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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

Conference of European Statisticians

**Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics**

28 September – 1 October 2020, Geneva, Switzerland (hybrid and virtual meeting)

# **Conclusions of the Chair of the Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics**

## **I. Attendance**

1. The 2020 UNECE Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics took place from 28 September to 1 October 2020. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uzbekistan.

2. The Expert Forum was attended by the representatives of the Directorate-General for Climate Action of the European Commission (DG CLIMA), Eurostat, European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Union, Group on Earth Observation (GEO), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA), World Adaptation Science Programme, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the World Bank Group and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

3. Bennett Institute for Public Policy of the University of Cambridge, CAOS Lda, Cadaster Institute, eco2ro, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change, Griffith University, Midsummer Analytics, Nalanda University, PlanAdapt and State University Zhytomyr Polytechnic also participated in the Expert Forum.

## **II. Organization of the meeting**

4. Mr. Olivier Thunus (Luxembourg), the Chair of the Steering Group on Climate Change-Related Statistics, chaired the meeting.

5. The Expert Forum consisted of four sessions:
  - Session 1: Setting the scene (28 September 2020) – Session Chair: Olivier Thunus (Luxembourg)
  - Session 2: Measuring climate change adaptation (29 September 2020) – Session Chair: Giovanna Tagliacozzo (Italy)
  - Session 3: Role of the statistical community in climate action (30 September 2020) – Session Chair: Arthur Denneman (Netherlands)
  - Session 4: Linkages between climate, wealth and well-being (1 October 2020) – Robert Smith (Midsummer Analytics)
6. Sessions 1, 2 and 4 were held in English in a virtual format. Session 3 was held in English, French and Russian in a hybrid format.
7. The outcome of the deliberations during each session are summarized in the Chair's conclusions below.
8. All meeting documents are available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53848>.

### III. Conclusions

#### A. Session 1: Setting the scene (28 September 2020)

9. National statistical offices should produce data related to important policy issues (e.g. fossil fuel subsidies or kerosene taxation) and interact with international organizations to advance the statistical measurement of new topics and develop internationally agreed methodologies.
10. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, many governments are putting in place new strategies and measures for economic recovery. It will be important to measure how “green” the recovery is, and national statistical office can produce important information for this purpose.
11. Producers of climate change-related statistics should address their products and communication not only to experts but to a wide range of users, also using new media.
12. National statistical offices should continue to be involved in mandatory reporting on GHG inventories, tracking progress on nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and support provided to developing countries. They should also explore producing information on climate change impacts and climate change adaptation.
13. National statistical offices should initiate and/or advocate for the development of national climate change-related indicator sets. By following the UNECE and UNSD indicator sets where relevant, NSOs can support these initiatives and contribute to improving availability of internationally comparable climate change-related statistics and indicators.

#### B. Session 2: Measuring climate change adaptation (29 September 2020)

14. Climate change adaptation is a large and complicated area. Basic scientific knowledge of many topics is needed to understand the data needs, which vary strongly among and within countries and are context-specific. It is also a dynamic area, and it is essential to stay updated about the developments.
15. As shown by the UNECE survey, many NSOs already undertake or plan some activities related to climate change adaptation, such as producing relevant statistics, linking

and disseminating data from other producers or supporting monitoring of national adaptation plans. They often carry out these activities in collaboration with other national institutions.

16. Many challenges are observed in this work. Lack of resources, lack of statistically operational definitions, conceptual difficulties and data gaps were considered the most important. In terms of data gaps, different organizations produce a lot of potentially useful data but it is often not fit for purpose. For example, the available data on economic losses is not internationally comparable.

17. Lack of political commitment to climate action and policy coherence are crucial challenges. There is a need for national statistical offices and international organizations to increase resources, capacity and coordination to make progress in this area.

18. Important improvements, including progress on concepts and definitions, have been achieved by the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction communities, such as the presented work of European Environment Agency with Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change and [UNDRR/ISC Hazard Definition and Classification Review Technical Report](#). More communication and collaboration among the communities is needed. Achievements and innovations in terms of policy, concepts, methods and data need to be better shared with the statistical community. The statistical community should use these materials as guidance in addressing the challenges in producing climate change adaptation statistics.

19. Involving NSOs in designing national adaptation strategies and plans, and their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, is critical for quality assurance and sustainability of climate change adaptation data. Currently, not all the National Adaptation Plans in place have M&E frameworks, and support from NSOs is critical to improving this aspect.

20. Adaptation indicators are very context-, country- and region-specific, and it is not possible to have a full, common indicator set for all countries. Still, the CES core set of climate change-related indicators and the UNSD indicator set can help NSOs to start providing some minimum information on climate change adaptation, vulnerability, exposure, resilience and improve the knowledge. The statistical community also needs to be open to qualitative information on climate change adaptation.

