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Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Conference of European Statisticians

Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators

Eighteenth session

Geneva, 18 and 19 October 2021

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the eighteenth session

**To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 9.30 a.m. on
Monday, 18 October 2021**

I. Provisional agenda

1. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Adoption of the report of the seventeenth session.
4. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference.
5. Ongoing developments with relevance for the work of the Joint Task Force.
6. Review of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators.
7. Ongoing and planned capacity development activities.
8. Data needs, statistics and indicators on environment and health in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
9. Other business.
10. Closure of the meeting.

II. Annotations

According to its terms of reference (ECE/CEP/2017/12, annex) the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators assists the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in their efforts to:

- (a) Apply the Shared Environmental Information System principles and methodologies for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) core environmental indicators and data production in line with international statistical standards;



- (b) Analyse and communicate environmental data;
- (c) Develop capacity to implement the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting;
- (d) Develop capacity for the compilation and integration of environmental data in support of measuring progress in the context of sustainable development and green economy initiatives.

The Joint Task Force also assists the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in evaluating the application of internationally accepted methodologies and statistical standards in data production and provides a forum for sharing experience on the communication of environmental information to users.

The Joint Task Force is open to environmental experts and statisticians from all ECE member States.

The work is supported by the European Environment Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Representatives of other international organizations dealing with environmental statistics are welcome to participate in the meetings of the Joint Task Force.

The eighteenth session of the Joint Task Force is expected to be held on 18 and 19 October 2021 as a 2-day meeting. The agenda and format of the session may need to be adjusted at a later stage given the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

1. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs

At its sixteenth session (Geneva, 28 and 29 October 2019), 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.¹ The terms of reference of the Joint Task Force specify that the Joint Task Force shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs for a term of up to two years and that the chair and vice-chairs shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term. Members of the Joint Task Force will therefore need to elect a new chair and vice-chairs at the eighteenth session. Members are invited to start consultations on possible candidates prior to the session.

The secretariat will open the session and invite the Joint Task Force to elect its new chair and two vice-chairs for a period of two years.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair will invite the Joint Task Force to adopt the agenda for its eighteenth session as set out in the present document.²

3. Adoption of the report of the seventeenth session

The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the seventeenth session of the Joint Task Force (Geneva, 26 October 2020) as contained in the corresponding report (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2020/2) and invite the Joint Task Force to adopt the report.

The secretariat will inform the Joint Task Force of the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations made at the seventeenth session.

¹ See ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/2, para. 6.

² Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the ECE website (<https://unece.org/info/Statistics/events/357762>).

4. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

At its twenty-sixth session (Geneva and online, 9–11 November 2020), the Committee on Environmental Policy extended the mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to mid-2023 in alignment with the Environment for Europe ministerial process.³ Considering the close linkages of the Joint Task Force with the work of the Working Group, the secretariat proposed that the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators also be extended to June 2023 (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/3).

At its online meeting on 17 and 18 February 2021, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians had already supported the renewal of the terms of reference of the Joint Task Force.⁴

The secretariat will provide an overview of the extended terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/3) and the Joint Task Force will be invited to endorse the extension.

The Joint Task Force will also be invited to initiate a discussion on a possible strengthened and broadened mandate and terms of reference for the Joint Task Force in terms of geographic coverage and content beyond mid-2023.

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

During its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019), the Committee on Environmental Policy welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and UNEP on the next pan-European environmental assessment and selected option 3 from among the options for the next pan-European environmental assessment, as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6, subject to the availability of resources. It requested the secretariat and UNEP, in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, to prepare a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment, and to inform the Bureau regularly of progress made.⁵

During its twenty-third session (Geneva and online, 4 and 5 May 2021), the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment welcomed the draft elements of the next pan-European environmental assessment as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/5 and took note of the progress made, timeline and next steps for the assessment. It also requested the secretariat to engage the Joint Task Force in the review of progress and clearance of draft elements of the assessment.⁶

The secretariat, together with consultants recruited for the development of the assessment, will present recent progress made on the assessment and planned next steps in the finalization of the assessment in preparation for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, to be held in Nicosia from 5 to 7 October 2022.

