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Putting the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) to work – A Blueprint for Action

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division

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Putting the FDES to work – a Blueprint for Action

1. Background

1. As requested by the Statistical Commission at its forty-third session, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in close cooperation with the Expert Group on the Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) formulated a draft plan for outlining a course of action for putting the FDES into practice. This Blueprint for Action was discussed by the Strategic Meeting on the Implementation Plan for the revised FDES (New York, 5-7 November 2012) which recommended that it be submitted to the Statistical Commission for endorsement.

2. The Rio+20¹ Conference (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, June 2012) stressed the need to strengthen the monitoring of sustainable development, through improved data collection and the establishment of indicators. Of the three dimensions of sustainable development, monitoring and measurement of progress towards environmental sustainability is the weakest. The capacity to inform about environmental sustainability is curtailed by the insufficient production of environment statistics. Any measure of sustainable development requires a strong foundation in environment statistics.

3. This does not mean that there is always a lack of data and information. On the contrary these appear to be increasing in volume over time. The challenge is to build national capacities to adequately transform environmental data into environment statistics within official statistical systems and regular programmes of work. UNSD has developed the FDES 2013 (FDES) and the Core Set of Environment Statistics which are methodological tools that respond to this challenge and will contribute significantly to improved monitoring and measurement of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

4. The FDES is a multi-purpose conceptual and statistical framework that is comprehensive and integrative in nature. It provides an organizing structure to guide the collection and compilation of environment statistics and to synthesize data from various subject areas and sources. It is broad and holistic in nature, covering the issues and aspects of the environment that are relevant for analysis, and for policy and decision-making. Within the FDES a Core Set of Environment Statistics has been identified to guide countries in the development of their environment statistics programmes. The Core Set is complemented by a wider set of environment statistics (the Basic Set of Environment Statistics) that can be implemented in a flexible and incremental fashion depending on countries' resources and priorities. In addition to the FDES and the Core Set, other methodological tools² will also be developed for use, in particular by national practitioners in the development and production of environment statistics.

5. Improving national statistical systems is an important part of the mandate and goals of UNSD. In that regard, UNSD is actively engaged in supporting countries' efforts to develop and improve their environment statistics programmes. Putting the FDES into practice is an important element in accomplishing that goal. Additionally, promoting the harmonization of concepts and methods in environment statistics among countries is a particular advantage not only at the national level, but also for assessment and monitoring at regional³ and global levels.

¹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E

² See Table 4 below

³ In this document regional refers to both regional and sub-regional.

2. Objective of the Blueprint

6. The objective of the Blueprint is to document a way forward for making the FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics operational in countries that need guidance in starting or further developing their environment statistics programmes. It focuses on assisting countries in the establishment and development of their environment statistics programmes in an incremental manner to produce a comprehensive set of statistics that can be useful and responsive to the demands of a wide array of users.

7. The Blueprint has been developed as a plan for assisting countries to address their policy demands as well as to respond to the general need for reliable information on the environment. Statistics that are useful and responsive to the needs of policy planners and the public, and which are presented in a user-friendly manner will go a long way to ensuring their own continued production at national level. The FDES provides a structure for the compilation of environment statistics and the application of the Core Set will help the production of a limited set of internationally comparable environment statistics. At the global level, the need for harmonization and coordination is well recognized and supported, thus enabling the production of these kinds of statistics.

3. The strategic pillars

8. This Blueprint sets out the activities outlying the appropriate conditions and technical resources for countries to use in strengthening their environment statistics programmes incrementally and to ensure the production of environment statistics of high quality that will be capable of better responding to the increasing demands of various users.

9. The Blueprint is focused on assisting countries that are most in need of developing and strengthening their environment statistics' production and dissemination. Global, regional and national support for countries are crucial components of this Blueprint. The capacity building activities should cover both technical (environment statistics knowledge) and institutional capacities (institutional strengthening and interagency collaboration).

10. The Blueprint relies on the application of the FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics, as well as on complementary methodological guidance that exists or will be developed in the near future. To be effective the Blueprint should be embedded in a coordinated programme consisting of capacity building, technical assistance and networking, in which the international, regional and national institutions and the different key players have inter-dependent but differentiated roles that synergize their individual contributions to benefit countries, particularly developing ones. The global, regional and national actions are thus designed as part of a coordinated effort where tasks may be deployed simultaneously or sequentially, as described in the Plan of Work below (see Section 4). Some of the planned activities can be realized with the current limited resources. However, current resources allocated to environment statistics are not sufficient to finance the incremental effort and activities needed, so a considerable effort is needed for the mobilization of additional resources in order to make a positive and considerable impact in the field.

