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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

EGM on Environmental Economic Accounting for the ESCWA Region
Beirut, October 14-16, 2009

INFORMATION NOTE

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is organizing an Expert group meeting on the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) for ESCWA which will be held in the UN House, Beirut, during the period of October 14-16, 2009.

I. Background

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) developed the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) in 1993, as a satellite to the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA), in recognition to the increasing importance of integrating environmental issues into development and the need to account for the manifold interactions between all sectors of the economy and the environment in order to ensure sustainable development.

ESCWA through the funded project "*Strengthening National Capacities in Environment Statistics, Indicators and Accounts in support of progress toward achieving the internationally agreed development goals in the ESCWA and ECLAC Region 2007-2009*", has planned activities to assist in enhancing the national capacities of Member States in environment statistics, indicators and accounts in order to integrate environmental concerns into economic development, thus supporting progress toward achieving environmental sustainability and related international agreed development goals member countries.

This assistance by ESCWA, which encompasses training workshops, technical assistance missions, publication of studies and development of information systems, is coordinated with regional and international agencies, particularly UNSD, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the regional statistical cooperation programme between the European Union and Mediterranean partner countries (MEDSTAT) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

II. Purpose of the EGM

Experts will discuss the publication on "Framework for environmental economic accounting in the ESCWA region", that was prepared by ESCWA in 2009. The framework proposes the system to ESCWA member countries, albeit with some adaptation aimed at taking into account the priorities and specificities of the region. The framework addresses, in the context of environmental accounting, scarce water resources, land degradation, and exploitation of oil and gas resources, which are considered main constraints in achieving sustainable development, in addition to environmental protection expenditure, cost of environmental degradation and valuation. Experts and countries representatives will discuss and give their views and recommendations regarding the framework. The publication will be sent to participants by mail and posted on the Meetings' website.

III. Tentative agenda of the meeting

The meeting will take place for 3 days, 2 sessions per day, as per the following draft agenda:

Session 1: Framework for Integrated Environmental-Economic accounting (SEEA) for the ESCWA Region: General Framework, SEEA revision, Review of the status of environment statistics and accounts as per the global assessment;

Session 2: SEEA Sub-accounts for ESCWA: Water Accounts, Water Surveys, Energy Accounts, Land and Soil Accounts;

Session 3: SEEA Applications: EEA and Climate Change: Air emissions, Environmental Protection Expenditures, Cost of Environmental Degradation (World Bank, UNSD);

Session 4: Regional and Country Experience: Importance of environmental accounting in the Arab Region, the experience of ECLAC, case studies from countries;

Session 5: Regional Agenda;

Session 6. Closing.

IV. Participation and registration

The meeting will bring together experts (statisticians, managers and/or accountant) from National Statistical Offices, from Ministries of Environment and Water Authorities in the Arab Countries.

International experts from the UN Statistics Division, from UNECLAC, from the World Bank, professors in environmental economics, the Mexican National Commission of Water will participate in the meeting.

The nomination form to be filled by participants is attached.

V. Date and venue

The meeting will be held in the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon from 14 to 16 October 2009. More information on the venue of the meeting will be given later to the participants.

VI. Documentation, methods of work and official languages

The working language is English and Arabic. Interpretation will be available for both languages. Experts and country representatives are kindly asked to prepare a short paper presenting the work of their organization or their country on environmental accounting and should submit the paper to Ms Wafa Aboul Hosn (E-mail: aboulhosn@un.org).

PowerPoint and PDF presentations will be available for download at the ESCWA/Statistics Division website (<http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/main.asp?division=sd>) and the project website (<http://www.escwa.un.org/esiap/>). Participants are encouraged to download the papers from the website and bring their copies to the meeting.

VII. Accommodation and travel arrangements

The meeting will take place in UN-ESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon. ESCWA will cover the participation of experts (tickets, DSA and terminal expenses).

Nominated participants are requested to fill the nomination form and send copies of their passport in order to finalize the administrative arrangements concerning their travel to:

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