

**Note on UN Environment Programme's work on environment statistics and accounting 2018-2030**

This note provides an overview of UN Environment Programme's work on environment statistics and accounting for the period 2018-2030.

The Secretariat is pleased to invite member States to provide feedback to this note in writing. Comments should be submitted to the Secretariat: [unep.sgb@unep.org](mailto:unep.sgb@unep.org), copied to Ms. Ludgarde Coppens ([ludgarde.coppens@un.org](mailto:ludgarde.coppens@un.org)). Based on feedback from member States, the Secretariat may revise this note in view of consideration at a future Subcommittee meeting.

**One Planet-Make It Count!**  
**Bridging the knowledge gap for the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals**  
**Environment Statistics and Accounting 2018 – 2030**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015 with a view to end poverty, **protect the planet**, and ensure prosperity for all. The natural resource base provides us with many benefits including the provision of food, fibre, fuel, clean water and energy. It also provides services such as protection against natural disasters and carbon sequestration. But there is increasing pressure on these resources, and those who depend most on the natural environment are also the most vulnerable to environmental changes.

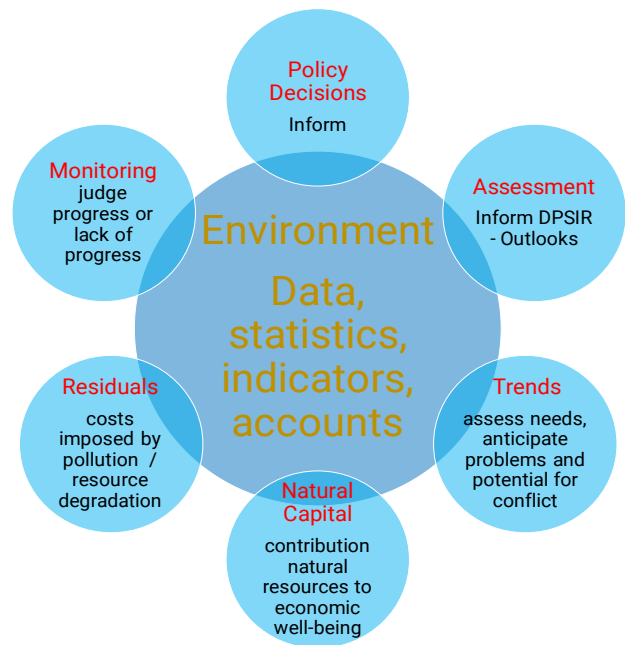
The goals and targets clearly demonstrate that there is an interdependency between humans and nature that must be addressed to achieve sustainable development

To protect the planet, we need to know our planet: The old rule "*you cannot manage what you cannot measure*" holds true. There are many ways to gain knowledge of the planet: research, assessments, statistics and environment economic accounting are different ways to gain knowledge about the planet.

**Why are environment statistics important for well-being?**

Governments, Civil Society, international organizations, scientists, the media and others need a statistical basis to judge progress or lack of progress, to assess needs, to anticipate problems and potential for conflict, to design major projects, etc.

The availability of an easily accessible, internationally comparable database has a great added value for societal decision-making. By measuring 'sustainable development'



based on a broad set of indicators, political actors are enabled to identify problems, set priorities, discuss them based on concrete figures, and eventually take informed decisions. Environmental issues play an important role in the overall 'sustainable development' of countries, and therefore we need a decent set of environmental statistics and indicators.

## Why are environmental accounts important for the environment?

Using environmental accounts to measure natural capital and residuals (with emissions, waste, etc. being part of residuals) is an important tool for understanding the role played by the natural environment in the economy. Environmental accounts provide data which highlight both the contribution of natural resources to economic well-being and the costs imposed by pollution or resource degradation. Environmental accounting sometimes referred to as "green accounting", "resource accounting" or "integrated economic and environmental accounting".

## Statistics and Accounting in UN Environment Programme

### Mandate

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/313 on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states the role of Custodian Agencies as follows:

Paragraph 7. ... *international organizations [Custodian Agencies] to provide the methodologies used to harmonize country data for international comparability and produce Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies, ...*

Paragraph 11. *11. Urges countries, the United Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies, ... to intensify their support for strengthening data collection and statistical capacity-building, including capacity-building that strengthens ... estimates through transparent mechanisms; coordination among national statistical offices,*

Relevant UN Environment Assembly Resolutions are: UN Environment Assembly Resolution 2/5 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; UN Environment Assembly Resolution 2/13 Sustainable management of natural capital; Ministerial declaration of the Third Session of the UN Environment Assembly "Towards a pollution-free planet"

### Current Programme

#### SDG International Follow-up and Review

1

UN Environment Programme is the custodian agency for 26 core environment indicators for Goals 6, 8, 14, 14, 15, and 17 in the global framework for the 2030 Agenda and plays a special role in the development of gender and spatial disaggregated information. UN Environment Programme works with national statistical offices and their partners in specialized ministries and with UN agencies and commissions, with a focus on climate, freshwater and marine resources, biodiversity, resource extraction, consumption and production, chemicals waste and pollution.

