (1)</i>	<i>Responses received (2)</i>	<i>Additional responses expected (3)</i>	<i>No response (4)</i>	<i>Expected response rate (percentage) (2)+(3) (1)</i>
Africa	53	13	12	28	47.17
Asia	44	16	4	24	45.45
Europe	11	8	1	2	81.81
Latin America and the Caribbean	37	21	8	8	78.38
Oceania	8	1	2	5	37.50
United Nations Statistics Division/ United Nations Environment Programme	153	59	27	67	56.21
OECD/Eurostat	39	34	1	4	89.74
World	192	93	28	71	63.02

9. The data collected through the questionnaires are shared among the organizations to avoid duplication and decrease the burden on the countries. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Statistics Division also agreed to collaborate on data collection and share data in relation to the OECD environmental performance reviews carried out in non-OECD countries. Efforts are also made to coordinate and cooperate in data collection and indicator work at the regional and subregional levels, with the regional commissions as well as with the regional offices of UNEP.

10. The Working Group was requested by the Conference of European Statisticians to prepare a paper on further coordination and streamlining

environment statistics activities in Europe. The group will present a joint paper on those issues at the next meeting of the Conference in June 2005. The paper will deal with issues related to the division of tasks and to the quality of environment statistics, and will also reflect on future plans to diversify data collections in terms of scope and frequency, which will create an even larger need for strong coordination.

11. 2006 will be the next year for biennial data collection, which will involve joint work on further harmonization of the questionnaires. 2007 will be a major reporting year, in which updated editions of the United Nations Environment Programme *Global Environmental Outlook*, the *OECD Environmental Outlook* and the pan-European report on the state of the environment are expected to appear. Those major reports will create a huge demand for environmental data during 2005 and 2006.

#### **IV. Training and capacity-building**

12. The United Nations Environment Programme co-sponsored a training workshop on environment statistics organized by the United Nations Statistics Division and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the ESCWA member countries. The workshop built upon the work done within the frame of the environment statistics component of the Eurostat statistical project in the Mediterranean (MEDSTAT). The Division's training workshop for the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Senegal in March 2005 will also be organized in collaboration with UNEP. Information on training and capacity-building is being shared, and further possibilities for joint training activities are discussed in the Working Group on a continuous basis.

#### **V. Joint events**

13. Following the decision to focus on water statistics in 2004-2005, the first joint event organized by the Working Group will be the joint work session on water statistics. The work session will be held in Vienna from 20 to 22 June 2005. The objectives of the work session will be (a) to review information needed for water policy and how the demand is met by international water statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for water resources; and (b) to provide a forum for countries and international organizations to exchange experiences on best practices in the collection, organization and analysis of water statistics. The work session will cover the requirements of both developing and developed countries. The discussions and conclusions will provide input to the United Nations Statistics Division manual on water statistics planned for the end of 2005 and will contribute to the refinement of the questionnaires used in international data collection and compilation.

## VI. The second meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics

14. The second meeting of the Working Group was held on 7 October 2004 in Luxembourg, concurrently with the Eurostat plenary meeting on environment statistics and environmental accounting. The meeting of the Working Group was attended by the representatives of the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Eurostat. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Secretariat of the World Water Assessment Programme were also invited and participated in the meeting. The focus of the agenda was water statistics: an overview of activities carried out by the organizations in that area, the status of the water manuals and the organization of the joint work session on water statistics. The meeting also discussed areas for future joint work in methodology, training and capacity-building, and considered the request of the Conference of European Statisticians to the Working Group for a report on further coordination of activities in environment statistics at the European level.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> The name of the Inter-agency Working Group on Environment Statistics was modified to Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics to be consistent with other groups reporting to the Statistical Commission. Current members of the Working Group are the United Nations Statistics Division, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The secretariat of the Working Group is the United Nations Statistics Division.

<sup>2</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4 (E/2003/24)*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 4 (E/2004/24)*.