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Conference of European Statisticians

**Joint Task Force on Environmental
Statistics and Indicators**

Sixteenth session

Geneva, 28–29 October 2019

**Report of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics
and Indicators on its sixteenth session**

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I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators was established by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians to support the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in improving their environmental statistics and indicators. The aim of the work being carried out by the Joint Task Force is to strengthen environmental reporting and make environmental statistics available and comparable throughout the pan-European region in the long term. The terms of reference of the Joint Task Force (ECE/CEP/2017/12) were approved by the ECE Executive Committee on 4 July 2018 (ECE/EX/2018/L.7).

2. The Joint Task Force held its sixteenth session in Geneva on 28 and 29 October 2019.

B. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by environmental experts and statisticians from the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

4. Representatives of the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations University, the European Environment Agency, the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Cadaster Institute (Russian Federation) also attended the meeting. The meeting was serviced by the ECE secretariat.

C. Organizational matters

5. The secretariat opened the session and invited the Joint Task Force to elect its new Chair and up to two Vice-Chairs for a period of two years.

Decisions and recommendations by the Joint Task Force

6. The Joint Task Force elected Ms. Ekaterina Poleshchuk (Belarus) as its Chair and Ms. Ševala Korajčević (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Ms. Natalia Shashlova (Russian Federation) as its Vice-Chairs. Ms. Poleshchuk chaired the meeting.

7. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:

- (a) Implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the fifteenth session of the Joint Task Force (Geneva, 25–26 October 2018);
- (b) Ongoing developments with relevance for the work of the Joint Task Force;
- (c) Review of the ECE *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators*;¹
- (d) Ongoing and planned capacity-development activities.

II. Adoption of the agenda

8. The Chair invited the Joint Task Force to adopt its agenda.

¹ See <https://www.unece.org/env/indicators.html>.

Decisions and recommendations by the Joint Task Force

9. The Joint Task Force adopted the agenda for its sixteenth session, as contained in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/1.

III. Implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the fifth session of the Joint Task Force

10. The secretariat presented the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the fifteenth session of the Joint Task Force, noting that progress had been slowed by the lack of a staff member in the ECE Environment Division whose role it was to implement the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment programme and of a second staff member in the ECE Statistical Division. The United Nations Secretariat had frozen staff recruitment due to financial difficulties.

11. The representative of the secretariat reported the posting on the meeting web page of a draft publication on progress in establishing a Shared Environment Information System in Europe and Central Asia.² He requested that comments be sent in as soon as possible so that the text might still be published in 2019.

12. He also reported that the ECE Statistical Division would soon begin making relevant environmental information available in its database. However, due to the recruitment freeze, little progress had been made in examining how the Shared Environment Information System could be considered in the recommendations for the establishment of national reporting platforms for the Sustainable Development Goals.

13. During its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019), the Committee on Environmental Policy had welcomed the mid-term review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System (ECE/CEP/2019/7), prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment with support from the secretariat.

14. As requested, proposals for amendments to the ECE *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators* had been prepared by the secretariat, focusing on those indicators identified by the Joint Task Force as being of highest priority, for discussion by the Joint Task Force at the current session. As also requested, the secretariat had drafted a workplan for the review of the Guidelines (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/4) and had involved experts from the Joint Task Force and other communities in the review.

15. The secretariat reported that the assessment framework of the Shared Environmental Information System had been further revised by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment at its twenty-first session (Geneva, 6–7 May 2019) and then approved (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/3); consequently, the online reporting tool – to be developed by UNEP – should be piloted. The assessment framework would be used for the final review of progress in the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System.

16. At its twenty-first session, the Working Group had requested the secretariat to prepare a draft outline of the final review of progress to be considered by the Joint Task Force at the current session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/2, para. 29 (c)). The Working Group had requested UNEP, in close coordination with the secretariat, to finalize the online reporting tool in time for the current session of the Joint Task Force. Additionally, it had requested the Joint Task Force to consider phasing out the use of production templates once a revision of the Guidelines had been completed (Ibid., para. 53).

² See <http://www.unecce.org/index.php?id=50800>.

Decisions and recommendations by the Joint Task Force

17. The Joint Task Force took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the fifteenth session of the Joint Task Force.

18. The Joint Task Force adopted the report of its fifteenth session (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2018/2).

