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### Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

Seventh session

Geneva, 5–7 November 2013

## Report of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators on its seventh session\*

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Background**

1. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators was established by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of the European Statisticians with the objective to support the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (the target countries)<sup>1</sup> in improving environmental statistics and in producing agreed indicators so that environmental reporting would be strengthened and comparable environmental statistics would be available throughout the pan-European region. The Joint Task Force's activities in 2013–2014 were governed by its mandate for that period, as approved by the parent bodies.
2. The seventh session of the Joint Task Force was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 5 to 7 November 2013.

### **B. Attendance**

3. Environmental experts and statisticians from the following target countries attended the meeting: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
4. Albania and Turkmenistan did not nominate representatives to participate in the meeting.
5. In addition, representatives from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland participated in the meeting to share their countries' experience with regard to environmental information, reporting and statistics.
6. A representative of the United Arab Emirates participated under paragraph 11 of the terms of reference of ECE.
7. Representatives of the United Nations Statistics Division, Eurostat, the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, the Regional Environmental Centre-Moldova, the Cadaster Institute (Russian Federation) and the non-governmental organization Zoï Environmental Network also attended the meeting.
8. The International Institute for Education in Statistics of the National Research University of the Russian Federation, the Aarhus Centre of Turkmenistan and the team implementing the European Union (EU)-sponsored project, Forest and Biodiversity Governance including environmental monitoring in Central Asia, were also represented at the meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

### C. Organizational matters

9. The Joint Task Force adopted the agenda for its seventh session as contained in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2013/1.<sup>2</sup> The Joint Task Force also adopted the report of its sixth session (Geneva, 30 October–1 November 2012), contained in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2012/10, as well as the Russian version of the report of its fifth session (Geneva, 4–6 July 2012), contained in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2012/5.

10. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Irina Komosko (Belarus).

## II. Review of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators

11. The Joint Task Force reviewed seven selected indicators from the revised Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup> (the Guidelines), as follows: (a) total water use; (b) public water supply; (c) connection of population to public water supply; (d) population connected to wastewater treatment; (e) wastewater treatment facilities; (f) concentration of pollutants in seawater and sediments; and (g) waste reuse and recycling. The review focused on, among others, the use of statistical classifications, data collection methods and procedures for the production of the selected indicators.

12. The review was supported by the national submissions provided by the following 14 target countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine. Three countries — Albania, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — had not submitted their inputs.

13. The national submissions had been prepared on the basis of a questionnaire developed and circulated by the secretariat prior to the meeting. The questionnaire requested time-series data for each indicator for the periods 1990, 1995 and 2000–2012. It further requested information per indicator regarding effective inter-agency cooperation mechanisms to produce them, data quality assurance and control procedures for the production process and publication in statistical compendiums and state of the environment reports.

14. The national submissions had been summarized in the informal summary report prepared by the secretariat with the assistance of a consultant.

15. Furthermore, the review was also supported with presentations delivered by invited experts from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Serbia and the United Kingdom on the national systems established in those experts' respective countries for the production of the selected indicators. In particular, the presentations focused on the legal basis and procedures for collection and the review and validation of data necessary for the production of the respective indicators. The speakers also outlined the challenges faced in that process and shared lessons learned in eliminating them.

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<sup>2</sup> Meeting documentation, including national reviews and presentations, are available online from a dedicated ECE website (<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2013.11a.viron.html>).

<sup>3</sup> The revised Indicator Guidelines, which are in the form of an online database, are available from the ECE website at <http://www.unece.org/env/indicators.html>.

## A. Total water use

16. All of the 14 reporting target countries had provided at least some data necessary to produce the indicator on total water use. The most complete data had been provided by Belarus and Ukraine. For other countries data had been missing either for water use by households (e.g., the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation) or for some of the economic activities specified (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) or the data had been completed only for some years instead of the whole period requested.

17. All of the reporting countries had also provided information about their State institutions responsible for data collection necessary for the production of the indicator and the quality assurance procedure. At the same time, not all of them had mentioned the collection method and only three countries (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) had stated their quality assurance procedures.

18. Certain countries reported at the meeting that they either did not have electronic databases available (e.g., Georgia) or that there was no unified database (e.g. Uzbekistan) that would allow them to produce the indicator properly.