The Joint Task Force will be invited to endorse the finalized parts and progress made in development of the assessment (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/5, ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/6, ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/7 and ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/8).

The secretariat will also summarize the main outcomes of the sixth Joint OECD/ECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (Geneva, 9–11 March 2021), the fifth Expert Meeting on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (online, 29 March–1 April 2021), the first Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics (online, 7–10 June 2021), the related outcomes of the

³ See ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 38 (c).

⁴ See ECE/CES/2021/14/Add.12, para. 25.

⁵ See ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 37 (k) (i) and (ii).

⁶ See ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/2, para. 39 (a) and (b).

sixty-ninth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (online, 23–25 June 2021) and the Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics (online, 31 August–3 September 2021).

Other international and regional organizations, including the European Environment Agency, OECD, UNEP and the United Nations Statistics Division, will be invited to give an update on their activities related to the production and sharing of environmental statistics and indicators.

The secretariat will also inform the meeting about activities of other related expert groups, such as the Task Force on Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters and the Task Force on Measuring Circular Economy.

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

At the sixteenth session of the Joint Task Force (Geneva, 28 and 29 October 2019), the secretariat recalled that the Joint Task Force had requested the secretariat to revise the ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators⁷ to better inform global policies, link them with statistical frameworks and increase the user-friendliness of the metadata.⁸

At the seventeenth session of the Task Force, the secretariat presented the completed parts of the Revised Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2020/3) and the draft metadata sheets for 42 indicators (28 of which had also been made available in Russian prior to the meeting) for discussion and approval.⁹

The secretariat also informed the Joint Task Force that the remaining indicators (approximately 120, including new proposals for indicators) would be gradually finalized and sent to Joint Task Force members for comments.¹⁰

The Joint Task Force agreed with the general structure of the revised guidelines as proposed by the secretariat, using the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics as the overall framework and structure, noted the importance of harmonizing the indicators with the European Environment Agency/European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) indicator system, and decided that an expert group, led by the secretariat, together with the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Joint Task Force, would continue the review of the Guidelines, taking into account all comments that had been expressed during the meeting and those made in writing.¹¹

The Joint Task Force also requested the secretariat to share all revised documents with it for written feedback.¹²

The secretariat made the list of revised indicators available prior to the Joint Task Force's eighteenth session and invited the members of the Joint Task Force to provide written feedback through an online survey on whether to keep, modify, discard or add indicators.

At the current session, the secretariat will present a summary of feedback received and the completed parts of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2021/4) for discussion and approval.

Furthermore, the Joint Task Force will be invited to discuss the next steps regarding the review process.

⁷ See <https://www.unece.org/env/indicators.html>.

⁸ See ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2019/2, para. 53.

⁹ See ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2020/2, para. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 24 (a), (b) and (c) (i).

¹² *Ibid.*, para. 24 (d).

7. Ongoing and planned capacity development activities.

The secretariat, UNEP and other international and regional organizations, including the European Environment Agency and OECD, will report on ongoing and planned capacity development activities related to environmental statistics and indicators, the Shared Environmental Information System and Sustainable Development Goal indicators. UNEP and ECE, together with the Environment Agency Austria, will provide an update on recent developments within the framework of the United Nations Development Account-funded project “Improved environmental monitoring and assessment in support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus” and other capacity-development activities, as appropriate.

Members of the Joint Task Force will be invited to present national capacity development activities and identify concrete capacity development needs.

8. Data needs, statistics and indicators on environment and health in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

At its seventeenth session, the Joint Task Force invited its members, international organizations and partners to provide it with regular updates on recent developments related to environment and health statistics, indicators and data.¹³

The secretariat will report on the latest developments in its work in relation to environment- and health-related data and indicators.

International and regional organizations and country representatives will be invited to share their experience in producing environment- and health-related data and indicators and their use for policymaking in the context of the pandemic.

9. Other business

The Joint Task Force will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention. Members of the Joint Task Force wishing to propose items are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

10. Closure of the meeting

The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions of the Joint Task Force, present the decisions and close the meeting. The report of the meeting will be finalized by the secretariat after the meeting and will be posted on the web page of the meeting in due course.

III. Organization of work

Detailed information on the organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the web page of the meeting.

¹³ See ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2020/2, para. 15 (b).