Budget 2016-2020: 10.8 million = (project funding: 5,100,000 + Staff: 5,630,000) \_ estimate plus important co-financing by Partners

Partnerships through Small-Scale Fund Arrangements with co-financing: institutional Partnerships including with World Conservation Monitoring Centre (Ocean statistics); Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization with University of Vienna, Nagoya University and Institute of Ecology (material flow accounts); Waste and Resources Action Programme and World Resource Institute and Wageningen; Regional Environmental Centre

Bulgaria and (waste); Resources and Waste Advisory Group; International Institute of Sustainable Development Global Subsidies Initiative and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (fossil fuels)

Partners: Google Earth, European Space Agency, European Joint Research Centre; National Aeronautics and Space Administration, UN Agencies, Eurostat,

## Data and Statistics

**2** One of the core functions is the quality assurance and validation of data. The Environment Live Global Database contains more than ca1400 indicators and these indicators cover the Social, Economic and Environmental indicators. 387 Indicators are UN Environment Programme Indicators, including the Sustainable Development Indicators where UN Environment Programme is the custodian agency. The remaining indicators are sourced from EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database; the Global Health Observatory (GHO) database of World Health Organisation; World Population Prospects; UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Institute of Statistics (UIS); Multilateral Environmental Agreements; National Accounts Main Aggregates Database; FAOSTAT Agriculture database; Labour Market (KILM); World Development Indicators (WDI); UN COMTRADE International Trade Statistics Database; and World Urbanization Prospects.

## National Capacity on Environment Statistics

**3** Regional and headquarter staff are now providing essential statistical training and capacity development in member countries to support the 2030 Agenda and reporting to national and international fora.

Budget 2016-2019: Development Account Projects: 2,600,000 US\$

Partners: UN Statistical Division, Statistics Divisions of the Regional Economic Commissions

## Programme on Environment Statistics and Accounting 2019 – 2030

### Statistical methodologies and Data collection

#### Priority Areas on Statistics:

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY: Corporate Sustainability Responsibility; Fossil Fuels Subsidies; Sustainable Consumption and Production; Environmentally Sound Technologies; (*SDG Indicators 12.1.1 – 12.6.1 - 12.7.1 – 12.a.1 – 12.c.1 – 17.7.1*)

GEOSPATIAL STATISTICS & LAND ACCOUNTS: Earth Observation, Remote Sensing (*SDG Indicators 6.3.2 – 6.6.1 - 14.1.1*)

OCEAN STATISTICS (*SDG Indicators 14.1.1 – 14.2.1 – 14.5.1*)

EMERGING AREAS: Gender-Environment; Chemicals; Environmental Crime

#### Priority Areas on Economic Environmental Accounting:

NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS; Public Expenditure Accounts

MATERIAL FLOW ACCOUNTS (*SDG Indicators 8.4.1/12.2.1 – 8.4.2/12.2.2*)

WASTE ACCOUNTS, including Food Waste Accounts (*SDG Indicators 12.3.1– 12.4.2 – 12.5.1*)

#### Database Information systems:

Statistics website; Environment Live Global Database;

Indicator Synergies between the Sustainable development Goals and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements

SDG Indicator reporting to UN SDG Global Database

Data integration and automation of data exchange

### **Indicators informing policy - integrated analytics and multidisciplinary indicators**

Analytical Indicators: The vast wealth of available indicators in the Environment Live Global Database, combined with Earth Observation data and other big data sources will form a sound basis from which to develop analytical indicators. Geospatial and multidisciplinary indicators provide a mechanism for accounting for area-specific realities, identifying vulnerable populations and monitoring policy interventions. The need for geographically disaggregated information was recognized in paragraph 74 of General Assembly resolution 70/1, 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' and this need is particularly important in terms of monitoring the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Reports: Secretary General SDG Progress Report, SDG Policy Briefs; Report for policy-makers on progress on the environmental Dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, with focus on integrative approach to implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda; Statistical Annex for the Global Environment Outlook.

Policy Coherence (SDG Indicators 17.14.1 – 6.5.1 – 6.a.1 – 12.4.1 – 15.1.2 – 15.4.1 – 15.9.1)

### **Capacity development**

Implementation of the capacity development will be guided by the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, prepared by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. National statistical systems (NSS) face the urgent need to adapt and develop to meet the widening, increasing and evolving needs of data users, including for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Capacity development will focus on environment statistics, strengthening and expanding the System of Environmental Economic Accounts, and Integrating geospatial data into statistical production programmes.

### **Implementation Model:**

Partnerships at country level: With National Statistical Offices, Environment Ministries, Line Ministries, in coordination with other actors

Regional technical support projects: Provide policy and programmatic support to countries to (1) advocate/dismantle barriers to regular production of environment statistics, (2) support the implementation of national plans to monitor the environmental dimension of the SDGs, Multilateral Environmental As, International Initiatives; and (3) promote South-South cooperation and sharing of best practices

Global policy support and SDGs monitoring: Coordination; link normative & technical work at global level to the regional & national levels

### **Initial rough estimate of resources (financial and in-kind)**

Long Term 2018-2030 (12 Years): 170 m. US\$:

Staff: ca. 50 m. US\$ (HQ staff: 2.7 million per year; RO Staff: 1.5 million per year)

Activity: ca. 120 m. US\$

Or ca 40m. per 4 years of consecutive MTS

### **Possible ways to raise resources:**

Increase in non-core contributions from donors; In-kind contributions from partners; Strategic collaboration with emerging donors; Collaboration with UN agencies, multinational organizations; Cost-sharing agreements with national governments; Contributions from private foundations; Partnerships with the private sector