19. A number of countries informed the Joint Task Force that they had faced difficulties in completing the questionnaire because the definitions and the methodology were not always clear enough. They requested that those be verified, especially in the Russian version of the Guidelines, and corrected, as necessary, to eliminate any inconsistencies, in particular between the questionnaire table, the glossary and the indicator description.

## B. Public water supply

20. Ten of the reporting countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan and Ukraine) had provided data for at least 10-year series on the public water supply indicator. Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had provided only partial data. Georgia and the Russian Federation had not completed the questionnaire table.

21. Twelve countries had provided information about their State institutions that had been assigned the responsibility for data collection and quality assurance for public water supply. As for the previous indicator, only a few had mentioned the collection method. The information on the procedure for quality assurance had been provided only by Belarus and Serbia.

22. Certain countries reported at the meeting (e.g., Georgia) that the data existed, but were not collected formally. Therefore, to produce the indicator they would need to initiate official data collection.

23. A representative of the Russian Federation stated that the country used different definitions for public water supply and hence could not provide data as requested in the questionnaire table.

24. The delegation of Serbia observed that, since public water supply enterprises might be supplying water to each other before supplying it to end users, those inter-enterprises supplies needed to be determined to avoid double counting. In addition, water enterprises counted water supplied to users but not paid for as water losses. Physical losses might thus be smaller than the losses reported by the water enterprises, and that should be carefully evaluated during the data quality check to avoid a misleading interpretation of the data.

25. As for the previous indicator, a number of countries questioned the clarity of the terms used and requested an explanation of the difference between “public”, “centralized” or “municipal” water supply.

26. After an exchange of views, the Joint Task Force agreed that whichever term was used, it should be understood for the purpose of the indicator as water supplied to users by water supply industry regardless the industry ownership. At the same time, the Joint Task Force requested the secretariat to ensure that the terms applied were consistently used in the Guidelines.

### **C. Connection of population to public water supply**

27. All of the reporting countries had provided data on the indicator on the connection of the population to public water supply, of which nine (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine) had provided the data for more than a decade. Montenegro had reported only on the urban population connected to public water supply, and not on the overall population of the country.

28. All of the reporting countries had also provided information on the State institutions responsible for data collection and the quality assurance procedure for the indicator. Nevertheless, as for the previous two indicators, the collection method had been stated by only a few of the reporting countries and the quality control procedure only by Belarus and Serbia.

29. A representative of the Republic of Moldova reported at the meeting that a formal collection procedure had not been introduced yet in the country for the indicator.

30. The delegation of Belarus asked the representatives of other countries about the method for calculating the number of members of the population “connected” to public water supply, stating at the same time that Belarus used the population census data with annual adjustments.

31. The Joint Task Force agreed, after an exchange of views, that there were two acceptable methods for the calculation, or rather estimation, of the number of “connected” population. One of them was the method used in Belarus. The second was based on the calculation of users — usually expressed as households — to whom the water supply industry was supplying water and was charging for the service. The households figure needed then to be recalculated into a population figure using the data on the average size of households in the country.

### **D. Population connected to wastewater treatment**

32. All of the reporting countries, except the Russian Federation, had provided data on the indicator on population connected to wastewater treatment; however, only the data from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia were complete. For the other countries the data were either for short time series or on selected data sets only.

33. As for the previous indicators, the reporting countries had provided information about the State institutions responsible for data collection and quality assurance. Again, also, the collection method had only been mentioned by a few countries and Serbia was the only country that had stated the quality assurance procedure.

34. A number of countries reported at the meeting about their difficulty in collecting the necessary data. Georgia said that its State institutions did not receive the necessary data

from the water and sewage supply industry. Kyrgyzstan stated that it provided data collected through the census only. Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova reported that they had not been able to establish a system that would allow for production of the indicator.

35. The Joint Task Force agreed that an exchange of knowledge and good practice on establishing an effective system for data collection and quality assurance for the indicator on connection of population to wastewater treatment would be much appreciated.

## **E. Wastewater treatment facilities**

36. Eleven of the reporting countries had provided some data on the indicator on wastewater treatment facilities. Nevertheless, in most cases the data available had not been sufficient to produce the indicator. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova the indicator could be produced, but for urban areas only.

