MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING

5 February 2026 –Virtual meeting

Meeting minutes

Present: Jacqui Vitas (ABS, Australia and Co-Chair of the UNCEEA); Piedad Urdinola (DANE, Colombia and Co-chair of the UNCEEA), Jonathan Khoo (ABS and chair of Area A); Augustine Akuoko-Asibey, Sonia Raizenne and Jennifer Withington (Statistics Canada); Andrea Camila Pereira, Camilo Mendez Coronado and Diego Andres Cobaleda Martinez, (DANE, Colombia); Sven Kaumanns (Federal Statistical Office of Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); Jesarela Lopez Aguilar (INEGI, Mexico); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands and Chair of the UNCEEA Technical Committee on the SEEA CF); Rachael Milicich (Statistics New Zealand); Kirsten Newton, Ian Townsend and Jonny Mudge (ONS, United Kingdom); Christine Magu (AfDB and Co-Chair of Area D); Arturo De La Fuente (Eurostat); Alessandra Alfieri (IMF); Bram Edens and Roberto Astolfi (OECD); Sokol Vako (UNSIAP and Co-Chair of Area D); Ilaria Di Matteo, Steven King, Elsa Begne De Larrea and Emil Ivanov (UNSD)

1. PREPARATION FOR THE UNSC AND ORGANIZATION OF THE STEERING GROUP MEETING

Ilaria Di Matteo provided an update on the preparation of the UN Statistical Commission, the UNCEEA report and its background documents. She also informed the Bureau that the calendar of the Side Events is available online at: https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/side-events/57. This year the Friday Seminar will be on AI-readiness for Official Data and Statistics, 27 Feb, 10am-6pm, and the High Level Forum will be on Beyond GDP: Rethinking Progress in a Changing World, 2 Mar, 3pm-6pm.

The Bureau noted with interest the upcoming High-Level Forum and expressed its support for providing a contribution from the UNCEEA perspective. Jacqui Vitas informed the Bureau that she had been approached to participate but could not confirm her involvement as she will not be attending the UN Statistical Commission. She will follow up regarding the possibility of a UNCEEA contribution to the event.

The Bureau was informed that the meeting of the UNCEEA Steering Group has been confirmed for **Tuesday, 3 March, from 8am to 9:30am (NY time)** *[Ed. Note: the original time was adjusted due to scheduling conflicts]*, and that an invitation will be sent to all Steering Group members.

The Bureau discussed the agenda of the UNCEEA Sterring group. An initial agenda was circulated and discussed. It included the following items: (1) a reflection on beyond GDP; (2) status of the update of the SEEA CF; (3) Advancing the SEEA in time of changing priority and resource constraints; (4) preparation of the discussion on the UNCEEA report at the UNSC.

Initial feedback from the Bureau highlighted the need to: emphasize SEEA linkages with the Expert Group on Well-being Measurement, including its task team on the environment; prepare an annotated agenda with short descriptions for each agenda item; and include a clear reference to the Monday High-Level Forum (HLF) on Beyond GDP, given its relevance to the Steering Group discussion.

Actions:

- **UNSD** to send calendar invitations to UNCEEA Steering Group members and provide remote connection details for Bureau members.
- **UNSD** to prepare an annotated agenda, incorporating Bureau comments, and recirculate it to the Bureau for review and comments prior to sending it to the Steering Group.

2. UPDATE ON THE SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK (SJOERD SCHENAU, CHAIR OF AREA B1)

Sjoerd Schenau (Chair of Area B1) provided an overview of the update of the SEEA Central Framework. He noted that the Technical Committee on the SEEA CF is finalizing the first tranche of Guidance Notes for global consultation, scheduled for mid-February, and also outlined several issues related to consistency with the 2025 SNA that have been identified and are currently under discussion.

The Bureau took note of the progress on the update of the SEEA Central Framework and provided some suggestions for the global consultation:

- Develop guidance on which issues are most relevant to specific expert communities (e.g., GFS, SNA, BoP), to facilitate targeted and effective review of the Guidance Notes;
- Ensure a transparent process, including providing explanations of how comments were addressed—such as through summary reports—and clearly indicating changes that are made as a result of the global consultations;
- Provide advance notice and realistic response time for contributors to review and comment on the Guidance Notes; and
- Clarify the decision-making process for how comments will be assessed and incorporated.

