

First meeting of the 2008/2009 Bureau

Washington D.C. (United States), 20-21 October 2008

Item 2c of the Provisional
Agenda

**PROPOSAL FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL STATISTICS AND ACCOUNTS**

Note prepared by Eurostat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its third meeting of 2007/2008, the Bureau reviewed in depth environment statistics based on a paper by Eurostat and comments by Germany and UNECE. The Bureau acknowledged that coordination of international work in environment statistics has improved over the last few years and efforts have been made to streamline the different international initiatives. The documents concluded that, at the current stage, the main problem is not the coordination of work but prioritisation and convergence of the activities towards a coherent system of environment statistics.

2. In the discussion following the introduction of the paper by Eurostat, comments were mainly focussed on, firstly, the issue of the unclear architecture of the domain of environmental statistics, and secondly, on the lack of an overview of the many different activities that are undertaken and whether this work will lead to a coherent system of environment statistics.

3. Mention was made of the ongoing mapping of the domain of Environmental Statistics by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Integrated Environmental Economic Accounting (UN CEEA) and in the European context by the so-called Group of Four (Eurostat, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Environment Agency (EEA) and the Directorate General on Environment).

4. The Bureau asked the UN CEEA through Walter Radermacher (Chairman of the UN CEEA) to prepare a paper with a proposal on how to address these issues, taking into account the interests of different groups active in the area. The paper will be considered at the CES Bureau 2008 October meeting.

5. This paper puts forward a proposal on how to address these two issues.

**II. THE ISSUE OF UNCLEAR ARCHITECTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL
STATISTICS.**

6. This issue has also been addressed by the United Nations Committee on Economic and Environmental Accounting (UNCEEAA). The CES concern and the recent developments in the field of statistics on Climate Change (Oslo conference) and the requested follow-up

generated a discussion on the mandate and structure of the UNCEEA. In considering a renewed mandate and structure, a further improvement of the overview on environmental statistics was one of the main aims. At its meeting at the end of June, the UNCEEA decided the following (based on the draft report of the Third Meeting of the UNCEEA, June 2008, New York - more details are available in the documents of the UNCEEA as referred to below):

(a) The Committee agreed to broaden its mandate to cover not only environmental-economic accounting but also environment statistics, including statistics on climate change. The new mandate is described in paragraph. 4 of the paper UNCEEA/3/5 (2008);

(b) The Committee recommended that statistics on climate change and spatial frames be explicitly mentioned as part of the work programme of the UNCEEA;

(c) With the broadening of the mandate, the Committee affirmed the importance of a focused work programme and reiterated that in the short and medium term the revision of the SEEA remains the highest priority for the UNCEEA;

(d) The Committee agreed to change its name to the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Environment Statistics. It did not, however, consider it necessary to change its acronym – UNCEEA – which was considered to be an established name for this committee;

(e) The broadening of the mandate and the proposal of the creation of an Advisory Group on Environment Statistics and Environmental-Economic Accounting has implications on the various groups working under its auspices. The Committee discussed the role of those groups. In particular, it recommended that the terms of reference of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (ISWGES) should be reconsidered. It requested the group to prepare a paper on the future of the ISWGES for discussion at the next UNCEEA meeting;

(f) The Committee agreed with the proposal to establish an Advisory Group on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Environment Statistics consisting of experts in those domains, named as members by the Bureau of the UNCEEA, taking into consideration regional representation. The Advisory Group would be a standing body of the UNCEEA, advising it on technical matters discussed by the various city groups and other technical expert groups. In the medium and short term, the Advisory Group would give a high priority to issues in the research agenda for the revision of the SEEA. To reduce the burden on travel and resources, it is recommended that, for the time being, the Advisory Group be composed of a subset of members of the London Group and meet back-to-back with London Group meetings. The composition of the Advisory Group should be reviewed in due course to ensure expertise beyond environmental-economic accounting, depending on the topics being addressed by the various groups. The Advisory Group will be chaired by one of the members of the Bureau on a rotating basis;

(g) The London Group on Environmental Accounting will continue to exist and will be the city group which will address the majority of the issues on the research agenda for the revision of the SEEA. It will submit its recommendations to the Advisory Group, which in turn will submit its recommendations to the UNCEEA.

