

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (online), 17-18 February 2021

Item III (e) of the Provisional
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE JOINT TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL
STATISTICS AND INDICATORS FOR EECCA AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN
COUNTRIES**

Note by the Secretariat

The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators was set up by the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in 2009.

The main objective of the Joint Task Force is to assist the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in their efforts to produce, share and use environmental information following international standards and guidelines, including the Framework for Development of Environment Statistics and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. In October 2015, the CES Bureau extended the mandate of the Task Force until 2021, to be reviewed in February 2021.

The Bureau approved the extension of the mandate and the updated terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators until June 2023.

I. BACKGROUND

1. In October 2015, the CES Bureau approved the terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for the period 2016-2021. CEP at its 23rd session in November 2017 approved the same terms of reference until 2021. A review of the terms of reference was planned at the first meetings of CES Bureau and CEP in 2021.
2. The work is closely linked with the Environment for Europe process and the outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The Ministerial Conference has been postponed to October 2022, among others due to impacts of COVID-19. Therefore, in October 2020, the 26th session of CEP extended the mandate the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment until mid-2023 with a planned renewal thereafter to reflect the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference. As the work of the Joint Task Force is closely aligned with the Working Group and the Environment for Europe process, its timing and terms of reference should be in accordance with these processes. Therefore, it is proposed to extend the mandate of the Task Force also until June 2023.
3. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators continues the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (2009-2015). The group has revised all indicators covered by the *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia* (Indicator Guidelines) prepared by the CEP Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and endorsed at the Belgrade

Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in 2007. The Joint Task Force updated the Guidelines and added important indicators that were initially not included.

4. The current focus of the work of the Joint Task Force has shifted from reviewing the indicators to the production and online sharing of data. The aim is to establish regular data flows for effective reporting according to international monitoring and assessment requirements, including the obligations under the relevant multilateral environmental agreements. This work will support the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the pan-European region beyond 2021.

II. MANDATE

5. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators shall serve under the oversight and guidance of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and the Conference of the European Statisticians (CES). It will report to both CEP and CES. These terms of reference are valid until June 2023. The ECE secretariat will present new terms of reference for the Joint Task Force to CEP and CES for their review in 2023.

III. OBJECTIVE

6. The aim of the Joint Task Force is to assist the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (target countries) in their efforts to:

- (a) correctly apply the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) data methodologies in line with statistical standards;
- (b) analyse and communicate environmental data;
- (c) implement the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA); and
- (d) apply environmental indicators in the context of sustainable development and green economy initiatives.

7. The Joint Task Force will also assist the CEP Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in evaluating the application of the internationally accepted methodologies and statistical standards in SEIS data production.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

8. The Joint Task Force shall:

- (a) Provide advice to the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment on the application of SEIS data production methodologies by the target countries;
- (b) Address specific challenges related to methodology and data quality in producing environmental data and indicators in line with the UNECE Online Indicator Guidelines, international statistical standards and guidelines, SEIS requirements and the recommendations made by the Working Group;
- (c) Build capacity in the target countries for the compilation and integration of environmental data in support of measuring sustainable development and green economy initiatives;
- (d) Provide a forum for sharing experience on the communication of environmental information to users, in line with the UNECE recommendations on statistical communication and the recommendations made by the Working Group;

- (e) Assist countries in developing the capacity for the implementation of SEEA;
- (f) Revise the *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators* to take into account recent policy developments and new guidelines for production of environmental statistics and indicators.

9. The following outputs will be achieved:

- (a) Advice on the application of SEIS data production methodologies is provided;
- (b) Capacity in the target countries is gradually strengthened in applying SEIS data production methodologies;
- (c) Capacity in the target countries is gradually strengthened for the compilation and integration of environmental data in support of measuring sustainable development and green economy initiatives;
- (d) Capacity in the target countries is strengthened for communicating environmental information;
- (e) Implementation of SEEA is gradually improved;
- (f) *Revised Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators* are available.

V. TIMETABLE

10. The activities of the Task Force are planned for the period from February 2021 to June 2023, as described in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Tentative time schedule of activities of the Joint Task Force from February 2021 to June 2023

<i>Tentative schedule</i>	<i>Planned activity</i>
Feb - Sep 2021	Continuation of the review of the <i>Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators</i> and preparation of a draft document for the 18 th meeting of the Joint Task Force
Oct 2021	18 th meeting of the Joint Task Force
Nov 2021 - Sep 2022	Implementation of recommendations and decisions of the 18 th meeting of the Joint Task Force; continuation of the review of the <i>Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators</i> and preparing a final draft
Oct 2022	19 th meeting of the Joint Task Force
Nov 2022 - Feb 2023	Finalisation of review of Guidelines and submission to the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment
Nov 2022 - Jun 2023	Implementation of recommendations and decisions of the 19 th meeting of the Joint Task Force

VI. METHODS OF WORK

11. The Joint Task Force shall continue to meet at least once annually. The Joint Task Force will also communicate through e-mail and other electronic collaboration platforms, such as wikis, during the period between meetings.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

12. The Joint Task Force shall be composed of experts representing national statistical offices and ministries or agencies dealing with environment statistics and assessment from the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Representatives of ministries and agencies dealing with economic issues may be invited to participate in the meetings. Other UNECE countries are welcome to participate in the work.

13. The Joint Task Force shall elect its Chair and Vice-Chair for a term of two years, and these officers shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term.

VIII. SECRETARIAT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

14. The UNECE Environment and Statistical Divisions will provide the joint secretariat for the activities of the Joint Task Force.

15. The work will be supported by the European Environment Agency, OECD, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization.

16. Donors will be invited to provide support for the activities of the Joint Task Force.

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