

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

**PROPOSAL FOR TERMS OF REFERENCE OF A JOINT INTERSECTORAL TASK
FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS**

Submitted by the secretariat¹

I. BACKGROUND

1. The involvement of the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) in the preparation of the assessment reports for the Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe” triggered their interest in the development of a set of environmental indicators and practical recommendations on their application. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) under the Committee on Environmental Policy prepared *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (Indicator Guidelines)*², that were endorsed at the Belgrade (2007) Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”. The Guidelines cover 36 key indicators highlighting, for each indicator, the importance of the environmental issue for which it has been designed; international targets, where available; requirements for measurements and data collection; internationally agreed methodologies for the indicator development; and references to useful literature and Internet sites.

2. The Conference of European Statisticians was active in developing environmental statistics in the 1980s and early 1990s. It developed several environmental statistics classifications and a pan-European compendium of environmental statistics. At present, it is supporting a Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (WGSSD) in its efforts to develop a broad conceptual framework for measuring sustainable development including some best practices to assist national governments and international organizations in the design of sustainable development indicator sets and in the development of official statistics in the area.

¹ For discussion by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, at their meetings to be held on 4-5 September 2008 in Geneva and on 20-21 October 2008 in Washington, respectively.

² Published as United Nations publication, Sales No. E 07.II.E.9.

3. Further to initial discussions between the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division and the Statistics Division of UNECE, the Committee on Environmental Policy, at its April 2008 meeting, invited the Conference of European Statisticians to consider cooperating with the WGEMA on methodological issues of environmental indicators (ECE/CEP/148).

II. OBJECTIVE

4. Against this background, it is proposed that a Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators be created. The purpose of the Task Force would be to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national state-of-the-environment reports in EECCA and SEE countries to improve environmental data collection, further strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region.

5. The Task Force would report to its parent bodies, the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians, and their Bureaux. The Task Force would work closely with WGEMA and inform it on the progress made and on the outcome.

6. The Task Force would:

(a) Review the indicators covered by the *Indicator Guidelines* to provide practical recommendations on the necessary adaptation of statistical classifications and data collection forms and procedures for the production of indicators;

(b) Propose additional environmental indicators that may be important but are currently not included in the *Indicator Guidelines* (e.g. environmental expenditure, environmental taxes and subsidies, production of and trade in environmental goods and services and hazardous substances, and resource productivity) and provide, and adapt to the needs of the countries concerned, relevance guidance materials available at the international level;

(c) Recommend modern presentation formats and tools for effective dissemination of environmental indicators including the use of modern information technologies;

(d) Assist in the organization of a workshop on environmental indicators to be jointly organized by UNECE and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in 2009. The workshop would be open to all interested countries to broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches. It would provide a forum for presenting the latest development on relevant methodologies and classifications available at the international level.

III. MEMBERSHIP

7. Members of the Task Force would be nominated by country focal points in the Conference of European Statisticians and WGEMA. UNSD, Eurostat, EEA and OECD would be invited to designate their representatives. The Statistical Division and the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division would jointly service the Task Force.

IV. TIMETABLE

8. The mandate of the Task Force would cover the period from October 2008 to June 2010. Once the terms of reference (ToRs) of the Task Force has been agreed upon by WGEMA and the CES Bureau, the ToRs will be submitted to the parent bodies, for approval and, subsequently, to the UNECE Executive Committee for endorsement.

V. OUTCOME

9. The Task Force would submit, through the WGEMA and CES Bureau, a final report on its accomplishments and a proposal for follow-up, if any, to both UNECE Committees.

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