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WEEK 2: Summary of discussion up to 6th December, 2009
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This e-forum has been set up to give people the opportunity to help develop a 'Common International Standard for the Classification of Ecosystem Services' (CICES). We have now completed two full weeks of discussion.

By the 6th December 2009 over 120 people registered, and this document summarises the key points they made. Some of the discussion also reflects the views of people who attended a workshop hosted by the EEA in Copenhagen, between 2nd-3rd December, 2009, who used a breakout session to add their views directly into the forum. However, a more systematic summary of the workshop outputs will be provided soon through the e-Forum website. On the basis of the support given at the workshop, it has been decided to extend the e-forum into January, 2010. Thus, we will shortly update the website to facilitate a further round of debate.

In the text that follows comments attributed to individuals and groups are referenced against the numbered comments under each of the six topics identified in the e-forum.

Topic 1: The scope of CICES

A number of contributors have considered the scope, purpose and focus of CICES. The most recent comments examine the primary purpose CICES, namely to develop a general classification that can support the development of integrated economic and environmental accounting methods. The aim of CICES is to provide a way of structuring land and ecosystem accounts so that they can be linked to information about economic activities contained in National Accounts. CICES would therefore form part of the proposed revision of SEEA2003 being examined by the London Group, which was set up in 1993 at the request of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA).

Recent comments in the e-forum endorse this primary aim, but also note that a standard nomenclature would be useful in the context of other initiatives, such as TEEB, MA follow-up and the more general discussions developing though such networks as the Ecosystem Service Partnership. Landers, (comment 3) highlights the Ecosystem Services Indicator Partnership, and classifications such as those discussed in *The Corporate Ecosystem Services Review*. One of the breakout groups at the Copenhagen Workshop, who entered comments directly onto the forum website suggested *"The political moment provides golden opportunity for moving this forward to a global classification and accounting systems. The way forward would be to apply this to a few different purposes and test it".*

Topic 2: The design of CICES

The issues surrounding the design of CICES have continued to attract discussion. The key points made by commentators have concerned:

- *Whether to extend the classification to ecosystem services to outputs that are the primarily depended on the abiotic components of the environment, or whether to restrict the classification to those which are dependent mainly on biodiversity.* Opinion seems to be split on this issue. From the Ecosystem Service perspective there was support for limiting the classification to services that fundamentally depend on biodiversity related processes. From the accounting perspective, some feel that it would be most appropriate to make the distinction between renewable and non-renewable outputs rather than to use the biotic/abiotic criteria. The question therefore remains an open on in the e-forum.

- *How supporting services should be handled.* A number of commentators (e.g. Huberman and others, comment 10) have suggested that even though the aim is to identify the 'final products' from ecosystems, any comprehensive system must consider how the processes that support them would be dealt with.

- *The terminology used to describe the service classes and groups.* Although there is support for a hierarchical system of classification, it has been pointed out that the language used to describe the different groups and classes must be generic and as neutral as possible (e.g. Schauer and others, comment 8). It has been suggested that a set of clear definitions for each service at the different levels in the hierarchy is also required, and that care must be taken to distinguish services from benefits (e.g. La Notte and others, comment 9).

- *That the classification should ensure that issues in the marine sector are fully covered.*

Clearly further discussion on the design of CICES is needed, and this will be factored into an updated proposal that will be made available thought the e-forum web site.

Topic 3: Linking CICES to UN Standard Classifications for Products and Activities

This topic has not received as much attention as the others in the e-forum, although it has been noted that it is important because it may help resolve in a practical way what some of the 'final products' of ecosystem are. In the original proposal for CICES it was suggested that the main task was to use these product and activity classifications to help define the ways in which ecosystems contributed to human well-being. Recent comments have also highlight the fact that the classification of services can also be used to identify the impacts of different economic sectors on service output. The nature of the link between service classes and groups and the different product and activity classifications clearly must be considered more deeply in future discussions within the e-forum.

Topic 4: Linking CICES to classifications of land cover and use

In addition to linking services to information on different economic sectors and activities, CICES must provide a link to classifications of land cover and land use, so that a more comprehensive set of economic and environmental accounts can be established. Recent comments have supported this approach and emphasised the importance of developing spatially explicit analyses. Part of the

difficulty of taking this forward, however, is the difficulty of distinguishing land cover from land use (see comments by Domingues, comment 2), and the future refinement of CICES will clearly have to take this issue into account.

Topic 5: CICES and the valuation of ecosystem services

This topic has received a good deal of attention, and recent commentators (e.g. Pushpam Kumar, comment 3) have suggested that in identifying the contribution that CICES might potentially make, we have to be clear about what the purposes of valuation is. Boyd (Comment 4) emphasises just how complicated valuation is, because of the difficulty of separating the direct and indirect roles of services in aspects in economic wellbeing. Huberman and others (see comment 7) suggest that more work is required in the design of CICES to differentiate between final and intermediate products. Other commentators have suggested that further clarification is needed about whether CICES clearly work on the valuation of services and benefits, or is primarily designed to support estimates of the cost of maintaining ecosystem services (Huberman and others, comment 6). At the workshop in Copenhagen, the need to explain the potential roles of CICES in valuation studies was identified as a future priority for the e-forum.

Topic 6: CICES and issues of location and scale

Questions of location and scale and how they affect the classification and assessment of ecosystem services have been highlighted in a number of comments in the e-forum. Boyd (Topic 5, Comment 4) notes that "the value of a given environmental commodity, quality, or condition is usually highly dependent on its location". Thus location and scale matter. However, if and how scale and location characteristics can or should be built into CICES is at present unresolved. Schauer and others (see comment 3) argues that the proposed classification should work at any scale, although evidence for this is still needed. Landers (Comment 4) concurs with others that "multiple, comparative demonstration studies would be a good way to proceed."