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UNECE



Twenty-first session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

We are happy to report that the twenty-first session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment was successfully held from 6 to 7 May October 2019 in the Palais des Nations, Geneva. Following up on decisions made during the twentieth session of the Working Group (3–4 September 2018), the first day focused on two important topics, namely, the revised Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) Assessment Framework ([ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/5](#)) and the draft concept for next pan-European environmental assessment ([ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6](#)). It included presentations on the revised assessment framework, possible options for the SEIS performance score ([informal document](#)), the SEIS online reporting tool, options contained in the draft concept for the next pan-European regular assessment and country perspectives on these topics. The first day moreover included a presentation of a forthcoming UNECE publication “Progress in establishing SEIS in Central Asia and Europe: A mid-term perspective”.

The second day of the session included a presentation on the gap analysis review reports produced for a United Nations Development Account project on improving environmental monitoring and assessment in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as progress made in reviewing the UNECE set of environmental indicators and the associated UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators. It also included reporting by countries on major actions taken nationally to strengthen environmental monitoring and assessment since the twentieth session of the Working Group. The European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNECE presented a report on the “Current

status of production, sharing and use of UNECE environmental indicators in the EU Eastern Partnership countries”.

The Working Group agreed, amongst other things, on the next steps to revise the SEIS self-assessment questionnaire and approved a new metadata sheet as part of the process of revising the UNECE set of environmental indicators. The Working Group also agreed to stop using the environmental indicator production templates once the revision of the UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators was complete. In addition, The Working Group decided to recommend the second option of the draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment – an indicator-based and thematic assessment – be used as a basis for preparing a detailed proposal on the pan-European assessment.

All documents and presentations from the Working Group session can be found here:

<https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50823>

Regional Conference on Environmental Data

Led by UNECE and implemented together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the project “Improved environmental monitoring and assessment in support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus” aims to strengthen the national capacities of seven target countries



(Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia and Tajikistan). These countries have requested support to improve environmental monitoring and assessment for the 2030 Agenda, highlighting the need to enhance the comparability of environmental statistics in the UNECE region.

As part of the project, the UNECE organized the first of two regional capacity-building conferences on environmental data on 8 May 2019. The purpose of the first regional conference was to review the use, harmonization and streamlining of environmental indicator-related methodologies for national and international reporting obligations and to provide a forum to exchange knowledge for the target countries.

More information on the project can be found [here](#).



The conference included presentations on progress towards measuring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Earth Observations Data Cube, citizen science, open data, administrative and statistical data for SDGs and using state-of-

the-environment-reporting to address SDGs. It also included a poster session during which the target countries introduced results from gap analysis reviews produced for each country, setting out the next phase of the implementation of the project.

All documents, presentations and posters from the conference can be found here: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50826>

Citizen Science – A growing Global Opportunity

Citizen Science Associations are forming across the pan-European region to provide professional standards for citizen scientists, to build common platforms and methods for citizen science, to share best practice and to secure funding and coordination of citizen science programmes. The European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) has been in the vanguard of this work. Growing from 2013 to become the main focus for citizen science in Europe, working closely initially with EEA and more recently with the European Commission.

Globally, Citizen Science Associations now exist in Australia, the United States of America and Europe and are forming in Asia, Latin America, Africa, New Zealand and Canada. Together they have also formed the Citizen Science Global Partnership (CSGP) to provide a focus for work with international bodies and, in particular, the United Nations.



The CSGP is working closely with the UN to develop common data and metadata standards and common methods of working so that best practice citizen science programmes can be made available globally. Work is in hand to develop common citizen science methods as an integral part of the SDG processes, so that national statistical offices can use citizen science data as one of the unconventional data sources to report progress on the implementation of the SDGs.

Martin Brocklehurst, who has played a major role in the establishment of both ECSA and CSGP, addressed the UNECE Regional Conference on Environmental Data in Geneva on 8 May 2019. A full copy of his presentation can be found [here](#). Martin made clear in his presentation that representatives from these Associations stand ready to work with members of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to help them put in place the institutional arrangements that will support the growth of citizen science in any of their member countries. The citizen science community will share best practices and link Governments to the right citizen science programmes to address the research and monitoring needs that they face.

If you are interested in more information, please contact Martin Brocklehurst (martin.brocklehurst@me.com) concerning any support you need and how it can be put in place.

Sixteenth session of the **Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators**

The sixteenth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators will be held in Geneva from 28 to 29 October 2019. One of the main topics to be covered during the session will be the continued revision of the UNECE set of environmental indicators, covering the indicator themes that national experts have helped the secretariat in reviewing. The secretariat will, amongst other things, present the progress made on the revision of indicators that were identified by the Joint Task Force and provide an update on the UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators.

The provisional agenda for the meeting is available [here](#).

To register for the sixteenth session, please follow this link: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50800>



Upcoming Events

UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
9-18 July, New York, USA
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>

World Water Week
25-30 August, Stockholm, Sweden
<http://www.worldwaterweek.org>

Sixteenth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators and Statistics
28-29 October 2019, Geneva
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50800>

Sixty-fifth Compliance Committee to the Aarhus Convention
4-8 November 2019, Geneva
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=49365>

Forêt2019 - joint Session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission
4-7 November 2019, Geneva
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51124>

The **Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment** was established in 2000 by the Committee on Environmental Policy to serve as an instrument for UNECE member States to provide recommendations, propose action plans, and improve coordination of international initiatives concerned with environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting.

For more information on the Working Group please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment>

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