IV. Ongoing developments with relevance for the work of the Joint Task Force

A. Shared Environmental Information System

19. The secretariat explained that, at its twenty-first session, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment had agreed that, once approved, the revised framework would contribute to the final report on progress in the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia, to be presented at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

20. The secretariat presented the finalized assessment framework and highlighted the steps taken to improve it, including the introduction of: levels for the questions, so that many would be asked only once or only once per theme; a new “general” category of questions; additional guidance on the use of the questionnaire; and a new system for assigning a performance score, which would allow for performance evaluation by country, theme, indicator and pillar of the Shared Environmental Information System. The Working Group had agreed that the online reporting tool would be used as the primary tool for data collection for the final review of progress (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/2, para. 32).

21. The secretariat noted that the reporting process for the final review report – which might start in December 2019 – was voluntary. The secretariat listed the 22 data flows, covering all 18 core indicators of the ECE set of environmental indicators, that would be covered by the final review. The final decision regarding the themes, venue and timing of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference would be taken at the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019).

22. The representative of UNEP explained the format for the collection of data for the final review report and informed the meeting of the current status of development of the online reporting tool. He suggested that, in countries where several institutions would be involved in completing the questionnaire, an offline (Excel-based³) reporting format should be used when gathering inputs and then the file should be uploaded to the online reporting tool.

23. A representative of Switzerland emphasized that the online reporting tool should be useable by multiple institutions at the national level when countries completed the questionnaire.

B. Pan-European environmental assessment

24. The secretariat referred to the informal concept note on the next pan-European environmental assessment.⁴ The assessment was required for the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and would use information gathered for the final report on progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System.

³ Mention of a commercial company or product does not imply endorsement by the United Nations or the States Members of the United Nations.

⁴ See <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50800>.

C. System of Environmental-Economic Accounting

25. The secretariat presented updates from international work related to the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, covering the main results of the Joint OECD/ECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (Geneva, 20–21 February 2019), the fourteenth meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (New York, 24–25 June 2019) and the twenty-fifth meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting (Melbourne, Australia, 7–10 October 2019).

26. The main focuses of the Joint OECD/ECE Seminar had been water accounting, environment-related taxes and subsidies and experimental ecosystem accounting. Participants had recommended continued collaboration among international organizations to harmonize questionnaires on and frameworks for water accounting, development of cooperation with ministries of finance to boost the implementation of environment-related taxes and subsidies and starting work on experimental ecosystem accounting within a small-scale pilot activity.

27. The meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting had concentrated on six working areas, including ecosystem accounting, a global database on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, capacity-building and communications. Lastly, the London Group had studied the issue of experimental ecosystem accounting. The representative of the secretariat informed the Joint Task Force that the London Group would be invited to attend the next Joint OECD/ECE Seminar, to be held from 13 to 14 February 2020, to present the main outcomes of its work.

28. A representative of the European Environment Agency underlined the importance of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for the Agency's activities, especially within the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, where it had carried out capacity-building activities based on the System. She encouraged international organizations to share with the meeting their studies on the System. Additionally, she expressed the Agency's readiness to support financially the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus so that they could participate in the Agency's seminar on the System, to be held in 2020.

D. Waste statistics

29. The secretariat presented updates on the work of the Task Force on Waste Statistics under the Conference of European Statisticians. The main items addressed by the Task Force were growing information demand, weaknesses in the waste framework and clarification of important waste-related terms.

30. The representative of the European Environment Agency stressed the importance of an accurate definition of waste in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The issue of waste definition had been identified by the Agency in the period 2017–2018, during its joint project with Eurostat on waste statistics, waste streams and waste use.

31. A representative of the United Nations University contributed to the discussion through a presentation on a regional electronic waste (or "e-waste") monitor. The pillars of the United Nations University work were policy advice, the Sustainable Development Goals and e-waste statistics, capacity-building activities and the facilitation of international dialogue. He spoke about a definition of e-waste, different classifications of e-waste, the University's tools for collection of e-waste data and a questionnaire on e-waste for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which he encouraged countries to complete. He also informed the Joint Task Force about forthcoming workshops on e-waste and possible fellowships available for one or two delegates from a given country.

32. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine shared with the meeting their experiences with e-waste statistics, pointing to a lack of national legislation on e-waste and unclear classifications.

