



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Launch of the UNDP publication "Making Progress on Environmental Sustainability:
lessons and recommendations from a review of over 150 MDG country experiences**

**Panel discussion on "How do we scale up our support to countries in achieving
MDG 7?"**

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Strengthening National Systems of Environment statistics

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Strengthening National Systems of Environment Statistics

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to participate in this panel on ‘Supporting countries in achieving MDG 7’ organized by UNDP. We have heard from our colleagues how developing countries are trying to improve the monitoring of environmental issues, sometimes with the help of international agencies. Much has been done since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000. However, it is also very clear that many data gaps still exist. We have now only seven years to fill the remaining information gaps before we give the final assessment on 2015. For this to happen we need the full commitment of both countries and international agencies.

In a recent assessment based on the UNSD MDGs global database, UNSD found that most countries have at least two data points for many of the indicators on MDG 7. However, this is only an apparent success. Most data come from international sources. National monitoring of many environmental indicators, such as CO2 emissions, remains limited. Although the availability of international data certainly represents a big achievement of the international community, it also tells us that many countries are not yet producing their own statistics on MDG 7. In our work with countries, we have found that in many developing countries, there is a lack of statistical capacity, especially in the environment statistics area. This is an issue that we must give our full attention.

The work of the IAEG on MDG Indicators

Let me mention briefly the work of the IAEG. As many of you know, the IAEG has been created for coordinating the MDG monitoring. One of the main concerns of this group has been to ensure support to countries in producing and using MDG indicators. UNSD, within its coordinating role in the IAEG, has worked closely with countries and international agencies to improve the national capacity of countries to produce all the MDG indicators. There is a technical sub-group established on environment statistics related to Goal 7.

In the IAEG meetings, lack of coordination within national statistical systems has been recurrently cited as one of the main obstacles for a better availability, quality and timeliness of data. To improve monitoring, it is imperative to bring together statistical sectors in a unified and coordinated statistical system. This is particularly relevant in the area of environment indicators, where data come from a variety of different sources and national agencies.

Global resolution on statistical capacity building

Strengthening countries' statistical capacity to produce, analyse and disseminate data has been increasingly recognized as an indispensable step in achieving the MDGs. In July 2006, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on “Strengthening statistical capacity”, which had been recommended by the UN Statistical Commission. The resolution calls upon Member States as well as the international statistical community for intensifying their efforts in building and strengthening statistical capacity.

National statistical systems will need to enhance their ability to produce and disseminate data, while at the same time improving access to data for diverse group of users. For environment statistics, technology and staff training are essential for producing good quality statistics and improve dissemination. The development of data dissemination infrastructures—which will include an IT plan, data analysis and dissemination tools consistent with international standards and guidelines, and improved software and hardware—will be crucial to ensure that existing data are used effectively in planning and monitoring and are made available to users nationally and internationally.

UNSD work on environment

The Environment Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division is fully engaged in the field of environment statistics, covering the development of methodologies, technical cooperation, data collection, and coordination. Our methodological work includes the elaboration of concepts, methods, and data compilation guidelines to support the development and harmonization of national and international statistics on the environment.

UNSD also provides technical cooperation, training and assistance in capacity building through regional and sub-regional projects, international training workshops, fellowship arrangements and ad-hoc technical assistance to countries. Recent projects covered the countries of the CARICOM, ESCWA and ECOWAS regions. A publication, *The CARICOM Environment in Figures*, has been prepared as one of the main outputs of this United Nations Project.

Since 1999, UNSD has been regularly compiling environmental data. Main environmental indicators derived from the data are now available. This year, the data collection on Environment Statistics was sent out to the countries as a joint activity of UNSD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A further example of our insistence on coordination at all levels, including at the international level.

Finally, in its role as the Secretariat of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-Env), UNSD coordinates all international activities in the field of environment statistics and indicators.

Concluding Remarks

Strengthening national statistical systems is a crucial component for monitoring environment statistics. Ad-hoc data collections without the countries involvement will not provide sustainable statistical programs. Absence of coordination among the national producers of environment statistics will favour duplication and waste of resources. Therefore, countries should be encouraged to establish robust and coherent national strategies for their data needs on environment statistics. These national statistical strategies should be based on the countries' environmental concerns and the requirements of international commitments. Political will and statistical capacity are foundation stones in the monitoring process.

UNSD is willing to collaborate with the statistical community and other partners in engaging more and more countries in the monitoring of MDG 7.