37. As for the previous indicators the reporting countries had provided information about the State institutions responsible for data collection and quality assurance. And, once again, the collection method had only been mentioned by a few countries. Belarus and Serbia were the only countries that had stated the quality assurance procedure.

38. The countries informed the Task Force that the indicator was causing difficulties similar to those mentioned for the indicator “population connected to wastewater treatment”. To address those difficulties, as with the previous indicator, workshops should be organized to share good practice on systems and procedures that would allow regular data collection and calculation of the indicator.

## **F. Concentration of pollutants in seawater and sediments**

39. The indicator on concentration of pollutants in seawater and sediments was relevant only for countries with access to the sea, i.e., 7 of the 14 reporting countries, of which 6 had provided some data (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Russian Federation and Ukraine). Only the Russian Federation had provided data to determine the full range of concentrations of pollutants that were included in the questionnaire. Four countries had shown the concentration of some pollutants on coastal seawater and sediments. Two had provided data for the three-year period only, which was not sufficient to assess the dynamics of changes in the seawater environment. Therefore, given the quality and quantity of the data provided by the countries, none of them had sufficient data to establish a process for the production of the indicator.

40. The reporting countries had also provided information on the State institutions responsible for data collection and control procedures for data quality for the indicator. At the same time, none of the countries had specified the measurement methods used or the quality control procedure.

41. The countries explained at the meeting that the rather scarce availability of data was the consequence of cuts in their monitoring budgets, for which reason some of the measurements had not been carried out or the monitoring had been discontinued for a period of time.

42. The Joint Task Force recommended that the long list of pollutants should be revised and focus on the main pollutants only, so that monitoring by the countries would be feasible within their available budgets. The EU list of pollutants should be taken into account for the review.

## **G. Waste reuse and recycling**

43. Thirteen of the reporting countries had provided some data on the indicator “waste reuse and recycling”. In all the cases the data were rather incomplete.

44. As for the other indicators, the reporting countries had provided information about the State institutions responsible for data collection and quality assurance procedures. Also again, the methods of collection had only been provided by a few countries and the quality control procedures had only been specified by Belarus and Serbia.

45. A number of countries acknowledged at the meeting that measuring waste at every stage was rather challenging, hence they faced difficulties with data collection to produce the indicator.

46. Some countries were able to report on positive developments and initial progress achieved towards establishing procedures for waste monitoring (e.g., Tajikistan) and creation of waste inventories (e.g., Kazakhstan).

47. A representative of Ukraine stressed that certain terms on waste used in the Guidelines (e.g., waste management) did not exist in its national terminology and would need to be introduced. For some other terms, their Russian translation was confusing for Russian speakers and should be revised.

## **H. Conclusions and the way forward**

48. The Joint Task Force acknowledged the results of the review, showing, for the majority of cases, that the available data were insufficient to produce the indicators. While positive developments were noted, the target countries were invited to further strengthen their efforts, based on the methodological requirements included in the descriptions of the indicators and using the developed indicator questionnaire tables of the Guidelines, to work towards establishing systems that would allow effective data collection and efficient production of the indicators.

49. The Joint Task Force called for support to be offered to the target countries in strengthening their efforts in production of the indicators. It requested the secretariat to explore with donors the possibility of organizing a workshop on water indicators, to share knowledge and good practice on establishing an effective system for data collection and quality assurance for the water indicators.

50. The Joint Task Force further requested the secretariat to revise the Guidelines on the reviewed indicators, taking into account the deliberations at the meeting, to ensure that the terms and definitions used were consistent throughout the text of the indicators’ descriptions, glossaries and the questionnaire tables. For the indicator “concentration of pollutants in seawater and sediments”, the secretariat was also asked to adjust the list of pollutants so that it would contain the most important pollutants that the countries would be able to monitor, taking into account the available monitoring budgets. In doing so, the existing list of pollutants for the EU countries should also be taken into account.



### **III. First reading of the indicators on transport and environment not covered by the Guidelines**

#### **A. Discussion on the first reading of the indicators on transport and environment not covered by the Guidelines**

51. At its sixth session, the Joint Task Force had requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal, in the light of the latest developments in other forums, for additional indicators on transport and environment to be considered for inclusion in the Guidelines. The secretariat had developed such a proposal with the support of a consultant.

