

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For decision

Second Meeting of the 2005/2006 Bureau  
Washington, D.C. (United States), 24-25 October 2005

Item 8b of the Provisional Agenda

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Note prepared by Statistics Sweden

INTRODUCTION

1. Sustainable development indicators are used by national governments and international agencies for monitoring progress towards goals set by national governments and comparing performance among countries. The working group should identify good concepts and practices in order to assist national governments and international organizations in the design of sustainable development indicator sets and in the development of official statistics in the area. However, it should be clear that the objective is not to develop international recommendations on a particular set of sustainable development indicators to be used at the national level. Effort should be devoted to establishing a common understanding of the “object” of sustainability (that which is to be sustained) and to establishing core principles of the measurement of sustainability.

PROPOSAL

2. The working group should:
- i) articulate a ***broad conceptual framework*** for sustainable development measurement. While the starting point of this work should be the concept of natural capital, the group should also consider other approaches to the extent that natural capital is found insufficient from a conceptual standpoint;
  - ii) identify the broad ***domains*** that good indicator sets should span;
  - iii) develop a ***menu*** of good sustainable development indicators in order to help governments and international organizations when they are designing indicator sets;
  - iv) identify a ***small set of indicators*** from the menu that might become the core for international comparisons;
  - v) identify basic data systems necessary for a small set of indicators and identify their possible sources (existing or new statistical surveys, administrative records, information derived from environmental monitoring systems);
  - vi) discuss the relationship between integrated environmental and economic accounts and sustainable development indicators.
3. The working group will be a joint working group of the OECD and the UNECE Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The OECD Statistics Directorate will provide the working group with a secretariat; some secretarial support will also be provided by UNECE and Eurostat. The working group will submit a more detailed project (with milestones) to the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 2006. The working group should, at the conclusion of its work, report back to the Conference of European Statisticians and the OECD Annual Meeting of Sustainable Development Experts.

**TIMETABLE**

4. The working group should endeavour to have an interim set of recommendations by spring of 2007, in time for discussion as appropriate at the June 2007 meeting of the CES. A final set of recommendations should be prepared by the end of 2007.

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