E. European Environment Agency activities

33. The representative of the European Environment Agency informed the Joint Task Force about its recent activities on environmental indicators. She presented an environmental indicator catalogue, which comprised a set of 123 indicators and was available on the Agency's website, and the political priorities of the European Union: climate neutrality; zero pollution; "farm to fork"; circular economy; sustainable finance; and just transition. She noted the expected results of the European Neighbourhood Instrument Shared Environmental Information System II East project, which were: the implementation of regional and international commitments; improved capacities in national administrations; and regular state-of-the-environment reports. She also presented the Agency's projects on water, biodiversity, air quality, land cover, open data and e-government for the environment.

34. The countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus expressed their gratitude to the European Environment Agency for the support, fruitful cooperation and visible results achieved by the countries over the years.

F. Expert Group on Environment Statistics

35. A representative of the United Nations Statistics Division provided an update on the work of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics relevant to the building of capacities in the regular production and sharing of environment statistics in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. He noted that: there would be amendments made to the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics; countries were testing the Environment Statistics Self-Assessment Tool and National Action Plan; and the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), OECD and Eurostat continued to work towards harmonized data collection on water, waste, climate change and other themes.

G. Green growth indicators

36. The representative of OECD reported on the Organization's recent work related to the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and OECD green growth indicators. She presented the OECD reports on implementation of green growth indicators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and the new European Union-funded EU4Environment programme, which would support countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

37. Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kazakhstan presented their national work on OECD green growth indicators. Belarus informed the meeting that the national list of green growth indicators, which were under development, had already been approved for 2019 and could easily be accessed online. Kazakhstan mentioned its upcoming report on the green growth indicators, which would be published in three languages and made available online by mid-November 2019. Azerbaijan added that, in 2016, it had developed green growth indicators, which had been published online in two languages, and a green growth database.

38. The secretariat stressed the importance of the development of the green growth indicators, indicating the alignment of ECE environmental indicators with the OECD green growth indicators.

H. Climate change indicators

39. The secretariat reported on the outcomes of the Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics (Geneva, 3–4 October 2019), including the finalization of the ECE set of core climate change-related indicators and the role of national statistical offices in climate action. The presenter highlighted the fact that climate change adaptation, the measurement of impacts of climate change on biodiversity and health and the development of capacity for the implementation of the set of indicators would be the priorities for further work of the next Expert Forum. He informed the Joint Task Force that, when

reviewing the ECE climate change indicators, he had taken into consideration relevance, soundness and data availability. At the current time, it was not possible to add some of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators to the list of the ECE environmental indicators, as the methodologies for certain global Goals – such as Sustainable Development Goal 13 (on climate action) – were still under development.

Decisions and recommendations by the Joint Task Force

40. The Joint Task Force took note of the information provided by the secretariat and UNEP on the revised Shared Environmental Information System assessment framework (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/3), an online reporting tool and the draft outline of a progress report on the establishment of the System.

41. The Joint Task Force requested that an offline (Excel-based) reporting format also be provided for assessing progress in the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System and that the online reporting tool be thoroughly tested by the end of 2019.

42. The Joint Task Force agreed to provide comments on the draft outline of a progress report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System and the draft of the forthcoming ECE publication on the Shared Environmental Information System by 15 November 2019.

43. The Joint Task Force also agreed to provide comments on a concept note for a pan-European environmental assessment. The first round of comments was due by 12 November 2019, before the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy. The second round of comments might be sent until the end of 2019.

44. The Joint Task Force welcomed the information provided by the secretariat on international work related to the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. The secretariat should explore how to organize more capacity-building activities on the System.

45. The Joint Task Force also welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and the United Nations University on the waste statistics framework and e-waste statistics.

46. The Joint Task Force took note of a deadline indicated by the United Nations University for completing the questionnaire on e-waste, which would be mid-December 2019.

47. The Joint Task Force noted that countries faced many challenges in gathering official statistics on electronic waste and integrating e-waste estimates into national statistical frameworks.

48. The Joint Task Force welcomed the information provided by the secretariat, the United Nations Statistics Division, the European Environment Agency and OECD on green growth indicators, relevant work of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics, outcomes from the Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics and other relevant work of those bodies.

49. The Joint Task Force noted the importance of a coordination mechanism between national statistical offices and the environmental authorities when defining environmental statistics.