11. To put the FDES to use in developing environment statistics programmes at a faster pace and with better quality and sustainability there are fundamental pillars, strongly interrelated and supporting one another that need to be developed and integrated. These fundamental pillars form the optimal organizational and management architecture, as well as context for enabling the activities which need to be organized and undertaken in the development of an environment statistics programme. Based on

experience in working with countries in this field, the following fundamental pillars, which are mutually supporting, are needed:

- I. Methodological development and dissemination of know-how
- II. Capacity building and technical assistance
- III. Inter-institutional collaboration
- IV. Networking
- V. Resource mobilization
- VI. Advocacy

3.1 Methodological development and dissemination of know-how

12. Methodological development and the dissemination of know-how are essential for the development of environment statistics at all levels. The FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics are important methodological tools for the use of countries. Together with other available and planned methodological tools they can be used to build and strengthen technical and statistical capacities in countries and regions.

13. The design and development of the necessary instructional materials to transfer knowledge in the area of data collection, analysis and dissemination of environment statistics is critical to methodological development and training. Existing and future international recommendations on concepts, methods and classifications, as well as manuals that provide guidance on: acquisition of data from multiple sources; extraction of relevant information from the data sets; analyzing and organizing the data that are procured; and drawing conclusions and informing decision makers and others of the relevant findings, are a fundamental part and mainstay of this process. It is important to note that the collection of geospatial and related data will form an important adjunct to many national statistical offices' current repositories of environment statistics and their development is therefore germane as part of this process.

14. The dissemination of know-how will be ensured through the progressive build up of the methodological tools in environment statistics and their distribution through the publication of methodological documents in all United Nations official languages as well as through electronic means such as knowledge bases, websites and e-learning tools.

15. More traditional capacity building and technical assistance activities to countries and regions will complete these activities. In this context, training material based on the FDES, the Core Set and other methodological guidance will be developed for use in training workshops and capacity building activities. In addition, the development of distance-learning material with focused content is pertinent given that the field of environment statistics is multidisciplinary and requires a combination of different expertise that may not be located exactly where it is needed.

3.2 Capacity building and technical assistance

16. In keeping with the mandate of UNSD, technical assistance and capacity building activities will be an important aspect of operationalizing the FDES, the Core Set and other existing and planned methodological tools. These activities will be organized at regional levels as well as at national level

through training and capacity building programmes and projects. The main technical assistance partners will be UNSD, international and regional partner institutions, as well as national statistical offices (NSOs) or other national institutions and experts with advanced knowledge and expertise in the field.

17. Training workshops aimed at specific sub-regions will be a primary vehicle for delivering this type of assistance. This offers economies of scale in transferring experiences. Expertise will not only be needed from the pool of experienced environment statisticians, but also in the areas of GIS and other such technical areas, as appropriate for addressing environment statistics topics that are particularly pertinent within a given region/sub-region/country. Training workshops will cover technical content, management and institutional concerns, sourcing of data as well as data sharing and technological issues.

18. Countries that are in an emerging to intermediate phase of developing their national environment statistics programmes can benefit from contributions from international and regional institutions as well as from countries that are more advanced in environment statistics, to build their capacities in this field. It would therefore be advantageous for countries to avail themselves of horizontal cooperation from neighbouring countries that are at a more advanced stage in the field of environment statistics as part of any strategy for capacity building.

19. The development of on-line resources and e-training will play an increasing role in the provision of technical assistance and capacity building. Finally, as there is a finite pool of trainers with the required technical expertise, training of trainers will be an important element of the strategy.

3.3 Inter-institutional collaboration

20. The cross-cutting and multi-disciplinary nature of environment statistics requires collaboration and coordination both vertically and horizontally to ensure the best contributions from key players throughout the different stages of the processes.

21. In terms of vertical collaboration, since serving countries is the main focus of the Blueprint, partnerships among international, regional and national institutions will contribute to the coordination and efficient use of limited resources. Institutions at these three levels have different attributes, resources and capacities, and there is room for them to collaborate in an integrated effort to attain the achievements sought.

22. From a horizontal collaboration perspective, also important is the collaboration of the three main communities that contribute to the development of environment statistics: the statistical, the environmental policy and management, and the scientific communities. Because of the nature of this domain of statistics, their contribution is essential at global, regional and national levels. Partnerships enabling the contribution of expertise and knowledge by all these communities will be necessary to fully address the quality and sustainability needs of ongoing data collections.

23. The statistical community as a whole makes a principal contribution in statistical methodological expertise and its mandate is to produce and disseminate official statistics at the national level according to the highest professional standards, following international principles of statistics and agreed methodologies, recommendations and norms as they apply to all fields that are relevant for environment statistics.