21. There is a need to bring together all the efforts and move forward in an integrated and coherent manner, involving more countries, institutions, academia and the private sector. The work should include sharing best practices, starting with available relevant indicators, analyzing interlinkages, clustering relevant thematic areas and creating taxonomies. The experience of the most advanced countries and institutions should be used as a towing force. Climate change adaptation should also be seen more broadly as part of societal transformation towards better recovery, response and preparedness concerning different risks under the principle of “one health”.

22. International statistical frameworks, such as [Framework for Development of Environmental Statistics](#) (FDES) and [System of Environmental Economic Accounting](#) (SEEA), can help to produce, model and organize statistics on climate change adaptation.

### C. Session 3: Role of the statistical community in climate action (30 September 2020)

23. Each NSO should have their own roadmap to developing climate change-related statistics and set their priorities, taking into account the [CES Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics](#), the recent [in-depth review on the role of statistical community in climate action](#), and the proposed follow up to the in-depth review.

24. Good practices should be shared on [the wiki platform](#), in particular on implementing [the CES Set of Core Climate Change-related Indicators and Statistics](#), but also on practical issues: how to communicate with users, what data and what guidance are needed for measuring the ongoing energy transition. Through submitting good practices, NSOs can share experience and help each other.

25. Both [International Recommendations on Energy Statistics](#) and SEEA are essential in the development of relevant climate-change related statistics. It is strongly encouraged to have timely emission data at the same frequency as macroeconomic statistics, that is, quarterly emission estimates. It was considered useful to estimate quarterly emissions for the economy (SNA approach), for the territory (IPCC approach) and/or by fuel type.

26. An important role of official statistics in the context of climate action is informing the general public and increasing their understanding of climate change drivers and mitigation efforts. Quarterly emissions can be very useful for this purpose as they link the emissions with the ongoing phenomena, such as weather, economic cycles or fuel changes with a short time lag.

27. More focus should be given to renewable energy statistics and producing climate change-related statistics at the subnational level. In the near future, efforts will also be needed on new topics, such as fossil fuel subsidies, footprint analysis, and green finance statistics.

28. Official statistics should be used more in climate action and energy transition policies. Making existing statistics fit for purpose, developing new statistics and developing and disseminating climate change-related statistical products were considered as having the most impact. The dissemination of statistics and statistical products should be aimed not only at experts but at all citizens.

#### **D. Session 4: Linkages between climate, wealth and well-being (1 October 2020)**

29. For nearly 20 years, there have been important efforts to measure inclusive/comprehensive wealth. The policy community is beginning to take notice of these efforts as a way of moving beyond GDP and showing how sustainable development of countries is as opposed to development relying on depletion of assets, including natural capital.

30. These efforts are only starting to take into account climate change, but there is already good progress and a wide range of statistical, analytical and policy-oriented activities undertaken. These include the revision of SEEA as the central global framework for measuring natural capital, expanding the range of assets that are taken into account in measuring nations' wealth and illustrating the impact of climate change on the value of all national assets. Another example is allocating emissions based on where products and services are consumed or where the damage occurs. There are also attempts to value renewable energy as an economic asset.

31. New approaches are needed in statistics to reflect the depletion of natural capital, impacts of climate change on the global economy, a huge increase in international trade and inequality within and between countries. Wealth accounting can capture these issues and provide key input to the discussion on climate change, its mitigation measures and impacts. It can inform the needed innovation in policies, concepts, methods and data.

32. The statistical community should take note of these efforts. National statistical offices can work towards producing wealth measures, starting from building SEEA accounts piece-by-piece.

33. This work should be better communicated to all stakeholders, especially the general public, also using the mainstream media. It helps to understand the importance of the

environment for economic outcomes and the value of preserving natural assets versus depleting them. It can also be used by citizens and civil society to advocate for policy measures aiming at the long-term well-being of the society. Data produced by NSOs can have more impact on the public debate than data calculated by researchers.

34. It has to be acknowledged that valuing natural or social capital is difficult. Many assumptions and simplifications are needed. Accounting for future damages can only be very limited, and not everything can be treated as an asset that can bring income to someone. There are invisible benefits of preserving the environment that cannot be captured by the valuation. As a result, there are different views on whether and to what extent NSOs should undertake such work. Publishing wealth measures as experimental statistics or co-publishing results with research organizations can be a solution.

35. Good progress is being made on addressing the challenges. Still, some critical assets cannot or should not be measured in monetary terms and must be measured in biophysical terms. However, the perfect should not be the enemy of the good, and environmental statistics and accounts should not be held to a standard that is not applied in other domains. If natural capital is not measured, its value may be overlooked.

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