

Energy

UNFC now operational: a new era for energy and mineral reserves reporting

The history of the reporting of energy reserves and resources worldwide passed a critical milestone on 22 November in Geneva. The Committee on Sustainable Energy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) approved the specifications for the application of the United Nations Framework for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources 2009 (UNFC). The system now has all the needed approvals for it to become operational. For the first time there is a global standard for the classification of all extractive activities. The specifications set out the secondary rules needed for UNFC to be applied, ensuring consistency and coherence with other economic statistical information.

Governments, regulatory agencies, industry, the financial community, international organizations and professional societies have worked under the umbrella of the United Nations to develop UNFC to meet their needs. UNFC is suitable for all extractive activities, including oil, natural gas, coal and uranium, whether mined as a solid or produced as a fluid through wells. Fundamental terms such as "reserves" and "resources" are defined differently in different industry sectors and can be difficult to translate into other languages. UNFC is a numerically-based classification system that rises above the definitional differences and transcends cultural nuances to aid global communication and comparison.

Jim Ross of Ross Petroleum and Chairman of the Specifications Task Force of the UNECE Expert Group on Resource Classification, the body responsible for development of the UNFC specifications, observed: "for any commodity, it is critical that reserve or resource quantities that are reported as UNFC-compliant are sufficiently comparable to provide meaningful information to users of the data. The specifications ensure that this will be the case".

As the only global system that allows reserve and resource estimates based on different classification systems to be documented in a single unified representation, UNFC has a significant impact on the ability to accurately understand the availability of non-renewable resources and hence facilitate the development of appropriate long-term policies based on this information.

Scott Foster, Director of UNECE's Sustainable Energy Division stated: "UNFC is one of UNECE's flagship activities and its development demonstrates the convening power of the United Nations. UNECE has provided the platform for all stakeholders to develop this much needed standard – there is no other venue that would have allowed this happen. I now look forward to the broadening of the scope of UNFC to encompass renewable energy resources".

□ For more information on the UNFC or the Expert Group on Resource Classification, visit: <http://unece.org/energy/se/reserves.html> or contact Charlotte Griffiths at: reserves.energy@unece.org.

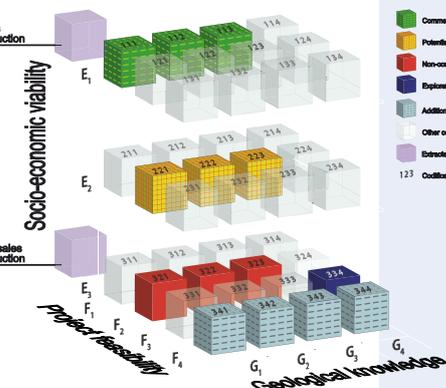
Central Asian countries discuss regional aspects of Rio+20 and the post 2015 development agenda

In response to the call by Rio+20 for the design of sustainable development goals that are consistent with the post 2015 development process, high-level representatives of countries participating in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) met between 19 and 21 November in Almaty, Kazakhstan. They discussed how strengthened regional cooperation in Central Asia can contribute to the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes and the regional priorities to be proposed for inclusion in the post 2015 development agenda. The High-Level Segment of the SPECA Economic Forum held on 21 November under the title "Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Regional Cooperation" discussed the need for policies and programmes to integrate the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

Speaking on behalf of UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary Andrey Vasilyev highlighted the potential of SPECA to effectively support efforts by its participating countries to implement the Rio+20 outcomes. He encouraged SPECA participating countries to agree upon regional priorities for Central Asia's post 2015 development agenda: while each Central Asian country has its specific needs, ongoing consultations have also highlighted several shared priorities that can only be achieved through coordinated regional action.

Participants in the High-Level Segment of the SPECA Economic Forum identified several

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areas where regional cooperation is essential. The ecosystems of the Aral Sea Basin are closely inter-connected, among others by the two river basins of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya. Only through regional cooperation can Central Asian countries achieve environmental sustainability, the efficient and rational management of their shared water resources and effective action on climate change.

The High-Level Segment of the SPECA Economic Forum was preceded on 19 and 20 November by an expert segment under the title "Regional Meeting on Promotion and Financing of Innovative Green Technologies". Participants in the expert segment underlined that environmental challenges require innovative policy responses that reconcile the need to create sustained improvements in living standards with the need to reduce the use of resources and address climate change concerns. Innovation can contribute to finding cost-efficient and eco-innovative solutions to address these challenges, while at the same time creating new business opportunities for the private sector.

Countries participating in SPECA are: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Programme is supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. □

Water and Sanitation

UNECE and WHO Regional Office for Europe launch first analytical tool to measure disparities in access to water and sanitation

In the WHO European Region, access to water and sanitation varies widely between countries, provinces and even people in the same communities, regardless of countries' level of development. A major difficulty in addressing these inequities is the lack of both a detailed picture of the level of access for all population groups and a clear understanding of the main factors in the origin of the inequities. This is especially relevant at times of financial crisis.

For the first time, inequities in access to water and sanitation can be measured with a new analytical tool, launched today by UNECE and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. They present the Equitable Access Score-card for the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (on 25–27 November 2013 in Oslo, Norway), whose agenda gives priority to fair access to water and sanitation.

In 2011, one in nine inhabitants of the European Region still lacked access to piped drinking-water at home and 67 million people lacked access to improved sanitation facilities, hampering the achievement of the water-related target of Millennium Development Goal 7 by 2015. Designed under the framework of the Protocol on Water and Health, the Score-card will help countries establish an equity baseline for access to water and sanitation in order to identify action needed for improved access and to evaluate their progress.

The Score-card provides a checklist to enable a country, region or city to gather, organize and evaluate information. Users can make a comprehensive overview of existing policy measures on fair access to water and sanitation by answering the following questions:

- Are there disparities in access to water and sanitation between geographical areas?
- Do vulnerable and marginalized groups have the same level of access to water and sanitation as the better off?
- Can everybody afford to pay for these services?
- Are there strategic and financial policies to ensure equitable access?

Any country, region or city in the world can use the Score-card to make a self-assessment and monitor its results over time. The Score-card has already been used in various settings.

- In France, in recognition of the benefits of self-assessment in the greater Paris urban area, the national health and environment plan included a recommendation that regional health agencies use the Score-card to identify inequities and develop a strategy to reduce them.
- In Portugal, the self-assessment highlighted information gaps, especially on vulnerable and marginalized groups' access. It also provided input to the revision of the national strategic plan for water.
- In Ukraine, an exercise in Sebastopol revealed that the homes of users who could not pay their bills would be disconnected from the sewage system. This led to the organization of a wide public consultation to find a solution.

Using of the Score-card brings together representatives of the health, environment, social and other sectors, as well as water and sanitation operators and civil society, to address inequalities in access to basic services. The Meeting of the Parties will include a special session on equitable access to safe drinking-water and sanitation, focusing on fair and innovative ways to reach universal access and calling for action to eliminate disparities. □

The Equitable Access Score-card is available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=34032>.

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The Equitable Access Score-card

supporting policy processes
to achieve the human right to water
and sanitation



Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on
the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses

