Global Environment Outlook

The GEO Data Portal

UNEP

A comprehensive on-line data resource on environment and development trends

Introduction

The GEO Data Portal gives access to a broad collection of harmonized environmental and socio-economic data sets from authoritative sources at global, regional, sub-regional and national levels, and allows data analysis and creation of maps, graphics and tables. Its on-line database currently holds more than 450 variables. The data sets can also be downloaded in a variety of formats, supporting further analysis and processing by the user. The contents of the Data Portal cover environmental themes such as climate, forests and freshwater and many others, as well as socioeconomic categories, including education, health, economy, population and environmental policies.

a comprehensive and widely-used data collection and an authoritative source of data and indicators used by UNEP and its partners to support integrated environment assessments and reports

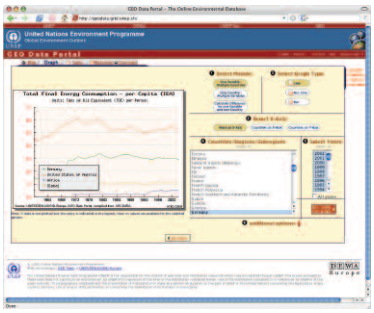
The on-line GEO Data Portal is an intuitive and flexible resource that can be quickly and easily used for remote data retrieval because of its simplicity and modest technical requirements. It services the data requirements of UNEP's flagship Global Environment Outlook (GEO) integrated environmental assessment reporting process directly, but is also of interest and value to environmental professionals and decision-makers across the world supporting environmental and sustainable development reporting. UNEP's fourth Global Environmental Outlook report (GEO-4), due to be published in 2007, already draws extensively on data from the Portal.

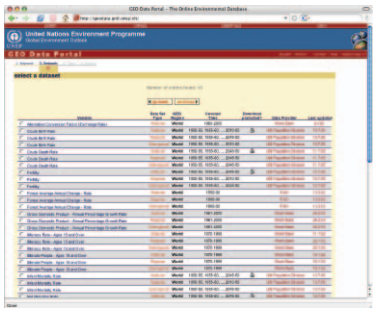
Background

Initiated in 2000 as work began on the third Global Environmental Outlook assessment report (GEO-3), the GEO Data Portal supported the illustrative base of GEO and helped harmonize data used in analysis. It has since matured into a comprehensive and widely-used data collection and is an authoritative source of data and indicators used by UNEP and its partners to support integrated environment assessments and reports, including the GEO Yearbook series. Over the years, the Data Portal has provided the data for a range of information products, such as the GEO(-3) Data Compendium, a CD-ROM version, a set of e-Learning tools, and a User Guide. The global Data Portal currently is complemented by regional GEO Data Portals, to capture more detailed at sub-global levels, improve accessibility of data systems at those levels, afford greater ownership and participation in the process, and contribute to capacity building and technology transfer in developing regions.

Search

There are several search and retrieve options available to users, these include thematic key word searches such as "emission", "waste" or "forest". The Portal will then query the database and present a list of variables to be chosen from. For more experienced users, there is an "Advanced Search" feature which can be relied upon to limit searches to a GEO "theme," "region" or "scale/resolution" e.g. national, regional, geospatial.





The GEO Data Portal is accessible through the GEO website at http://www.unep.org/geo/data, or directly at http://www.geodata.grid.unep.ch

The CD-ROM version of the GEO Data Portal, plus various e-Learning tools, including a 10-minute introductory video and User Guide are available from UNEP upon request. Most materials are also available at the Portal's web site.

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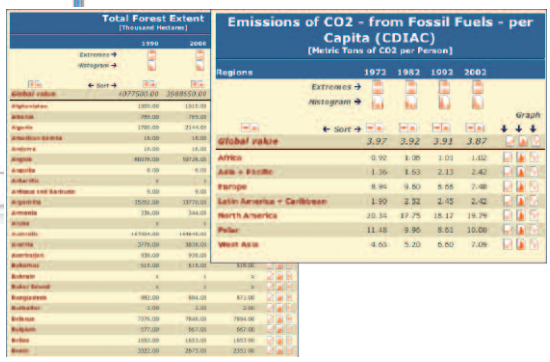
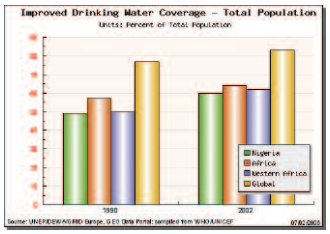
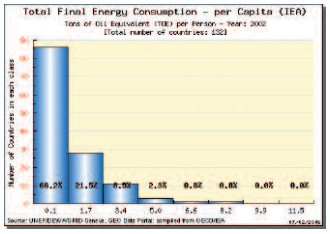
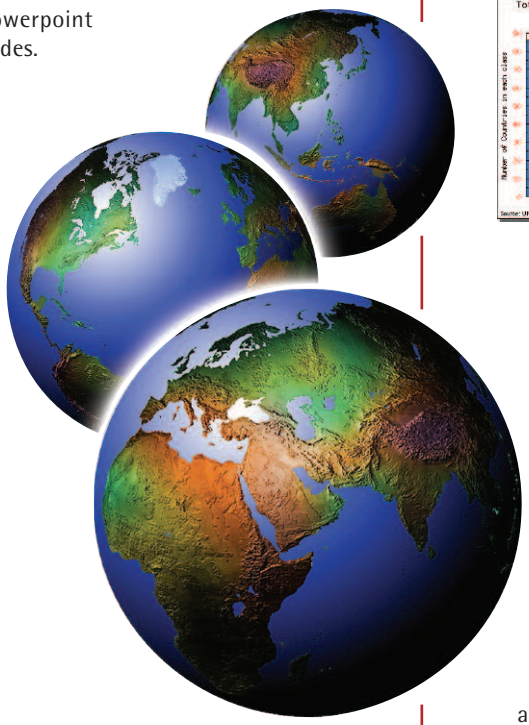


Display and Download

Any of the data sets from the list of search variables can be selected, and then viewed on-line in different display and analysis modules i.e. as map, graph or table. They can also be downloaded in different statistical and geospatial formats, including Excel, Access, ArcInfo which enable the user to further process the selected variables. Graphs and maps can also be copied and pasted directly into Word files or Powerpoint slides.







Dynamic Mapping

The mapping module allows interactive manipulation of the selected data set in cartographic format. Statistical data displayed in the form of maps are often much easier to understand than the raw data tables. Through various option menus, it is possible to zoom to get more details, query names and values, analyze trends, add more layers and print the customized map.

Customized Graphing

The graph module enables the selection of different graph types (line or bar), time scales and assignment of different x-axes. These display-and-analysis modules are very accessible as they require only limited Internet bandwidth to be fully used.

Generating Data Tables

The table module enables the user to display the exact, real values. Although it is more difficult to discover trends and compare selected countries/sub-regions/regions, this module offers interesting sorting and analytic capabilities.

Analyzing Statistics

From within different modules statistical tools such as the histogram and the 'extreme values' feature are accessible. The histogram groups individual data points together into classes, for easy assessment of the frequency of data occurrence in each class providing an easy-to-read picture of the location and variation in a data set.

Displaying Meta-data

Meta-data or "data about data" describe the content, quality, condition and other characteristics of data. Detailed background information for the selected data set, such as its definition, the spatial and temporal reference, data provider, source and footnotes is available.

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