24. The environmental policy and management community and its sectoral partners (i.e., policy and decision makers, as well as administrative bodies regulating and/or managing water, forest, agriculture, atmosphere, climate, oceans and marine environment, energy, etc.) contribute enormous technical resources as well as management expertise. Within their subject matter domains, they are aware of the most important environmental issues and challenges that demand the production of environment statistics in each country and its related region. They can therefore help in identifying the needs for quantitative information for monitoring, assessment, policy and planning applications, and contribute a wide array of valuable administrative and other data sets that are essential for inclusion in environment statistics.

25. The participation of the scientific community is vital, since it can contribute its in-depth and extensive knowledge at all levels. It is crucial to develop collaboration with scientists and experts, on specific aspects of the environment, who can be consulted as needed. Experts and researchers in academic and research institutions dealing with highly specialized subject matters within environmental themes are in the position to contribute to a better understanding and promote decision-making on specific environmental phenomena and their corresponding data sets and indicators, both in the context of starting a first environment statistics production, and in subsequently updating and upgrading those statistical holdings.

26. The combined expertise and knowledge of these players at both vertical and horizontal axes has proven to work to the benefit of the quality and sustainability of the results. It is most important to optimize their respective contributions by clearly identifying and appreciating their complementary expertise in different aspects and stages of the collaborative work in the domain of environment statistics.

27. Developing the best organizational structure for this collaboration is crucial, as formal arrangements for increasing synergies requires not only complementary expertise, but also careful consideration of the different levels (global, regional and national), tasks and stages where the diverse partners operate most productively.

3.4 Networking

28. Global, regional and national networks of experts and institutions working in the field of environment statistics have to be set up to support the development of environment statistics in the countries by sharing knowledge and expertise. Participating in global and regional communities where environment statistics experiences, programmes and results are being periodically presented and discussed benefits all participants as they can learn and consult with peers in different countries under similar circumstances.

29. Creating and sustaining different types of networks will be supported by different formats, including electronic forums or specialized virtual groups, as well as face to face seminars and meetings of practitioner groups. The networks can be official or informal in nature, as networking relies strongly on human networks and not only institutional ones. Animating and sustaining networks is productive and can significantly contribute to sharing resources, know-how and support at the global, regional and national levels.

3.5 Resource mobilization

30. Equally important to the fundamentals above are efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of the results sought. It is critical that adequate new resources be mobilized to bring about the comprehensive initiative of development of environment statistics in the near future. The process will need to mobilize donor resources for technical assistance in a substantive proportion to augment financing of the operations in countries and regions.

31. Countries at early stages of the development of environment statistics are the chief beneficiaries of putting the FDES into practice. UNSD and international/regional partner institutions, together with willing, statistically advanced countries will be the main technical assistance and capacity building providers. Countries are also encouraged to mobilize resources, and express commitment and political will to promote the development and sustainability of a national environment statistics programme. A wide range of funding possibilities and strategies should be explored.

3.6 Advocacy

32. The importance of environment statistics and its role in policy and decision making as well as in informing the general public need to be advocated at global, regional and national forums involving producers and users of statistics and information. The development of environment statistics programmes benefits greatly from active and vocal advocates who can engage with the different institutions involved in the production of environment statistics, in order to bring these different statistical production activities into a coordinated environment statistics programme. This advocacy can take place on the global, regional or national levels. It involves speaking on behalf of a more optimal coordination of activities related to environment statistics and persuading concerned parties that it represents a mutual interest. It also involves influencing public policy regarding environment statistics in order to be able to more regularly collect high quality environment statistics and create the subsequent statistical products which are based on these statistics. A successful communication strategy is essential for creating the political will and commitment of countries to develop an environment statistics programme as well as for resource mobilization. The FDES is a tool to assist in advocacy for environment statistics by providing a framework around which environmental issues can be organized and addressed. Strong advocacy for the production and dissemination of environment statistics, and the utilization of the FDES in this process, is a critical element of the Blueprint to put the FDES into action.

4. Plan of Work

33. This Plan of Work is based on the pillars of the Blueprint described above for the global, regional and national levels, incorporating the key players identified at the different levels and the steps to be undertaken. The main actions and required resources are organized according to national, regional and global contributions and roles, as described below.

4.1 Work at the national level

34. This plan of work aims directly at technically helping countries to develop environment statistics programmes and outputs and be capable in maintaining them as part of their regular statistical activities. Presented in Table 1 below are some illustrative, general lines of work and resources needed to advance the process of putting the FDES into practice at the national level in countries where capacity building and technical assistance in environment statistics is most needed. This table is indicative and generic. It will necessarily need to be discussed and adapted to reflect the specific needs and perspectives of different countries.

