



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 March 2013

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-first plenary session

Geneva, 10-12 June 2013

Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda

Reports of the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau and Teams of Specialists, and approval of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2013

Progress report of the Task Force on climate change related statistics

Note prepared by the Task Force

Summary

The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians set up the Task Force on Climate Change Related Statistics in November 2011 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 greenhouse gas emission inventories.

The final report of the Task Force is planned to be submitted to the Conference of European Statisticians in 2014. In February 2013, the Bureau expressed strong support for the work of the Task Force and supported the main messages coming out of the Meeting on Climate Change Related Statistics for Producers and Users, held on 19-20 November 2012 in Geneva (the report of the meeting is available as document ECE/CES/2013/18/Add.10).

At the request of the Bureau, the Task Force compiled a paper including the interim recommendations, key policy messages and key directions for future (ECE/CES/2013/11/Add.1). Members of the Conference are welcome to provide comments on this document by sending their feedback to Anu Peltola of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe secretariat (anu.peltola@unece.org).

I. Introduction

1. The Task Force (TF) on climate change related statistics was set up by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in November 2011¹.
2. The work was launched as a follow-up to the programme review on climate change and official statistics carried out by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in 2009. The programme review was based on a paper by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the outcome of the two Conferences on this topic held in 2008. As a result, the UNSC recognised the role of official statistics in closing the data gaps related to climate change, and emphasised the need for better understanding of the data requirements of stakeholders.
3. At the request of the CES Bureau and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) carried out a survey in 2011 to explore to what extent national statistical offices (NSOs) are involved in producing climate change related statistics, and to identify issues of common concern for further work at international level.
4. In total, 48 national statistical offices replied to the survey. They called for international work to consider how the data available in the statistical systems could be made more useful for the purposes of climate change analysis and policy making. In 75 per cent of the responding countries, NSOs participate in the compilation of greenhouse gas emission inventories, at least by providing source data, and 40 per cent produce some climate change indicators.
5. In view of these developments, the Bureau asked the Task Force first to assess the gap between user needs and available statistics, and define the scope of climate change related statistics. The overall objective of the work 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 greenhouse gas emission inventories.
6. The TF consists of representatives of the national statistical system of Canada (Chair), Italy, Finland, Norway, United Kingdom and Mexico as well as the European Environment Agency, Eurostat and the Directorate-General on Climate Action of the European Commission. UNECE provides the secretariat for the Task Force.
7. The output of the Task Force work 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 greenhouse gas emission inventories.

II. Achievements

8. The Task Force organized an expert meeting on Climate Change Related Statistics for Producers and Users, which took place on 19-20 November 2012 in Geneva. The

¹ The Terms of References approved by the Bureau, work plan and related documents are available at: www.unece.org/stats/ToS.html

meeting discussed the initial findings of the Task Force and identified many concrete recommendations for enhancing the role of statistical systems in providing climate change related statistics.

9. In total, 47 experts took part in the meeting. The participants included statisticians, data users, greenhouse gas emission inventory compilers, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. The following countries attended: Albania, Armenia, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland. The following international organizations were represented: Directorate-General on Climate Action of the European Commission (DG CLIMA), European Environment Agency (EEA), Eurostat, International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Bank, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and World Health Organisation (WHO). In addition, a non-governmental organization, the Carbon Brief, took part. The report of the meeting is presented in document ECE/CES/2013/18/Add.10.

10. The meeting comprised four sessions. The first session discussed the scope of climate change statistics (CCS) based on a paper by the Task Force. The second session addressed user needs and data gaps based on presentations from WHO, EEA, DG CLIMA, the Carbon Brief and the World Bank. The third session included presentations by Finland, Mexico, Albania, Kyrgyz Republic, Eurostat and Netherlands introducing current practices and challenges in reporting on emissions and other climate change information. The panel discussion, consisting of representatives of DG CLIMA, WMO, UNFCCC, EEA, Statistics Finland and the UNECE Statistical Division, outlined key directions for future in CCS. All documents related to the meeting are available at: www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.11.environ.html

11. The Task Force has prepared a lot of material that will form the basis for drafting the chapters of the final report. It presented some of these documents at the expert meeting. The Task Force has carried out most of its work electronically through a dedicated wiki site and by holding a number of teleconferences.

12. Two Task Force meetings have taken place: 16-17 April 2012 and 21 November 2012 (back-to-back with the expert meeting). The first Task Force meeting discussed annotated plans for each research topic. In the second meeting, the Task Force drafted a tentative structure for the final report and agreed on the lead authors.

