

Second Meeting of the 2011/2012 Bureau
Geneva, Switzerland, 2-3 November 2011

Approved

Item 4(c) of the Provisional
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A TASK FORCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE
RELATED STATISTICS**

Prepared by the UNECE secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. In recent years, several initiatives have highlighted the need to develop climate change related statistics for the purpose of climate change mitigation, impact and vulnerability analysis, and adaptation. The Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission's report called for a set of well-chosen indicators to describe the environmental aspect of sustainability, including climate change. The need to complement Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with other statistics, e.g. to address climate change, had also been noted by the EU Commission's initiative "GDP and beyond". More recently, an EU sponsorship group on measuring progress, well-being and sustainable development has selected further development of climate change indicators to be among its priorities for future work.
2. The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) has also supported the work on developing climate change related statistics. Led by the UN Statistics Division in New York, two Conferences on Climate Change and Official Statistics were organized in 2008. Soon thereafter, the Australian Bureau of Statistics prepared a programme review for the UNSC on how official statistics can better contribute to the climate change debate. The programme review recommended developing a framework for climate change related statistics, improving the quality of greenhouse gas emission (GHG) inventories and advocating the use of official statistics for climate change policies. The UNSC recognised the role of official statistics in closing these data gaps, and emphasised the need for better understanding of the data requirements of stakeholders.
3. Climate change related statistics is a new area for the national statistical offices (NSOs), and therefore, the UNECE considers important that the NSOs define their role among the institutions involved in producing climate change related statistics. During its two latest Commission sessions, the UNECE stressed the need to work towards robust, timely and comparable statistics on climate change in the context of environmental indicators.
4. In view of the latest developments, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) decided to take stock of the current state of work on climate change related statistics in the NSOs, and asked the UNECE to conduct a survey. The aim of the survey was to find out the extent to which the NSOs are involved in producing climate change related statistics and to identify issues of common concern for further work at international level.

5. The survey was also undertaken at the request of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, and the UN Statistics Division supported the work. The questionnaire was consulted with experts from Statistics Norway, Statistics Finland, Eurostat and the European Environment Agency (EEA).
6. The survey covered 69 countries reaching beyond UNECE region, and 47 countries replied. A report on the findings is provided in document ECE/CES/BUR/2011/NOV/9 Add.1. According to the survey, 75 per cent of NSOs that replied participate in producing GHG inventories, whilst almost 40 per cent of them produce climate change indicators. Many countries have concrete plans on how to improve work in this area.
7. The respondents identified the following priorities for international work:
 - establishing a framework for climate change indicators;
 - defining areas for NSOs to improve the accuracy and quality of GHG inventories;
 - harmonising and mapping the GHG and statistical classifications;
 - considering the role of NSOs among other agencies dealing with climate change related statistics.
8. The draft Terms of Reference are prepared to address the needs identified by countries in the survey. The draft was consulted with Statistics Finland, Statistics Norway, Eurostat and EEA, and incorporates their comments.

II. MANDATE

9. The work of the Task Force is conducted within the framework of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period of two years, after which it will submit a final report.

III. OBJECTIVE

10. The main objective of the Task Force is to identify practical steps to support future development of climate change related statistics to meet user needs, and to enhance the role of official statistics in GHG inventories.
11. In pursuing this objective, the Task Force will discuss and collaborate with other bodies involved in international work on climate change related statistics, including the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Eurostat, EEA and UNSD. Regular progress reports will be submitted for consultation with the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) established by the UN Statistical Commission.
12. The work will address issues of climate change related statistics, in particular those related to GHG inventories, statistics on the consequences of climate change and measures taken to reduce climate change and its adverse effects.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

13. The Task Force will undertake the following activities:

(a) Define the scope of work for the Task Force and what is meant by climate change related statistics;

(b) Assess the gap between the user needs and the available climate change related statistics, including international reporting activities;

(c) Explore ways for harmonising the GHG and statistical practices by mapping the classifications and identifying what data NSOs have for GHG inventories;

(d) Identify possibilities to simplify the calculation and improve the quality of GHG data, and consider issues for further revisions;

(e) Review links between climate change related statistics, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) and the UN Framework for the development of environment statistics (FDES), both currently under revision.

(f) Consider organisational issues and the role of NSOs in climate change related statistics.

14. The output will be a review of the current state of climate change related statistics and possibilities to develop and streamline the work, with a proposal for:

(a) Developing climate change related statistics for evidence-based climate change policies: concrete steps and priorities for further work;

(b) Harmonising and streamlining the work of NSOs on the GHG inventories.

V. TIMETABLE

15. The Task Force will work for the period from January 2012 to end of 2013.

VI. METHODS OF WORK

16. The Task Force should develop a more detailed work plan at its first meeting, which will be presented to the CES Bureau. The Task Force will meet face-to-face at least once per year as agreed by the Chair and members. Much of the work is expected to be carried out electronically.

17. The Task Force should be chaired by a statistician with experience and knowledge of the issues. The Chair will have the responsibility for ensuring that the Task Force fulfils its mandate and that its composition is balanced between statisticians and other experts. A leadership sub-group from among the Task Force members will be created to assist the Chair in managing the work.

18. The UNECE will provide secretariat support to the work of the Task Force.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

19. The Task Force will be open to all CES members. International organisations, including UN bodies and other agencies are welcome to participate.

20. The work will be initiated with a small group, including the NSOs of Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway and United Kingdom, as well as EEA, Eurostat and UNSD. At the first stage, this group will focus on defining the scope of work and assessing the gap between the user needs and the available statistics.

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