



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

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**Intersessional Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of
Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Mexico City, Mexico
17-19 November 2015**

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Working Group on Environmental Indicators of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

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Background

1. The Working Group on Environmental Indicators (WGEI) of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC), was established by Decision 6 of the XIII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment held in Panama (2003). Since then, the WGEI has developed a set of indicators to track advances at national and regional level towards sustainable development.
2. The WGEI is formed by technical representatives of Ministries of Environment and/or representatives of National Statistics Offices. They focus their work in the methodological development and documentation of the indicators. Since 2010, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico (SEMARNAT) chairs the Group and UNEP acts as Secretariat.
3. The indicators cover the six thematic areas originally established in ILAC: Biological Diversity, Water Resources Management, Vulnerability, Human Settlements and Sustainable Cities; Social Issues (including health, inequity and poverty); Economic Issues (including trade, consumption and production patterns) and Institutional Issues.
4. This document informs about the activities carried out by the Group between 2014 and 2015, with emphasis on the workplan approved during the IXX Meeting of the Forum of Ministers, lessons learned and future activities.

Activities of the WGEI (2014 - 2015)

Indicator development

5. The most important activity of this biennium was held in the framework of the Regional Environmental Information Network Conference, REIN (4 – 8 May, 2015). The joint meeting of the WGEI and the Group of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) discussed priority topics of the Regional Strategy of SCP and based on this, basic criteria for indicator development were explored. The minutes of this meeting, including the conclusions and main recommendations are attached to this document.

Promote the elaboration of National ILAC Reports and the regular update of the indicators

6. Several countries report ILAC indicators periodically through their National Environmental Information Systems (NEIS). In this way, indicators can be updated

easily and more frequently than through printed reports. The REIN Conference addressed this topic extensively with the presentation of the latest developments in the NEIS and in UNEP Live, the new global environmental information platform of the United Nations (www.uneplive.org). The importance of these platforms to share data, monitor the enforcement of national regulations and ease the report to Multilateral Environmental Agreements was highlighted.

7. Representatives of the Caribbean Island States stressed the need for international support to produce indicators and develop their National Environmental Information Systems.

Promote the use of ILAC indicators at the regional level

8. During the last years, the capacities in statistical and geospatial environmental information management have been significantly developed in the region. Valuable data on biodiversity, atmospheric emissions and others have been gathered. In order to promote the systematization and publication of ILAC indicators in the Cloud, the Secretariat of WGEI organized an online training on the spatial dimension of environmental indicators (May 5 – June 13, 2014). This course, part of the GeoSur and Eye on Earth initiatives, had the participation of 61 representatives of National Geographic Institutes, Ministries of Environment and Statistics Offices of Latin America and the Caribbean.

9. In order to present recent regional environmental trends, the Secretariat has planned the elaboration of a regional ILAC report, to be finalized in 2016.

Strengthen the Working Group on Environment Indicators, promoting joint activities with other similar initiatives at the regional level

10. There are good opportunities for regional cooperation in indicators-related work, which have financial support and technical backstopping from the Secretariat. They refer specifically to the following topics:

- Sustainable Consumption and Production, through the coordination with the Group of Government Experts on SCP
- Water quality, through the Regional GEMS Water Centre at the National Water Agency of Brazil
- Statistics and Environment accounts, through the Project “Development and Strengthening of National Official Statistics through the creation of a Regional Framework in Latin America and the Caribbean”, led by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI)
- Geospatial information, in the framework of GeoSur and Eye on Earth. The indicators online training is expected to run a second version in English language in 2016.

- National Environmental Information Systems and data sharing through UNEP Live, in the framework of the cross-cutting capacity development portfolio of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). A sub-regional project proposal for strengthening environmental information in the Small Island Developing States is still open for comments and endorsement by interested countries.

11. The participation of the organizations of the Interagency Technical Committee will be key to strengthen the WGEI and for the success of its activities. Currently, the Committee has the following members: ECLAC, PAHO, UNDP, OECS, MERCOSUR, CARICOM and CCAD.

Recommendations to strengthen the ILAC Initiative

17. Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most active and committed regions with the development of environmental information (including not only data production, but also access to information). In the last years there has been significant progress, particularly in the development of technical and analytical capacities at the national level, and also concerning the commitment to cooperate at the regional level, which provides a good outlook to support decision making in the future. In this context, the work of WGEI has been very important.

18. There is agreement amongst the members of WGEI on the need for synergies and partner networks to work on common topics of interest. An effective way to do this is through horizontal cooperation between countries. The experiences of the WGEI during this period show that there are policies, programmes and good practices in the region that could be replicated successfully.

19. Having information and environmental assessments of different countries in an online, dynamic format and the access to information already available from a wide variety of initiatives and sources is very relevant for decision-making in the framework of the Forum of Ministers. In this context, platforms like UNEP Live and its capacity-building tools could serve these purposes and keep the environment under revision at the regional level.