50. The Joint Task Force encouraged the alignment of the climate change indicators within the set of ECE environmental indicators with other climate change-related indicators developed for major policy processes.

V. Review of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators

51. At its fifteenth session, the Joint Task Force had expressed satisfaction with the progress made on revising the ECE environmental indicators and decided to consider how the metadata and metadata sheets of the environmental indicators with the highest priority of ECE *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators* could be further revised and improved.

52. At the current session, Azerbaijan reported on the structure and themes of the national catalogue of environmental indicators, which had been developed with the support of the European Environment Agency and Eurostat, and on further steps in developing environmental indicators. The catalogue consisted of 14 themes and 157 indicators and was aligned with the recommendations of ECE. The catalogue, which was available online and open for comment, had been reviewed by almost all departments of the country's Ministry of Ecology and National Resources.

53. The secretariat recalled that the Joint Task Force had requested the secretariat to revise the ECE *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators* to better inform global policies, link them with statistical frameworks and increase the user-friendliness of the metadata (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2018/2, paras. 31–40). The main items described by the secretariat were the structure of the metadata of indicators, data and statistics, the indicator metadata database and a new list of indicators. That approach had already been presented to the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The presenter stressed the importance of making a clear distinction between “indicators” and “data and statistics”, referring to the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics. He demonstrated to the Joint Task Force what the new metadata database looked like, indicating that several indicators (such as air pollution and ozone depletion indicators A1 and A2, water indicators C1–C4, energy indicators G1–G4, waste indicators I1–I4 and environmental financing indicator J1) had already been populated into the metadata database. In addition, the secretariat highlighted the importance of the climate change component when revising the Guidelines. The secretariat suggested that the easiest way to share the metadata at the current time would be to post downloaded PDF files on the ECE website.

54. Ukraine pointed out that there was still misunderstanding as to the meaning of the terms “data” and “indicator” and that further guidance would be useful in that regard.

55. The European Environment Agency expressed its full support for the ECE work on metadata and suggested that countries take policy into consideration when developing indicators and using the expertise of the Working Group, ECE environmental conventions and other relevant ECE divisions. The Joint Task Force agreed to approach the Working Group on Environmental Assessment and Monitoring in order to nominate experts to contribute to the review of the metadata database.

56. The representative of the Russian Federation stressed the importance of preparing metadata in English and Russian to avoid differences in terminology between the two languages.

57. The secretariat presented the proposed revision of metadata for indicator A1, on emissions of pollutants into atmospheric air, with no substantive changes and only a change in the presentation of the metadata.

58. The representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina presented information on the country's data sources, collection and experiences and suggestions for improving the metadata. She highlighted the fact that the confidentiality of statistical data created obstacles for the statistical authorities when working with environmental information.

59. Following the discussion, the Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan and Ukraine shared their national experiences with confidential data. The representative of Kazakhstan noted differences between national legislation and regional environmental conventions, such as the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The representative of Ukraine added that, when compiling air emission accounts, his country faced specific problems such as long delays, the

lack of a classification of activities and the lack of information on other pollutants. The Republic of Moldova had solved the problem of data confidentiality by changing the status of statistical data to “administrative” and, on that basis, had developed an information collection, processing and sharing system.

60. The secretariat informed the meeting about the proposed revision of metadata for indicator A2 – on ambient air quality in urban areas. The secretariat recommended following the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines by adding fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) as a pollutant, the 24-hour mean limit values of PM_{2.5}, particulate matter (PM₁₀) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂), the 8-hour mean limit value of ozone, the 10-minute mean limit value of SO₂, the 1-hour mean limit of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and the annual mean concentrations of PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and NO₂, while not introducing Sustainable Development Goal indicators 3.9.1 (“Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution”) and 11.6.2 (“Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) in cities (population-weighted)”). The Joint Task Force agreed to the proposed revisions by the secretariat, taking into consideration relevant WHO guidelines.