7. It is expected that, with this change of the mandate of the UNCEEA and its restructuring, the architecture of environmental statistics and the neighbouring fields of statistics will be substantially improved on a global scale. On the European Scale, the efforts of Eurostat and the Group of Four and, more specifically, the efforts stemming from the cooperation on the SEIS Country visits (see point 9), are also expected to substantially improve the architecture and overview.

III. THE ISSUE OF LACK OF OVERVIEW OF THE MANY DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

8. In the context of European and global statistics on environment, environmental accounts and climate change, several mapping exercises are planned or ongoing. Most of these exercises aim at giving an overview of the activities in these fields undertaken by the National Statistical Offices: examples are the mapping of the work on modules in environmental accounts in the EU Members States by UNSD (work also undertaken by UNSD on a smaller scale but in more detail), and the follow-up plan from the Climate Change conference in Oslo to generate information on how countries are involved in e.g statistics on Emission Trading.

9. The current state of environmental statistics on a country level is characterised by a mosaic situation. The lack of use of a framework that organises the elements as described by the DPSIR (Driving Forces, Pressures, State, Impacts, responses) model, for example, is producing the impression of an unclear architecture on the country level.

10. Concerning environmental statistics, Eurostat has an overview of the current situation in national statistical institutes in European Member States and some neighbouring countries. However, information on the activities of many other institutes is lacking or is only partly available. In this context, some activities might in the medium term result in a better overview. Examples are the cooperation with the European Environmental Agency and the other services of the EU, such as DG Environment and DG JRC in the context of the SEIS (Shared Environmental Information System) initiative. The SEIS initiative and, more specifically, the SEIS country visits as they are undertaken in cooperation between the EEA and Eurostat, give detailed insight into the information structure on environmental statistics in European (EEA) Member States. From the available SEIS country visit reports, it is clear that there is great diversity in how environment statistics are organised in countries. Making this visible via the reports, however, allows international coordination.

11. The reports of the SEIS country visits should serve as an important source for a mapping exercise of European statistical information on environmental issues. A similar exercise could be considered in non-EU (EEA member) CES countries.

12. In the document submitted to the CES Bureau for the February 2008 meeting, the activities of the so-called Group of 4 (Eurostat, DG Env, DG JRC and EEA), the joint EU Directors Meeting of Environmental Statistics and Accounts (DIMESA) and EEA Management Board meeting were described in detail, as well as the mandate of the DIMESA. These activities showed that on the EU level coordination is currently well organised and expected to lead to visible results in due time (for example, the Data Centres).

13. It is expected that the actions described above will allow the global statistical system and the European Statistical System to arrive at a much better overview of the ongoing and

planned activities in this field, and finally lead to a more coherent system of environment statistics.

IV. CONCLUSION

14. The following actions are completed, ongoing or planned:

- (a) For the unclear architecture:
 - The broadening of the mandate of the UNCEEA;
 - The restructuring of the UNCEEA and the creation of an advisory group;
 - The strengthening of the cooperation between Eurostat, EEA, DG JRC and DG Environment;
 - The strengthening with the national systems on environmental information via the so-called SEIS country visits;

- (b) For the mapping exercise:
 - Systematically use the inventories on the work on environmental accounting in UNSD and EU context;
 - Use the results of the SEIS country visits;
 - Expand the SEIS country visits to non-EU (EEA) countries.

- (c) For a coherent system of environment statistics:
 - The new UNCEEA will have to guarantee coherency on a global level;
 - On the European level, the cooperation between the EU institutions, OECD and UNECE has to guarantee coherency. The Bureau of the UNECE is invited to follow this on a regular basis.

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