Table 1 - National level of the Blueprint - main lines of work and additional resources needed

Strategic pillars	Main lines of work	Additional resources needed
Methodological development and dissemination of know-how	Start/strengthen national development and dissemination of environment statistics through the application of methodological tools.	Resources have to be mobilized to properly implement environment statistics programmes.
Capacity building and technical assistance	Participate in the programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD. Initiate national environment statistics programmes and participate in training and capacity building activities.	International/regional projects should mobilize donor resources (e.g. international institutions, regional development banks, etc.) to finance the investment of technical capacity building into national statistical systems.
Inter-institutional collaboration	Ensure the legal mandate and management organs that are put in place are appropriate for accomplishing the tasks at hand. Start/strengthen national committees for inter-institutional collaboration in the development of environment statistics.	Resources have to be mobilized in order to build and/or strengthen national inter-agency collaboration.
Networking	Develop national capacities to integrate into or create national, regional and global networks.	No significant additional resources are needed for networking; existing national resources should suffice.
Resource mobilization	Organize and strengthen the contribution of statistical, policy/management and expert communities to contribute to the production of environment statistics. Request the allocation of adequate resources to environment statistics programmes. Support and participate in fundraising and advocacy global groups.	Resources have to be mobilized in order to support fund raising activities.
Advocacy	Develop communication methods to address the different audiences and circumstances of potential contributors to and users of environment statistics. Promote the use of environment statistics in national policy planning and development activities.	Resources have to be mobilized in order to advocate the importance of environment statistics.

4.1.1 National programmes to develop environment statistics using the FDES

35. Detailed national plans will have to be developed for each country that embarks on the development of its environment statistics programme by using the FDES. These will depend on the unique mix of national circumstances facing a given country. It would be advantageous to global harmonization efforts if they aligned as much as possible with the basic elements described in this Blueprint.

36. Necessary strategic planning objectives include the identification of current strengths and weaknesses in the country's statistical system, specification of the appropriate actions and resources to address those weaknesses, and documentation of the goals and deliverables.

37. In the preparatory and operational stages (described below), careful understanding and linking of the programme of environment statistics with key country policy and programmes is required. The most important policies and possible targets to consider are those that refer to national plans about or related to environmental information, sustainable development, or evidence-based policy targets, as well as the more general national plans for development, as these usually integrate environmental goals that may include environmental and/or sustainable development indicators and therefore require environment statistics.

38. The development of national environment statistics requires a lot of work which is of an institutional nature in order to strengthen the inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms, and the institutionalization of environment statistics programmes.

39. At the national level, the contribution of three key communities is crucial. The main players are: a) NSOs; b) environment and other environmentally relevant line ministries or authorities; and c) national experts and researchers with extensive and in-depth knowledge of specific environmental phenomena.

40. It is incumbent upon countries to constitute or strengthen coordinating mechanisms to bring the relevant partners and stakeholders together in the early planning stages of putting the FDES into practice. It is fundamental for the success of the programme to constitute a high-level decision-making intergovernmental body whose members will have the political aptitude and the authority to make decisions and oversee implementation at a national level. They should also be capable of assisting substantially with the mobilization of resources. Advocating at national level, they will give environment statistics the prominence that it needs to ensure that the legal mandate and management organs that are put in place are appropriate for accomplishing the tasks at hand.

41. Another important component is an intergovernmental coordinating or collaborating group or committee that comprises users and producers of environment statistics from the three main communities mentioned above. The purpose of this group would be to ensure that activities of data collection, analysis and dissemination of environment statistics are planned in response to the needs of all important stakeholders.

42. Presented below are the basic elements of a rudimentary programme for developing environment statistics at the national level. The elements which are briefly described below can be considered as a model for the detailed programme of work. However, it can also be considered applicable for countries engaging in further development of their environment statistics programmes, using the FDES:

A. Preparatory Stage

- Creating a national team, establishing leadership and responsibilities;
- Establishing modes of collaboration with other institutions and within each institution;
- Reviewing of legal framework, mandate and national policy priorities related to the environment, information and development;
- Establishing policy and user needs;
- Developing a national strategy for establishing an environment statistics programme;

- Reviewing methodological resources, available in appropriate languages, including the FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics.

B. Foundational Stage

- Assessing data availability and sources for producing environment statistics at the national level;
- Applying the Self-Assessment tool based on the Core Set of Environment Statistics to identify possible data gaps that are important to the country (see para. 43);
- Engaging in technical building capacities activities such as training, study tours and workshops;
- Formalizing and supporting inter- and intra-institutional collaboration mechanisms and focal points;
- Defining the environment statistics product(s) mostly required within a long-term time frame.