61. As to water-related metadata, the secretariat proposed to the Joint Task Force the addition of the following for indicator C1: long-term average values (20 years or more) for each item; “Outflow secured by treaties” (as an analogy to the United Nations Statistics Division/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics); and logical links to the FAO global information system on water resources and agricultural water management (Aquastat) and Sustainable Development Goal indicators. For indicators C2–C7, the secretariat proposed alignment with the 2018 version of the United Nations Statistics Division/UNEP Questionnaire, to correct the methodology used for Water Exploitation Index and not to add Sustainable Development Goal indicators 6.4.2 (“Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources”), 6.4.1 (“Change in water-use efficiency over time”) and 6.1.1 (“Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services”). Finally, for indicator C8, the secretariat suggested correcting the name of the indicator to “Reuse of freshwater” and updating the industry breakdown.

62. The representative of Belarus considered it essential for countries to develop the environmental indicators based on the United Nations Statistics Division/UNEP Questionnaire, as it would allow countries to collect, share and publish information in line with international practices. The Joint Task Force agreed to revise indicators C9–C16 at its next session.

63. With respect to the waste-related metadata, the representatives of the secretariat and the United Nations University proposed to the Joint Task Force the following: for indicator I1, not to introduce any changes; for indicator I2, to add “Incineration, of which with energy recovery” and “Incineration, of which without energy recovery”; for indicator I3, to make a distinction between reuse and recycling; for indicator I4a, to ensure full alignment with the United Nations Statistics Division/UNEP Questionnaire; and for indicator I4b, not to make any changes.

64. North Macedonia supported the proposal of the secretariat to align ECE waste indicators with the United Nations Statistics Division/UNEP Questionnaire, since such an approach would allow countries to report more easily and to be internationally comparable.

65. The representative of the United Nations Statistics Division presented the recent amendments to and results of the United Nations Statistics Division/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics. The Questionnaire had been translated into Russian, which had minimized the reporting burden on the countries, and some Sustainable Development Goal indicators had been added to the Questionnaire. Waste variables had been collected for the first time in 2018. The Questionnaire distinguished between “municipal waste collected” and “municipal waste generated”. In addition, the United Nations Statistics Division had carried out a pilot data collection exercise on e-wastes in 2017, with 16 variables.

66. The representative of UNEP again addressed the issue of the current status of development of the online reporting tool. He reported that the assessment framework for the Shared Environmental Information System had been finalized and the Excel forms had been restructured. In the coming weeks, countries would receive a notification and be able to pilot

the online reporting tool. In the short term, there would be national training courses on the reporting tool, covering how to use it and how to complete the data entry.

67. The representative of Ukraine provided information on the development of ECE waste-related indicators in his country. He suggested clarifying connections between indicator I1 (row 2 of the indicator Excel sheet “Mining and quarrying (ISIC 05-09)”) and indicators I2, I3 and I4, and making clear the wording of the “policy context” subsection. For indicator I2 (row 3 of the indicator Excel sheet “Hazardous waste imported during the year”), he recommended specifying what the phrase “temporarily storage of waste” meant.

68. The representatives of Armenia, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova agreed that the work on waste statistics should continue, since there were many points to be improved and revised. The Joint Task Force agreed to the introduction of the stock of hazardous waste at the beginning of the year, so that there would be a full balance, and the introduction of “generated municipal waste” versus “collected municipal waste”. It also requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal regarding plastic wastes and synthetic clothes, reconsider the name of the indicator “non-hazardous waste” and make sure that there was alignment between ECE and the United Nations Statistics Division Questionnaire on the theme. Furthermore, the Joint Task Force wished to consider the introduction of additional items for the waste indicators, such as e-waste or composition of municipal waste.

69. The representative of OECD presented environmental protection expenditure accounts. He clarified the terminology, methodology, problems and limitations of such accounts.

70. As requested by members of the Joint Task Force in earlier sessions, the secretariat made a proposal regarding a new indicator J1, on environmental protection expenditure. The secretariat proposed developing the first indicator J1.1, called “National expenditure on environmental protection as a percentage of GDP”, showing expenditures for environmental protection of Government, enterprises, non-profit organizations and households in relation to gross domestic product. In developing the indicator, consideration should be given to the Eurostat Classification of Environmental Protection Activities 2000 (CEPA 2000), the Classification of the Functions of Government and the Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE). The secretariat suggested that the Joint Task Force take the OECD indicator on environmental expenditures as a starting point, though it could be still challenging for the countries.