52. The proposal, contained in the document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2013/3, recommended the following additional indicators on transport and environment: use of cleaner and alternative fuels; exceedances of air quality objectives due to traffic; transport accident fatalities; waste from road vehicles; fuel prices; and proportion of vehicle fleet meeting certain emission standards.

53. The proposed indicators were described using the standard Guidelines format for indicator description, i.e.: (a) a general description with brief definition and unit of measurement; (b) the relation to other indicators in the Guidelines; (c) the relevance for environmental policy, including the purpose, background and international agreements and targets; (d) the methodology and guidelines for data collection and calculations and internationally agreed methodologies and standards; (e) data sources and reporting; and (f) references at the international level. Such a description helped make it clear how the particular indicator could be used to improve environmental governance in the transport sector, as well as what was needed to produce the indicator.

54. A representative of the ECE Transport Division presented the activities of the Transport Statistics Programme focused on the collection of transport statistics, in cooperation with Eurostat and the International Transport Forum at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, through harmonized data collection questionnaires. He also provided an update on the ongoing activities aimed at developing the definitions of energy types for road motor vehicles and elaborating a common questionnaire breakdown for vehicle stock and new registrations, i.e., activities that might be of relevance to the work of the Joint Task Force. The Transport Division had experienced difficulties in obtaining data from a number of ECE member countries on the basic transport indicators, and the representative invited members of the Task Force to work together as much as possible to promote synergies and to avoid duplication of activities in the area of transport and environment statistics.

55. The Joint Task Force discussed the proposal on the new indicators on transport and environment in the light of countries capabilities to produce them. The countries pointed at problems with a lack of data and information for the majority of the proposed indicators. They further recognized that they did not yet have in place processes and the technical capacity established for the collection and validation of data on the proposed indicators. Furthermore, the countries were interested in the availability of agreed definitions in the area of transport and environment, and appreciated the information provided by the representative of ECE Transport Division in that context.

#### **B. Conclusions and the way forward**

56. The Joint Task Force expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for preparing the proposal on additional indicators on transport and environment. At the same time, it

decided, taking into account the absence of the necessary data for the production of the proposed indicators and the ongoing work in other forums related to elaboration of relevant definitions, to postpone further discussion on those indicators to future sessions, when more data and information would be available.

57. The Joint Task Force requested the secretariat to continue liaising with the ECE Transport Statistics Programme, in particular on the elaboration of the definitions of energy types for road motor vehicles which would be of relevance to further work on the proposed indicators. It further requested the secretariat to share the existing and the proposed indicators on transport and environment with the Transport Statistics Programme with the aim to identify possible common activities.

58. Finally, the Joint Task Force invited the secretariat together with the ECE Transport Division to report on the progress with the elaboration of the definitions and on the identification of possible common activities at the Task Force's next sessions.

## **IV. Revision of the Guidelines on the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia**

### **A. Revision and comments received**

59. The Joint Task Force, at its sixth session, had requested the secretariat to start revising the text of the Guidelines by introducing previously agreed amendments to the description of the individual indicators, making additions to the questionnaire tables and including the additional indicators, whose descriptions had been agreed by the Joint Task Force. As a result of the revision undertaken, the new files for each revised indicator both in English and Russian had been uploaded to the website of the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment programme and the target countries were requested to provide comments on the revised files and communicate them to the secretariat.

60. The secretariat presented a brief overview of the revision made and introduced the comments received from the Russian Federation and Belarus that were of a substantive nature and needed further consideration by the Joint Task Force. Such comments concerned the following indicators: A1 "Emissions of pollutants into the atmospheric air"; A3 "Consumption of ozone-depleting substances"; C10 "BOD<sup>4</sup> and concentration of ammonium in rivers"; C11 "Nutrients in freshwater"; C12 "Nutrients in coastal seawaters"; F2 "Fertilizer consumption"; F4 "Pesticide consumption"; and G1 "Final energy consumption". There was also a request to verify the consistency of the English and Russian definitions for the waste indicators (I1 "Waste generation" and I4 "Final waste disposal").

