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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Twenty-ninth meeting
Geneva, 27 February 2009

**DECISIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Cooperation between the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians: Establishment of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators and its Terms of Reference

Note by the secretariat

1. In April 2008, the Committee on Environmental Policy invited the Conference of European Statisticians to consider cooperating with the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment on methodology issues of environmental indicators. Following discussions between the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division and the Statistical Division, terms of reference for a joint intersectoral task force on environmental indicators were prepared. The aim of the task force would be to help countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and of South-Eastern Europe strengthen environmental data collection, produce environmental indicators and promote comparability of environmental statistics.
2. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians at its meeting of 20 and 21 October 2008 agreed on the joint undertaking and approved the attached terms of reference for the task force. The Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session held from 27 to 29 January 2009 agreed on the establishment of the task force and the proposed terms of reference. The task force would function from February 2009 to September 2010.
3. The Executive Committee is invited to approve the establishment of the joint task force on environmental indicators and its terms of reference as annexed to this document.

Annex

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A JOINT TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

I. BACKGROUND

1. The involvement of the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) in the preparation of the assessment reports for the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conferences 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 under the Committee on Environmental Policy prepared the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (Indicator Guidelines)¹, which were endorsed at the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 2007).
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 supports a Joint UNECE/OECD²/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development in its efforts to develop a broad conceptual framework for measuring sustainable development.
3. Further to initial discussions between the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division and the Statistical Division of UNECE, the Committee on Environmental Policy, at its April 2008 meeting, invited the Conference of European Statisticians to consider cooperating with the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment 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 will be to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national reports on the state of the environment 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 joint task force will report to its parent bodies, the Committee on Environmental Policy and Conference of European Statisticians, and to their Bureaux. The task force will work closely with Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and inform it about the progress made and about the outcome.

¹ Published in the United Nations publication, *Environmental Indicators and Indicators-based Assessment Reports: Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*, Sales No. E 07.II.E.9.

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

6. The joint task force on environmental indicators will:

(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) as well as provide and adapt to the needs of the countries concerned relevant guidance materials that are 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 in 2009. The workshop will be open to all interested countries so as to broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches. It will provide a forum for presenting the latest developments on relevant methodologies and classifications available at the global level.

III. MEMBERSHIP

7. Members of the task force will be nominated by country focal points in the Conference of European Statisticians and the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The United Nations Statistical Division, Eurostat, the European Environmental Agency, the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States will be invited to designate representatives. The UNECE Statistical Division and the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division will jointly service the task force.

IV. TIMETABLE

8. The mandate of the task force will cover the period from 2009 to September 2010.

V. OUTCOME

9. The task force will submit, through the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, a final report on its accomplishments and a proposal for follow-up, if any, to both UNECE Committees.