20. The WGEI can serve as a space of collaboration, discussion and exchange, based on the capacity already available in countries and international organizations, and for the creation of tools to share documents, ideas and national experiences around new topics of interest, like green economy, resource efficiency, among others.

21. The WGEI proposes to continue its work, aligning it and in support of the economic, social and environmental goals of the Post-2015 Agenda (the Sustainable Development Goals). Also, it proposes to support the revision of the ILAC Initiative by the Forum of Ministers of Environment.



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Annex 1

Workplan 2014 – 2015 and updates

Activity	Expected outcomes	Countries and participating agencies	Next steps/comments	Update
1. Continue the development of methodological sheets of the ILAC indicators in the thematic areas approved by the Forum of Ministers	5 methodological sheets for the indicators will be agreed by the WGEI	Member countries of WGEI UNEP		Indicator 3.5.1.1 "Proportion of the population with access to waste collection" was modified and is now called "Generation of solid urban waste per capita". Indicator 5.2.1.1 "Consumption of Ozone-depleting substances" was also modified to include all substances of the Montreal Protocol
	WGEI makes a proposal to the Forum of Ministers on the inclusion of indicators on Sustainable Consumption and Production	Member countries of WGEI		
2. Promote the systematic development and institutionalization of ILAC indicators monitoring at	Promote the elaboration and update national ILAC reports	WGEI	In addition to national ILAC reports, ILAC indicators could be included in the National State of the Environment	The following countries published ILAC reports in 2014: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico. Peru's report is in

national level, improving the coordination between environmental authorities, national statistics offices, technical offices managing geospatial information and other ministries and agencies that generate relevant data.			Reports or in the National Systems of Environmental Information.	progress. All countries that have a National System of Environmental Information monitor at least a minimum set of ILAC indicators.
	Promote capacity building in the use of geospatial tools for the construction of ILAC indicators	SEMARNAT GEOSUR UNEP		24 persons of 11 member of WGEI participated in the online course "The spatial dimension of environmental indicators and their publication on the web", organized by the GeoSur programme, the Panamerican Institute of Geography and History and UNEP.
	Technical assistance for the elaboration and implementation of a National Environmental Information System Support in topics such as collection of environmental data (techniques, formats, exchange protocols), interpretation of statistical and environmental information, implementation of Environmental Accounting	WGEI UNEP ECLAC	South-South and triangular cooperation Ongoing and pipeline projects	UENP has designed a new application called "National Reporting System" for the management of data, indicators calculation and report to international conventions. The application was presented in May 2015 during the Regional Environmental Information Network Conference.
3. Promote the use of ILAC indicators at the regional level for the monitoring of progress towards sustainable development and for decision-making.	A regional, thematic analysis using ILAC indicators, which could lead to a publication, is prepared (subject to fund availability)	WGEI UNEP		UNEP hired consulting services for data recompilation and analysis of SCP topics. Part of the results can be found in UNEP Live. This is raw material for the elaboration of a regional ILAC indicators report.
4. Strengthen WGEI promoting concrete activities with other groups and similar initiatives at the regional level	Establish coordination between the WGEI and other initiatives and projects, promoting national capacity building in the construction of environmental statistics and indicators	CEA WGEI ECLAC UNEP	Topics: SCP, green growth, environmental accounting, "blue growth" (referred to marine and coastal issues)	Bahamas, Belize, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic, Suriname and Venezuela and ECLAC participate in the project

				"Development and strengthening of official statistics through the creation of a regional framework in Latin America and the Caribbean"
	Invite sub-regional environmental commissions (CAN, CCAD, CARICOM, MERCOSUR), to participate as observers in the WGEI	WGEI UNEP	Topics: environmental accounting, international trade	MERCOSUR and CARICOM are now observers of the WGEI, as well as sub-regional and UN agencies: OECS, UNDP, PAHO
	Virtual meetings of the WGEI for the discussion of topics related to ILAC indicators, or others of common interest.	WGEI UNEP	Via webinar, Skype or videoconference	Several virtual conferences to discuss indicators were held in 2014.
7. Promote the incorporation and active participation of Caribbean SIDS in the WGEI	Establish a sub-regional alliance for the adoption of ILAC indicators in the specific context of SIDS	WGEI UNEP CARICOM	Sub-regional Project proposal to be submitted to the GEF	The proposal is still open for comments and endorsement by Caribbean Governments.



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Annex 2

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING ON INDICATORS on sustainable consumption and production (SCP)

Panama City, May 7, 2015

Participants (see attached list):

- Delegates from Ministries of Environment in charge of environmental information and sustainable consumption and production
- Delegates of National Statistical Institutes
- UNEP, ECLAC

Objectives of the meeting:

- Improve the analysis of SCP in the Forum of Ministers, bringing together members of the working groups on environmental indicators and SCP.
- Create synergies and avoid duplication in the work of the expert groups
- Discuss key issues of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) and the Regional Strategy on SCP that have potential for the development of indicators

The background of the Forum of Ministers and its working groups / expert groups was introduced.