### **B. Conclusions and agreed changes**

61. The Joint Task Force, after an exchange of views, agreed on the following:

(a) For all of the indicators commented on, to check and revise the consistency of the terms and definitions used in the text of indicators' descriptions, questionnaire tables for data collection and glossaries of terms;

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<sup>4</sup> Biochemical oxygen demand .

(b) In the Russian text of the description of the indicator “Consumption of ozone-depleting substances”, to use the abbreviation “ОПИ” (Озоно разрушающий потенциал) instead of “ПРОС” (Потенциал разрушения озонового слоя);

(c) To amend the description of the indicator “Fertilizer consumption”, as follows:

(i) To delete “amount of mineral fertilizers sold” from the text of the definition. The “brief definition” under the section “General description” should read: “Amount of mineral and organic fertilizers used in total and per unit of arable land and land under permanent crops, and share of land treated by mineral and organic fertilizers in total land”;

(ii) The text on “Data collection and calculations” under the section “Methodology and guidelines” should include the alternative methods of data collection, which should refer to fertilizers used or fertilizers sold. The text should read: “It is necessary to collect data on mineral fertilizer use or, if such are not available, on fertilizer sales as well as fertilizers’ basic characteristics. The indicator is assessed annually. Data on the quantities of fertilizers used or sold to the final consumer are converted into the three basic nutrient components (N, K<sub>2</sub>O, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>) and aggregated”;

(iii) In the glossary, to bring the definition of “agricultural land” into conformity with the definition used by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;

(d) In the Russian text of the questionnaire table for data collection for the indicator “Final energy consumption”, to use the words “кроме того неэнергетическое использование энергии” instead of “в том числе неэнергетическое использование энергии”.

62. Furthermore, the Joint Task Force discussed waste-related definitions and agreed on the following:

(a) To use the word “производственные” instead of “промышленные” for the Russian translation of the term “industrial” in the Russian text (descriptions, questionnaire tables and glossary) of waste indicators;

(b) To shorten the definition of “Waste”, which should read in Russian as “Материалы, непригодные для дальнейшего использования в месте их образования”, unless otherwise concluded when verifying the consistency of the definition with those used by the United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat. The English version of the definition should be adjusted accordingly;

(c) For “Waste from manufacturing”, to use “Отходы обрабатывающей промышленности” instead of “Отходы от производства” in the Russian translation of the term;

(d) For “Waste from Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply” and “Waste from other economic activities”, to improve the Russian text for the terms by deleting the word “от” from the definition, which should read: “Отходы систем энергоснабжения, газоснабжения, парогенерации и кондиционирования воздуха” and “Отходы других видов экономической деятельности”;

(e) For “Waste from construction”, to use the words “Строительные отходы/Отходы строительства” instead of “Отходы от строительства” in the Russian translation of the term;

(f) For “Municipal waste”, to verify if the Guidelines’ definition for that term was consistent with those used by the United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat;

(g) For “Management of waste”, to use the words “переработка/обработка” instead of “очистка”, “окончательное удаление” instead of “удаление отходов” and “мест хранения/захоронения/размещения отходов” instead of “свалок” in the Russian translation of the term, and to consult Eurostat on the terminology used in the European Waste Regulation to keep the terminology unified, and to verify the Russian translation of the terms treatment, disposal of waste and aftercare of disposal sites;

(h) For “Reuse”, to add an example to the term to make it better understood, unless otherwise concluded;

(i) For “Incineration”, to use the word “энергии” instead of “энергетических ресурсов” in the Russian translation of the term;

(j) For “Landfilling”, to use the words “окончательное удаление отходов” instead of “свалка” in the Russian translation of the term, and to consult Eurostat on the terminology used in the European Waste Regulation to keep the terminology unified;

(k) For “Controlled landfilling”, to consult Eurostat on terminology used in the European Waste Regulation to keep the terminology unified.

63. The Joint Task Force requested the secretariat to incorporate the changes agreed and verify the consistency of the terms and definitions used. While incorporating the changes, the secretariat should ensure that the terms were unified with those used by the United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat and, for that purpose, to consult those organizations as necessary.

64. The secretariat was invited to circulate the improved indicator files to the Joint Task Force members for final validation as soon as they became available after the additional revision.

65. The Joint Task Force further requested the secretariat to explore the possibility of developing an English-Russian glossary of terms used.