13. In summary, the Task Force's work is progressing as planned:

(a) The Task Force has tested different frameworks and models to define the scope of climate change related statistics. The expert meeting gave important feedback for finalizing the definition of the scope of CCS;

(b) User needs and data gaps have been reviewed by conducting interviews of a number of stakeholders and by carrying out desk studies on the data needs for emission inventories and climate policies. The expert meeting also included presentations on user needs. The UNECE survey on the involvement of statistical offices in CCS has been further analyzed to review existing statistics. Further work is needed for prioritizing the existing data gaps;

(c) The countries' experience presented at the expert meeting helped to review the relationships between NSOs and emission inventory compilers. Communication between organizations involved in CCS needs to be improved to better meet user needs for climate data. Many challenges exist because of underdeveloped institutional settings, unclear division of work and lack of coordination in CCS nationally and internationally;

(d) The countries' experience presented in the expert meeting highlighted both good practices and lessons learned. These and the results of a brief desk study on country practices will be presented in the final report;

(e) The climate change related statistics pose challenges to statistical infrastructure (i.e. definitions, quality frameworks, resources and processes, etc.). These challenges were analysed in a paper by the Task Force and discussed at the expert meeting. The differences in definitions, quality frameworks and production processes of emission inventories and official statistics need to be further explored;

(f) The Task Force drafted initial recommendations for the next steps for NSOs to better meet user needs based on the feedback of the expert meeting. These recommendations will be further developed during a Task Force meeting that will be held in April 2013.

14. As requested initially by the Bureau, the Task Force has collaborated with other bodies involved in international work on reporting climate change relevant information. Progress reports were sent to the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) in May 2012 and November 2012.

15. Moreover, the Task Force has interviewed 11 organizations about their views on using official statistics in climate change analysis and how statistical offices could improve their contribution. The interviews targeted the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNFCCC, WHO, WMO and DG CLIMA as well as researchers and NGOs, such as the University of Bologna, Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), the Finnish Environment Institute, the Carbon Brief and the World Wildlife Fund.

III. Summary of the Bureau discussion in February 2013

16. The Bureau discussed the progress of work of the Task Force on climate change related statistics on 6 February 2013. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) The Bureau supported the initial recommendations included in the report of the Meeting on Climate Change Related Statistics for Producers and Users, held in November 2012. The Bureau asked the Task Force to establish priorities and identify practical steps that could be implemented in the short term to improve provision of climate change related data in statistical offices.

(b) The Bureau expressed the need to increase awareness in statistical offices for urgent action on climate change related statistics. A brief document providing a summary of the work of the Task Force and its first findings should be prepared. The document should include key directions for future and key policy messages.

(c) It would be useful to identify inter-linkages of the climate change related statistics to other statistical domains and infrastructure issues, such as statistical frameworks, standards and classifications. This will help Chief Statisticians to take into account the requirements of climate change related statistics in other activities undertaken under the CES umbrella.

(d) The Task Force should be clear in its communications that it is dealing with climate change related statistics and not with meteorological data.

(e) The issue of climate change related statistics should be proposed to be included in the agenda of a future United Nations Statistical Commission session.

(f) One practical example that could be followed up from the November meeting concerned the quarterly estimates of greenhouse gas emissions released by Statistics

Netherlands. These estimates are published together with the quarterly GDP 45 days after the end of each quarter. This practice can help to improve timeliness of climate change related statistics and increase policy relevance of these data.

17. The Bureau expressed strong support for the work of the Task Force and supported the main messages coming out of the expert meeting, held on 19-20 November 2012.

18. As requested by the Bureau, the Task Force prepared a summary of the first findings of the Task Force, interim recommendations and key policy messages for the CES 2013 plenary session (document ECE/CES/2013/11/Add.1).

IV. Further work

19. The Task Force plans to finalise the full report by the end of 2013 in order to submit it for wide consultation with all CES member countries and organizations in early 2014. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the report will be submitted to the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians for endorsement in 2014.

20. Taking into account the pioneering work of the Task Force, wider consultation of the key recommendations would be useful, including with other institutions involved in reporting climate change relevant information. The Task Force is, therefore, considering organizing an expert meeting, tentatively on 8-9 October 2013. This would also offer an opportunity to hold a Task Force meeting back-to-back with the expert meeting to agree on how to finalise the report.

21. The Task Force will hold a meeting on 22-23 April 2013 in Geneva. The meeting will review the draft chapters of the final report, finalise the policy briefing and make preparations for the possible expert meeting.

V. Action by the Conference

22. The members of the Conference are welcome to comment on the interim recommendations and the key policy messages provided in document ECE/CES/2013/11/Add.1. Please send your comments to Anu Peltola of the UNECE secretariat (anu.peltola@unece.org).
