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Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring

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(Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda)

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DATABASES IN THE UNECE REGION

Note by the secretariat¹

1. According to its terms of reference, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring should, among other things, promote the coordination of efforts and strengthen international initiatives within the region on environmental monitoring and related areas, in particular, by improving data transfer and use.

Current situation

2. Today, many international organizations and institutions and governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements collect environmental data on UNECE Member Countries and publish assessment reports covering entirely or partially the UNECE region. These include United Nations bodies and agencies (UNEP, UN Statistics Division, UNECE, WHO, WMO, FAO etc), OECD, Eurostat, European Environment Agency and private or public research institutes (the World Resources Institute, for example). Assessment reports present a picture of important issues and trends such as land degradation, pollution of air, soil and water, human health and welfare, etc.

3. Many international institutions are secondary data collectors in fact and the number of prominent primary sources of environmental data is rather limited. Most of the latter are listed in the note on data collection for the Kiev report (CEP/AC.10/2002/4, annex). Many institutions collect a wide variety of statistical data sets, mostly socio-economic in nature or produce themselves geo-referenced data sets relating to the terrestrial surface, oceans, atmosphere etc.

¹ This document was not formally edited.

4. Various initiatives have been undertaken at the global level such as those under UNEP/Earthwatch and UNEP/UNCSD Common/ Compatible Systems of Access to Data and Information to facilitate and harmonize the provision or sharing of core data sets, and the relevant information (meta-data) which describes and makes them useable for international environmental assessments and other studies. For instance, the Core Data Working Group was assembled in the context of preparations for UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report series to achieve better access to existing data sets, more efficiency in improving or developing new data sets, more comparability between them and other advantages (<http://earthwatch.unep.net/about/docs/cordatwg.htm>).

5. Insufficient attention has been paid so far, however, to broadening country coverage by existing international environmental databases and data accessibility. Coverage of UNECE countries in transition and, especially, Newly Independent States (NIS) is far from being satisfactory, for instance. Poor data reporting by a number of UNECE Member States according to their obligations regarding multilateral environmental agreements is another issue. Insufficient knowledge about the availability of environmental data in individual international databases or uneasy access to them hamper country comparisons and data harmonization.

Possible action

6. In considering its possible contribution to better coordination of and strengthening international initiatives within the region, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring might decide, as a first step:

- (a) To list major international environmental databases that are based on data collection from a substantive number of UNECE Governments;
- (b) To list data sets in these international databases that would be helpful for regional, subregional and national assessments and policy-making, and to identify possible gaps in country coverage and reporting;
- (c) To propose, as a result of this inventory, measures to improve country coverage in existing environmental databases and to make data contained therein more easily accessible.

7. The proposed activity would not aim at building up a complete database of existing data collections. The inventory would focus on monitoring² data flows in a few environmental areas only: climate change, ozone layer, air pollution and quality, inland waters, soil, forests, fisheries, nature (species and protected areas), and waste. Those databases would be covered which receive monitoring, modeling or inventory-based data from Governments. The inventory would cover environmental databases maintained, in particular, by:

- United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD);

²In this context environmental monitoring is defined as *gathering, assessing and reporting environmental information obtained through continuous or periodic sampling, observation and analysis (including modelling) of both natural variation or changes and anthropogenic pressures and their effects on humans and the environment.*

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- UNECE:
 - Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution;
 - Forest assessments in Europe;
- United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP):
 - Vienna Ozone Convention and Montreal Protocol;
 - Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes;
 - Convention on Biological Diversity;
 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES);
 - Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS);
- World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO);
- Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT);
- The European Environment Agency (EEA) including its European Topic Centres on:
 - Air and Climate Change;
 - Water;
 - Terrestrial Environment;
 - Nature Protection and Biodiversity;
 - Waste and Material Flows;
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);
- Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP);
- Council of Europe:
 - Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats;
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance;
- World Conservation Union (IUCN).

8. A draft guideline data sheet for the international institutions concerned is annexed. If so decided, the secretariat would circulate this guidance sheet and prepare, subsequently, an inventory for consideration by the Working Group at its third session.

Annex**INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DATABASES
IN THE UNECE REGION**Guideline Sheet

for completion by international institutions and secretariats of environmental conventions

Title of the international organization/convention (web site address)		
Type of data and time series: (e.g. emissions of, data available since 198....., submitted annually)		
Holding body: (e.g. Working Group on, Steering Body on ..., Task Force on ...)		
Contact details: (e-mail address of a responsible officer)		
Accessibility: (e.g. availability via Internet - http://www, or “as publication only”, ...)		
Participating countries	Participation in the activity (if, “Yes”, should be marked by X)	Actual data submission (if, “Yes”, should be marked by X) and possible comments
Albania		
Andorra		
Armenia		
Azerbaijan		
Belarus		
Belgium		
Bosnia and Herzegovina		
Bulgaria		
Canada		
Croatia		
Cyprus		
Czech Republic		
Denmark		
Estonia		
Finland		

France		
Georgia		
Germany		
Greece		
Hungary		
Iceland		
Israel		
Italy		
Kazakhstan		
Kyrgyzstan		
Latvia		
Liechtenstein		
Lithuania		
Luxembourg		
Malta		
Monaco		
Netherlands		
Norway		
Poland		
Portugal		
Republic of Moldova		
Romania		
Russian Federation		
San Marino		
Slovakia		
Slovenia		
Spain		
Sweden		
Switzerland		
Tajikistan		
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		
Turkey		
Turkmenistan		
Ukraine		
United Kingdom		
United States		
Uzbekistan		
Yugoslavia		

Any other countries		