C. Operational Stage

- Adapting the FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics to the country's needs and priorities;
- Defining a set of environment statistics to be produced at the national level;
- Developing collaboration with national scientists and experts on specific realms of the environment to consult as needed;
- Developing data compilation and collection instruments and undertaking these processes;
- Carrying out data validation;
- Developing metadata;
- Preparing publications;
- Preparing launch events;
- Disseminating environment statistics products;
- Obtaining feedback.

D. Consolidation Stage

- Institutionalizing and strengthening of environment statistics units;
- Formalizing national inter-institutional collaboration platforms;
- Allocating budget and staff resources dedicated to environment statistics;
- Connecting with and participating in regional and global expert groups, networks and resources;
- Maintaining and further developing environment statistics' coverage and timeliness;
- Ensuring statistical quality.

43. To measure the success and assess the efficacy of national programmes, it is necessary for the country to carry out a preliminary review to evaluate the existing state of affairs regarding the production of environment statistics. For this purpose UNSD has developed a Self-Assessment tool based on the environment statistics contained in the Core Set which includes information on the availability of relevant data, priorities, production of environment statistics, main partners, and the principal challenges encountered.

44. This would serve to document the situation ex ante, recognizing the base from which efforts are being launched. Subsequent enquiries, based on the same matrix of questions could then be used to establish the situation ex post, recording progress in given areas over time. This could be seen as an important metric of the status of availability, quality and other characteristics of the Core Set and will serve as a good indicator of the speed and effectiveness with which the FDES is put into practice worldwide.

45. Success indicators for the effectiveness of the programmes to develop environment statistics at the national level using the FDES would include evidence of: availability of high quality environment statistics organized according to the structure identified in the FDES; state-wide sustained coordination activities concerning the environment; agreement and support of stakeholder groups; sustained funding

sources in the production of environment statistics; formation of clear work plans; introduction of practices for monitoring the availability and quality of data produced; production of information on relevance, improved comparability and adaptability of the environment statistics that are being produced; the use of a forum to register any needs for change.

4.2 Work at the regional level

46. The main regional partnerships can be constituted from the United Nations Regional Commissions (their statistical and sustainable development divisions); regional United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) offices, regional United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices and regional Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) offices; regional development banks, regional inter-governmental institutions; and other key regional partners.

47. These regional partnerships can contribute greatly to the process of putting the FDES into practice, both in terms of their contribution of financial resources as well as through making their technical capacities available. The regional bodies have typically cultivated closer relationships with the member States of their region/sub-region and are very familiar with the needs of the institutions and practitioners at the national level. They are also able to collaborate with regional institutions and can provide assistance and cooperation in commonly used languages.

48. Importantly, these regional bodies also have very good capacities to mobilize financial resources from donors formulating and carrying out specific projects, and acting together with other regional, global and national bodies, they have, in some instances, accomplished very good results in the field of environment statistics.

49. The following are some illustrative, suggested main lines of work, resources and players needed in order to further the process at the regional level.

Table 2 – Regional level of the Blueprint - main lines of work and additional resources needed

Strategic pillar	Main lines of work	Additional resources needed	Main players
Capacity building and technical assistance	Implement regional projects for development of environment statistics in the relevant region. Participate in the programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD. Participate in capacity building activities organized by regional institutions.	Donor resources mobilized by international or regional sources.	UNSD and regional partner institutions, together with more advanced countries and experts will be the main technical assistance and capacity building providers. Less advanced countries will benefit from these actions.
Inter-institutional collaboration	Participate in vertical collaboration with global and national partners and horizontally with other regional bodies.	Current resources should be enough to carry out these activities.	

Strategic pillar	Main lines of work	Additional resources needed	Main players
Networking	Organize / strengthen regional working groups of environment statistics including NSOs, environmental ministries and other relevant institutions.	Resources for the development of an online forum for networking.	Regional partner institutions, regional working groups and interagency collaborative committees at the national level can organize and strengthen these networks.
Resource mobilization	Mobilize incremental resources for regional capacity building and technical assistance projects. Support and participate in a mechanism and activities for resource mobilization.	Current resources should be enough to formulate the mechanism and carry out the related activities. Develop new project proposals to secure additional resources for further development work.	Regional partner institutions, regional working groups and NSOs and environmental ministries can work together to mobilize resources.
Advocacy	Support and participate in a mechanism and activities for advocacy.	Current resources should be enough to formulate the mechanism and carry out the related activities.	Regional partner institutions, regional working groups and NSOs and environmental ministries can work together to mobilize resources.

4.3 Work at the global level

50. The international institutions that are the main players in the implementation phase include UNSD and partner institutions such as FAO, UNEP and UNDP. Other collaborating partner institutions, such as the United Nations Regional Commissions, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Eurostat, as well as other regional inter-governmental organizations can be very important in mobilizing resources and in deploying their technical capacities at the regional and national levels in support of strengthening environment statistics in the countries.