71. The representative of Kazakhstan presented the national experience on the compilation of environmental protection expenditure accounts and the country’s strategy for further development of those accounts. Kazakhstan had begun implementing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in 2014 by establishing a working group and elaborating its own methodology. In developing environmental expenditures accounts, Kazakhstan was guided by the Central Framework of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Eurostat environmental protection expenditure accounts. At the current time, Kazakhstan was producing seven CEPA 2000 categories of environmental protection expenditures.

72. The Joint Task Force decided to review indicators, covering subsidies, taxes and other issues. It requested the secretariat to draft metadata for environmental expenditures, share it within the small group of experts and, later, with the Joint Task Force, for feedback. The Joint Task Force agreed to review that group of indicators during its next session.

73. The Joint Task Force agreed to postpone the introduction into the list of ECE environmental indicators of those Sustainable Development Goal indicators that could not be calculated by countries themselves, or that were still tier III indicators.

Decisions and recommendations by the Joint Task Force

74. The Joint Task Force welcomed the note prepared by the secretariat on the Amendment of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/4).

75. The Joint Task Force welcomed the information provided by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, as presenters, alongside the secretariat, the United Nations University, the United Nations Statistics Division and OECD, addressing indicator metadata, air pollution and ozone depletion, water, waste and environmental financing.

76. The Joint Task Force welcomed the work undertaken by the secretariat, partner organizations and small technical groups, including member State experts, to review the *ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators*.

77. The Joint Task Force noted that further work on the Guidelines would be carried out by the secretariat and the small groups and asked that comments made during the session be addressed in that work. Furthermore, the Joint Task Force agreed that, once cleared by the small groups, revised indicator Guidelines would be shared with the members of the Joint Task Force for approval. The revised Guidelines would be considered approved if no substantives comments had been submitted within four weeks.

78. The Joint Task Force requested the secretariat to present the completed parts of the revised Guidelines as an official document at its next session, given the official publication of the *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators*.

79. The Joint Task Force requested the secretariat to address the comments made when amending the Guidelines, and to report on the progress made at the next meeting.

VI. Ongoing and planned capacity-development activities

80. The representative of Uzbekistan presented information on a national workshop on environmental and livelihood Sustainable Development Goal indicators, organized with the support of a large number of organizations (Tashkent, 12–14 June 2019). International experts had provided the participants with methodological recommendations and data sources and identified problems related to the monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

81. Representatives of ECE and UNEP then gave a joint presentation of their most recent and upcoming capacity-building activities related to the Shared Environmental Information System and environmental statistics for Sustainable Development Goals. In the period 2017–2019, a series of capacity-building workshops and seminars had been carried out in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The main focus had been on environmental data sharing, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and development of methodologies and data collection for environment-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators. In addition, the United Nations Development Account was funding a joint ECE-UNEP project, entitled “Improved environmental monitoring and assessment in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus”, which should be implemented in the period 2018–2021.

82. The representative of Belarus informed the Joint Task Force about a training event on energy statistics for use in policy tracking, jointly organized by the International Energy Agency, ECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and held in Dushanbe from 21 to 22 May 2019.

83. The Russian Federation expressed its gratitude to ECE and UNEP for their support, particularly for the organization, together with the national statistical office and OECD, of a training event on environment-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators (Moscow, 19–21 March 2019). The event had proved to be beneficial and fruitful for the national experts.

Decisions and recommendations by the Joint Task Force

84. The Joint Task Force welcomed the information provided by Belarus and Uzbekistan and the capacity-building activities of ECE, UNEP, the European Environment Agency and OECD.

VII. Other business

85. The representative of OECD expressed her gratitude to the Joint Task Force for the invitation. She indicated that OECD would continue to strengthen collaboration with ECE and explore possible ways of aligning the work of OECD and ECE on the green growth indicators.

86. Switzerland, supported by the Russian Federation and the European Environment Agency, stressed the importance of setting the date of the Working Group session, since it would be the final milestone in the development of the online reporting tool on the Shared Environmental Information System. The European Environment Agency added that it was vital to put the development of the online reporting tool on the agenda of the upcoming session of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

VIII. Closure of the meeting

87. The Joint Task Force thanked Austria, Norway, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the European Union – through the European Environment Agency – for the financial support provided to organize the sixteenth session.

88. The Joint Task Force adopted the decisions taken during the session.

89. The next meeting of the Joint Task Force will be held from 26 to 27 October 2020 in Geneva.