## **V. National systems for regular data reporting on the core set of environmental indicators**

### **A. Progress made by countries**

66. The Joint Task Force had agreed at its fifth session on an initial core set of environmental indicators for regular and sustained data-flow reporting (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2012/5, para. 77). Furthermore, at its sixth session, the Joint Task Force had discussed ways to determine the most practical approach for the development of the regular data-flow reporting system. It had further called for the establishment of the necessary normative and legislative basis in the countries concerned to ensure regular data collection and to make the data sets available and easily accessible in common and harmonized formats (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2012/10, para 47). At its seventh session, the Joint Task Force was invited to discuss the progress achieved in the target countries.

67. The scene for the discussion was set by the secretariat, which reminded the target countries about the past decisions and recommendations and informed them about future demands with impacts on regular and sustained data-flow reporting. Among them were (a) the pre-agreement on the organization of the next “Environment for Europe” Conference, for which both the national and regional indicator-based state of the

environment assessment reports would be required; and (b) the agreement that performance indicators for establishing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) be developed to measure the progress on SEIS by the pan-European countries starting from late 2014.

68. An expert from Croatia made a presentation showing how the country was working towards establishing its national system for regular and sustained data handling as a basis for effective environmental reporting and assessment. The presentation showcased a number of complexities and challenges that Croatia had had to address to establish its effective environmental information system.

69. The target countries reported on progress achieved since the previous session in establishing regular data reporting and sharing on the core set of environmental indicators (or beyond). The information provided by countries showed that, in most of the cases, data were collected and the core set of indicators were produced and shared in common formats through the environmental agencies' websites. At the same time, the countries named a number of challenges that they had been facing in that work, and steps that they had been undertaking to eliminate them and to further enhance their national systems (see annex).

## **B. Conclusions and the way forward**

70. The Joint Task Force welcomed the reports of countries and congratulated them on the progress achieved, in particular that, in majority of cases, the core indicators were not only produced in common formats but also shared via the web. It also noted the difficulties faced in a number of countries, which hindered the production and sharing of some of the core indicators, as well as the general challenges encountered. In view of those difficulties and challenges, as well as the future demands with impacts on regular and sustained data-flow reporting, the Joint Task Force decided that the production of the core indicators should be reviewed in detail at its next session.

71. The Joint Task Force agreed that the review of production should be made based on the information — data, indicators and additional information — provided on the websites of the national agencies. Therefore, it requested those target countries that reported on production and sharing of a selected core indicator to provide to the secretariat with a link or links to the site where the indicator was published, together with its data sets and additional information, such as the explanation of the indicator and its production method, its use in policymaking or for fulfilling international reporting obligations, etc. Should the additional information be unavailable or provided in other languages than English and Russian on the websites, the Joint Task Force requested that the information be sent to the secretariat separately.

72. Furthermore, the Joint Task Force requested those target countries that had reported that they did not produce a particular core indicator to provide an explanation with reasons for that situation. The countries were further requested to inform the Task Force if the necessary data were available and, if so, to complete an indicator questionnaire available on the website of the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme.<sup>5</sup>

73. In addition, the Joint Task Force asked the secretariat to prepare an analytical paper to support the review of the production of core indicators at its next session. The paper should describe the status of production and sharing of each of the core indicators in the target countries based on the information available on the websites and the additional information or explanations sent. It should explain how the agreed data production and

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<sup>5</sup> Available from <http://www.unece.org/env/indicators.html>.

sharing criteria, i.e., the use of common data structure and formats as well as SEIS principles, were met. In case failures were identified in meeting the agreed criteria or the principles, the paper should attempt to provide the reasons for such a situation and propose ways to address the failures.

74. Finally the Joint Task Force agreed on the following deadlines for preparing the review of production of the core set of indicators at its eighth session (Geneva, 14–15 May 2014):

(a) **Before the end of 2013**, the secretariat to send the target countries a message reminding them about the agreed review process and deadlines;

(b) **Before the end of February 2014**, target countries to provide to the secretariat a link or links to the websites with the core indicators, data sets and additional information, or, if unavailable, the explanation for such a situation and further information as agreed;

(c) **Before end of April 2014**, the secretariat should prepare and share with the countries the analytical paper on the status of production and sharing of the core indicators.

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