51. One of the most important roles of institutions at the international level is the development of methodologies in environment statistics. Building on existing methodological tools, others will be developed, published and translated in the following years.

52. Dissemination of the FDES and the Self-Assessment tool in the official United Nations languages, in print and electronic formats is a sine qua non element that can be started as early as possible.

53. Early production of a manual providing further guidance on applying the FDES is paramount. Such a manual will provide definitions, classifications and hands-on information on the sourcing, collection, analysis and dissemination of the statistics contained in the Core Set of Environment Statistics.

54. Work must also be organized around the development of additional methodological tools to address other important or supplementary aspects of environment statistics. Guidelines for building institutional capacities for environment statistics should also be developed.

55. Digital resources are also a very efficient means for the dissemination of methodological resources and a potential mechanism for the presentation of technical assistance. Digital documents and web links will be organized and presented, by subject, on the Internet within a knowledge base format.

Useful international, regional and national reports and publications on best practices can form the core of these digital resources. These can be uploaded and organized in the knowledge base on an ongoing basis. The knowledge base may be structured in a format that mirrors the structure of the FDES. This will be populated over time to become an extensive repository of information on data collection, analysis and dissemination related to the statistics in the FDES. It may also encompass institutional and organizational issues relating to implementation. It will allow for collection, organization, sharing, research and utilization of relevant methodological and conceptual information for the FDES in a transparent and open format. This sharing will help to reduce the cost of acquiring essential information for the production of environment statistics.

56. As part of UNSD's information delivery mechanisms, the environment statistics website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/default.htm>) will continue to provide information on current and important developments in environment statistics, including the FDES and further methodological work.

57. As in the development of the FDES, an expert body would be essential in guiding and supporting the task of putting the FDES into practice. Accordingly, the recommendation is to establish a Standing Expert Group on Environment Statistics (Expert Group) that can carry out such a task. This Expert Group will advise on the application of the FDES including providing contributions to the necessary methodological and training material. The Expert Group will be responsible for any necessary revision and updating of the Core Set of Environment Statistics, to take into account new developments in the field, with a view to maintaining the relevance of the FDES. Focusing its activities on coordination and support, this Expert Group will meet every year to monitor progress, promote knowledge sharing and provide technical assistance in the documentation of experiences among other tasks.

58. The Environment Statistics Section of UNSD can lead and dedicate a significant proportion of its existing resources to putting the Blueprint and the FDES into action with the support of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics. However, the magnitude of the effort that is needed, together with the limited amount of staff and regular budget currently available for its global operations makes it necessary to mobilize substantial additional resources. Therefore, additional funding from donors should be sought via dedicated new projects in order to enable its full development. It is paramount to organize to create a mechanism that can work effectively to seek donors to steer the process of fundraising and secure new resources to enable capacity building and networking in and with countries in need. A strategy and work plan will be developed to ensure that the objectives can be met in a reasonable time period. This plan should also identify potential donors and contact them to explore potential collaboration. These potential donors include but are not restricted to international institutions and funds such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), regional development banks (such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank), UNDP, UNEP and developed countries' international cooperation institutions.

59. It is proposed that work on the use of the FDES start with an initial group of countries in need of developing and strengthening environment statistics that can be served with existing/upcoming new resources within the first two and a half years, in 2013-2015. Training material and other methodological tools can then be produced, translated and perfected for subsequent work with new countries.

60. Table 3 illustrates the most important actions at the global level, organized by pillar.

Table 3 - Global level of the Blueprint - main lines of work and additional resources needed

Strategic pillar	Main lines of work	Additional resources needed	Main players
Methodological development and dissemination of know-how	Dissemination of FDES and Core Set of Environment Statistics.	Increasing the speed of editing and translation of manuals and website material.	UNSD with the support of the Standing Expert Group on Environment Statistics can lead the finalization of methodological guidance manuals and oversee their translation to United Nations official languages. IWG-ENV and United Nations Regional Commissions can edit and finalize translation. IWG-ENV and regional collaborating institutions can organize the electronic and physical dissemination of the methodological resources as they become available.
	Manual on the Core Set of Environment Statistics.	Expert consultants to supplement available technical resources.	
	Self-Assessment tool.		
	Guidelines for setting up/strengthening an environment statistics programme.		
	Other methodological resources (see Table 5, lines 5-7).		
Capacity building and technical assistance	Develop the programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD in collaboration with global and regional partners.	Donor resources to finance the provision of supplementary technical resources in countries and regions.	UNSD, IWG-ENV members and regional partner institutions, together with more advanced countries, will be the main technical assistance and capacity building providers. Less advanced countries will be benefited by these actions (through inter-agency channels).
Inter-institutional collaboration	Participate in vertical collaboration with regional and national partners and horizontally with other global bodies.	Current resources should be enough to carry out these activities.	
Networking	Construct a global network of experts and institutions working in environment statistics.	Resources for the development of an online forum for networking.	Participation of stakeholders through the Statistical Commission and other forums organized by UNSD, United Nations institutions and other intergovernmental organizations, United Nations Regional Commissions as well as countries.