The Bureau also noted the importance of considering whether additional resourcing may be required to process and synthesize the potentially large volume of feedback received.

UNSD indicated that every effort will be made to ensure that the consultation process is as transparent and inclusive as possible. It was noted that reports will be prepared to summarize the outcomes of the global consultations, and—subject to the agreement of respondents—the individual responses will be made available online. Feedback received through the consultations will be reviewed within the established governance structure, including the

relevant Task Teams, the Technical Committee, the Bureau, and the UNCEEA. Any controversial or unresolved issues will be escalated to the appropriate level within this governance structure for decision-making.

3. UNCEEA MEETING IN 2026 (UNSD)

UNSD indicated that, given current funding and resource constraints, an in-person annual UNCEEA Meeting is unlikely to be feasible this year. The proposal is therefore to hold the 2026 annual meeting virtually during the week of 22 June 2026.

Bureau members underscored the importance of resuming in-person meetings, noting the added value of face-to-face engagement for advancing the Committee's work. They suggested exploring possibilities for external support to facilitate the participation of experts, especially from developing countries, to a physical meeting.

Actions:

- Bureau members, within their own mandate, to explore funding options.
- Bureau members to check for potential conflicts and inform UNSD so dates can be penciled in and announced.

4. TOUR DE TABLE

Area A: The Chair of Area A mentioned that the working group is coordinating outreach around the SEEA Central Framework update—including webinars timed with global consultations—and strengthening connections with related initiatives such as the Expert Group on Well-being Measurement, where several Bureau members are engaged in the Task team on Environment and will ensure appropriate SEEA representation and linkages. Area A also contributed to broader work under the Network of Economic Statisticians on the Net Zero sprint which concluded in 2025 with a "Net Zero Storybook" (how countries and NSOs collaborate to measure net zero). This will be presented at UNSC.

Area B1: Already covered under item 3.

Area B2: UNSD provided an update on behalf of the Chair of Area B2. The working group is advancing methodological development and implementation support for ecosystem accounts, with a current focus on producing operational guidance for the Global Biodiversity Framework's headline indicators on ecosystem extent and ecosystem services. Under an EU-funded project, the working group—supported by a dedicated task team—has been reviewing technical models, coordinating country testing, and developing practical compilation tools. An Expert Group Meeting is being organized from 10-12 February in Cambridge, UK, to advance this work. The Committee is also actively contributing to the SEEA Central Framework update by reviewing relevant guidance notes, particularly those that are closely related to the

SEEA EA. Looking ahead, the Committee is consolidating inputs from its members to define priority areas for its next work programme. Eurostat informed the Bureau on the preparation of a manual consolidating the technical guidelines for ecosystem accounts and emphasized the need to coordinate the work to avoid duplication and maintain methodological coherence. The Eurostat technical guidelines for ecosystem extent are available here and for Ecosystem Services are available here. They are being consolidated into a single, shorter handbook on ecosystem accounts which will be published by the end of March. It will be shared with UNSD and the SEEA community when ready.

Area C: The Chair of Area C indicated that the working group is preparing for its upcoming meeting which will set priorities for 2026 in light of financial constraints that may affect data collection and continues to advance the assessment of the priority accounts. Area C is also beginning to assess how upcoming updates to international classifications, such as the revised COFOG, may have an impact in the future work.

Area D: The Co-chairs of Area D mentioned that the group supported the preparation of the two background documents to the UNSC on capacity building activities on the SEEA and the 2025 Global Assessment, which now shows about 98 countries implementing SEEA. Despite staffing and budget challenges—particularly within the UN and its Regional Commissions—Area D continues to coordinate international organizations' efforts, maintain regular updates among partners, and seek ways to sustain support to countries. Engagement of the SEEA country-reporting focal point network has slowed down due to constraints, with plans to resume once conditions improve.

London Group: The Chair of the London Group on Environmental Accounting reminded the Bureau of the updated ToR which are submitted to the UNSC for approval along with the new name as the "London Group on Environmental-Economic Accounting". The Bureau of the London Group will meet on 25 February to plan for the 32nd London Group meeting in Guatemala in September 2026.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Next Bureau meeting rescheduled from 13 May to 28 April 2026. UNSD to send updated calendar invite.