Presentations - Focus on patterns of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) at regional and national level

- Adriana Zacarías (UNEP): Ten-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) and its relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The representative of UNEP gave an overview of the Ten-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP), which is a concrete outcome of Rio+ 20. This framework focuses on six areas: sustainable public procurement, tourism, food, building and construction, consumer information and sustainable lifestyles. She also presented UNEP's work on indicators and targets that could contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The publication is available in: <http://www.scpclearinghouse.org/d/the-clearinghouse/94-scp-indicators-for-the-future-sdgs-discussion-paper.html>

- Rocío Prieto (Peru): Regional Strategy on Sustainable Consumption and Production

The representative of the Ministry of Environment of Peru presented the history of SCP policies and initiatives in the region, as well as key elements and priorities of the Regional Strategy on SCP. Within this context, she stressed that the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean in its nineteenth session requested to "Give priority to the development and harmonization of indicators of SCP in response to the Decision 6 Regional Forum Environment Ministers (Quito, 2012) and coordinate this task with existing initiatives in the region and the search for synergies, especially."

- Raquel Breda (Brazil): data collection programs for decision-making in SCP

The representative of the Ministry of Environment of Brazil presented their country's work on SCP, and indicated the existence of national SCP program, especially in the areas of energy, sustainable procurement and waste. On the latter subject, she presented in detail the work of collection and processing of data on solid waste at the municipal level. It has already consolidated in several municipalities in the country, mainly from household surveys and administrative records information.

- Carlos Ramirez (Colombia): SCP indicators at national level

The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia has made efforts to give substance to its policy on monitoring CPS, including activities in both qualitative and quantitative information. It has integrated the subject of SCP in the national environmental information system by using statistical data (derived mainly from surveys) and environmental and economic indicators, including ILAC indicators.

Discussion - moderated by the presidents of the working groups (Edda Fernandez and Arturo Flores of SEMARNAT, Mexico):

In Latin America and the Caribbean different SCP issues are being addressed: lifestyles, sustainable procurement, tourism, education, material consumption, waste, energy, existence of plans and programs, among others. Experience shows that the inclusion of the private sector and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is key to the collection and interpretation of data. It is also important to maintain a level of realism among the objectives to be monitored and the technical feasibility of creating and documenting indicators. Ideally, the objectives of an initiative should first be defined and then the indicators.

While some indicators directly related to SCP have already been implemented in several countries (for example, the ecological footprint), the need to link information about SCP to Environmental and Economic Accounting Systems arises as a recent development in the region.

It is important to mention that SCP information is not always registered as such. In Argentina, for example, the data are part of the set of Sustainable Development Indicators developed by the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development. Some other countries do not yet have specific policies or plans on SCP and have made a request to UNEP to support the development of the issue at national level.

Several participants mentioned the relationship of SCP with Green Economy / Green Growth (or similar concepts) and the fact that there are several national and regional initiatives for the use of indicators. Highlighting that some indicators can be used for either issue, or both. Also, other participants stressed the need to identify some indicators that fulfil multiple purposes, as well as the need to consider that sometimes combining some indicators provide us with the required information, which not always is necessary to develop new indicators. In this regard, the importance of not only basic information but also to link environmental and economic indicators was highlighted.

Conclusions

- The meeting was a good opportunity to bring together two groups of experts of the Forum of Ministers of Environment: the indicators and the SCP groups; and facilitate the exchange of information and interests, and identify possible areas of cooperation.
- The panel on SCP expressed interest in contributing to the work of the ILAC initiative and to use their expertise for the development and definition of impact indicators on SCP.
- It was further recognized that regardless of the names the indicators may have (or the classification assigned to them), the most important step is their interpretation.
- The need to consider different types of indicators, especially economic, social, environmental was highlighted. These can be complemented and used to measure progress and impacts of different objectives / initiatives at national and regional level.
- It was mentioned that both instances, the ones who define policy objectives, and the ones who generate information have a responsibility over monitoring activities.
- The objectives of the ILAC and Sustainable Development Goals can be part of joint efforts to follow up on the decisions 6 and 7 of the nineteenth meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean¹.
- Finally, the spirit of cooperation between the two working groups called for a report of the ILAC indicators, particularly in terms of sustainable consumption and production. The results of such cooperation may be reflected in recommendations messages and joint working groups to the Forum of Ministers.
- It was agreed that more information on the work of both groups would be provided and that further dialogue and exchange of progress in the work of ILAC and SCP indicators would be facilitated.

List of participants

¹ "Supporting the development of indicators to report on the links between different priority areas of the ILAC; e.g. indicators of sustainable consumption and production through cooperation between GTIA and the Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production"

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