Resource mobilization	Establish a mechanism for resource mobilization. Develop a strategy for resource mobilization. Mobilize incremental resources for capacity building and technical assistance projects.	Current resources should be enough to formulate project proposals and develop new ones to secure new resources.	International partner institutions and working groups can work together to mobilize resources.
Advocacy	Establish a mechanism for advocacy. Develop a strategy for communication and advocacy. Provide materials to advocate the importance of developing and/or improving the quality of environment statistics.	Production of materials to support advocacy.	UNSD, international partner institutions, global working groups and interagency collaborative committees can organize and strengthen this network.

4.3.1 Coordination with other relevant global initiatives

61. There are several ongoing and planned global initiatives relevant to the development of environment statistics. The coordination of the Blueprint's main actions with these other initiatives is important for developing synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts and making the best use of resources.

62. The coordination of the main lines of work as outlined in the Blueprint with other relevant initiatives at global/regional levels in the area of environment statistics is as important as the internal collaboration and organization of efforts. The coordination and possible co-execution of different activities in the same countries and with the same partners should be carefully considered and promoted by the global, regional and national level institutions. Despite the fact that different initiatives and projects operate under different mandates and with varying commitments, deliverables and deadlines, it should be considered from the start that these and other future activities that are related to environment statistics will greatly benefit in terms of impacts and efficiency of resources if they are coordinated and planned with joint effort from the earliest stages possible.

63. The Strategy for the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Central Framework (SEEA-CF) under the auspices of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) will include capacity building and technical assistance to countries, and through those activities, environment statistics that support the compilation of the accounts will also be strengthened. As the FDES and the SEEA-CF are complementary frameworks that build on one another, coordination of technical assistance and capacity building for the implementation of the FDES and that of the SEEA-CF is necessary to achieve synergies of these programmes.

64. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) is a global partnership of national, regional and international statisticians, analysts, policy-makers, development professionals and other users of statistics. PARIS21 focuses its efforts on encouraging and assisting all low-income and lower middle income countries to design, implement, and monitor *National Strategies*

for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and to have nationally owned and produced data for all MDG indicators. An NSDS presents a comprehensive and unified framework for continual assessment of evolving user needs and priorities for statistics and for building the capacity needed to meet these needs in a more coordinated, synergistic and efficient manner. It also provides a framework for mobilizing, harnessing, and leveraging resources and a basis for effective and results-oriented strategic management of the national statistical system. Embedding the implementation of the FDES in the NSDS may ensure the establishment and sustainability of environment statistics as part of official statistics.

65. Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development⁴ is the roadmap to implement a global strategy for the development of several statistical fields relevant to environment statistics.

66. MDG 7 capacity building activities by UNSD and the United Nations Regional Commissions, UNDP, and other international institutions are expected to continue with regions, sub-regions and countries. In the future, coordination with efforts to produce indicators to monitor the post-2015 development agenda including the Sustainable Development Goals will also become important for harvesting synergies with the development of environment statistics.

5. Preliminary time-lines for putting the FDES into action

67. This section presents general time-frames proposed for the upcoming key activities and processes to put the FDES at the service of countries. It considers present resources and the search for additional resources that will enable new activities and participation and therefore broaden the overall impact of this Blueprint. It offers a general understanding of the sequence of actions and elements that must be considered at a later stage while formulating specific projects and mobilizing new resources. These programmes and projects must be logically framed to contain in-depth information on their objectives, activities, time-frames, results, country involvement and products that are expected, along with specific amounts of financial resources needed. They will be used for the purpose of mobilizing resources from donors.

68. The following two sub-sections will describe the sequence and timing of activities of methodological tools and provide a time-frame for the main activities needed at the global, regional and national levels to put the FDES into action.

5.1 Environment statistics methodological tools, what we have and what is needed, 2013-2015

69. Within the sequential approach to methodological development, the FDES and the Core Set are available in English while other methodological tools will be developed and finalized progressively.

70. There is no need and it is counter-productive to wait for all methodological tools to be fully finalized and translated before countries can be assisted in using the FDES to develop and/or strengthen their environment statistics. As the timelines in Table 4 below show, technical assistance and capacity building can be started, with an initial group of countries, using the FDES and the Self-Assessment tool.

⁴ Led by FAO and World Bank in collaboration with the United Nations Statistical Commission.

Table 4 - Progression of development of methodological tools in environment statistics

Responsible party	Tool	Tasks	Timeline
UNSD	1. FDES	Formal editing and translation	2013-2014
	2. Self-Assessment tool	Translation	2013
UNSD and partners	3. Manual on the Core Set of Environment Statistics	Development	2013-2014
	4. Guidelines for setting up/ strengthening an environment statistics programme	Development	2013-2014
	5. Case studies on the development of environment statistics programmes in selected countries	Development	2013-2014
	6. Training material based on the FDES, manual and guides	Development	2013-2015
	7. FDES distance learning content, manuals and guides	Development	2013-2015

71. The methodological tools outlined in Table 4 above, will be translated into official United Nations languages, disseminated both in hard copies (as resources permit), and will also be made available through the UNSD website.

5.2 Main activities at the global, regional and national level, 2013-2015

72. It should be noted that there are a certain number of activities that can be done in the immediate term, using existing or relocated resources at the various levels, while others require substantial additional resources. For example, capacity building can be initiated, but as a practical matter, to only a limited number of countries and regions/sub-regions in the next two years, given that this activity will be undertaken only by UNSD, regional institutions and the regular budgets of national institutions. With additional resources, the number of activities, the coverage and the impact of the initiatives undertaken can be expanded accordingly. Therefore the effort and rate of work necessary to be able to put the FDES into practice at the national level will initially be supported by existing resources but will expand to include more countries according to the availability of newly mobilized resources.

73. Table 5 below is illustrative and aims to show the sequence of activities that will be put forward in order to develop environment statistics at the global level using the FDES. The table is organized according to main actions per level, and presumes that these efforts will be organized optimally at all times.

**Table 5 - Main activities to put the FDES to work at the global level, 2013-2015
(preliminary)**

Main activities per level, by trimester	2013				2014				2015			
Global level	i 2013	ii 2013	iii 2013	iv 2013	i 2014	ii 2014	iii 2014	iv 2014	i 2015	ii 2015	iii 2015	iv 2015
Dissemination of FDES and Self-Assessment tool to countries and regional bodies												
Development of the Manual on the Core Set of Environment Statistics												
Establishment of the Standing Expert Group on Environment Statistics												
Development of guidelines for setting up/strengthening an environment statistics programme												
Preparation of case studies on the development of environment statistics programmes in selected countries												
Establishment of mechanisms and development of strategies for resource mobilization and advocacy												
Development of the programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD in collaboration with global and regional partners												
Elaboration of projects to put the FDES to work at national level, in collaboration with regional bodies												
Preparation/ refinement of training material												
Preparation of distance learning programmes												

74. The following tables (Tables 6 and 7) illustrated below propose a sequence of activities that can be used as a guide to develop environment statistics at the regional and national levels respectively and synchronizing them with those activities at the global level outlined in Table 5 above.

**Table 6 - Main activities to put the FDES to work at the regional level, 2013-2015
(preliminary)**

Main activities per level, by trimester	2013				2014				2015			
Regional level	i 2013	ii 2013	iii 2013	iv 2013	i 2014	ii 2014	iii 2014	iv 2014	i 2015	ii 2015	iii 2015	iv 2015
Contribution to translation/editing of FDES and other methodological tools to official UN languages												
Collaboration in translation of training material and distance learning programmes												
Establishment and launching of mechanisms for resource mobilization and advocacy												
Training of trainers												

Participation in the programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD													
Elaboration of other programmes and projects to put the FDES to work at national level													
Provision/coordination of technical assistance and capacity building on the FDES and other methodological tools													

Table 7 - Main activities to put the FDES to work at the national level, 2013-2015 (preliminary)

Main activities per level, by trimester	2013				2014				2015			
National level	i 2013	ii 2013	iii 2013	iv 2013	i 2014	ii 2014	iii 2014	iv 2014	i 2015	ii 2015	iii 2015	iv 2015
Dissemination of FDES and Self-Assessment tool within national teams (interagency partners)												
Communication of interest of countries to UNSD and regional bodies to participate in the programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD												
Organization/strengthening of national interagency cooperation platforms/committees in each participating country												
Advocacy and resource mobilization activities												
Participation in/elaboration of regional and national projects and work plans to put the FDES into action												
Participation in programme of technical assistance and capacity building using the FDES led by UNSD												
- Preparatory and foundational initial group of countries												
- Operational stage for initial group of countries												
- Consolidation stage for initial group of countries												
Participation in self organized and funded environment statistics programmes and projects using the FDES and other methodological tools												
- Preparatory and foundational stages												
- Operational stage												
- Consolidation stage												