

Opening message from Ms. Alessandra Alfieri, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

- On behalf of the United Nations Statistics Division, It is my great pleasure to address you at this International Seminar on Natural Capital Accounting. At the beginning of this important event, I would like to share with you some thoughts on Natural Capital Accounting

The importance of Natural Capital Accounting in official statistics

- The theme of the seminar “Natural Capital Accounting” is of high interest for my organization, as UNSD is working on various initiatives to develop an integrated information system for account for Natural Capital and measuring sustainable development.
- A strengthening statistical framework to measure the linkage and interdependence between nature, economy and society can play an important role in achieving the global agenda to end poverty, protect the planet, ensure prosperity for all and place all countries on the path towards sustainable development by 2030.

System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)

- I would like to draw your attention to the work that the international statistical community has done in this regard: The development of SEEA and the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework in 2012 as a statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission marked a milestone. It brought environmental data and information into the realm of official statistics at the par with economic statistics allowing to go beyond GDP. Ecosystem Accounting builds on the Central framework to provide an integrated system to measure and value ecosystems assets and services and link them with measures of economic and other human activity.
- The SEEA provides credible, reliable, comparable and integrated information that supports various global initiatives including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators, the Aichi biodiversity targets and post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, climate change, the World Bank Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services, the green economy/green growth initiatives, etc. The SEEA standard allow us to examine our dependence on ecosystems in both physical and monetary terms, thus providing key information for national and local planning and public policy making.

Importance of SEEA to SDG and post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

- To illustrate the importance of SEEA to SDG and the post-2020 Global Framework, at the tenth meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) held in Addis Ababa, from 21-24 October 2019, members of the group gathered to review proposals for several SDG indicators, including indicator 15.9.1 and 12.b.1. Indicator 15.9.1 measures “Progress towards national targets established in accordance with Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.” The SEEA has strong relevance to Aichi Target 2, which refers explicitly to the integration of biodiversity values into policy through national accounting and reporting systems.
- To advance this indicator, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Environment and the UN Statistics Division brought a proposal to the IAEG-SDGs, requesting to upgrade the indicator from its Tier III status and called for a two-part indicator, where one part looks at the integration of biodiversity values into national accounting and reporting systems, defined as implementation of the SEEA. The indicator for this will look specifically at those countries compiling either the SEEA Central Framework or the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. This data will come from the results of the Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics, which is regularly administered by the UN Statistics Division under the auspices of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA).
- The SEEA is now also part of indicator 12.b.1, under custodian of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Target 12.b is to develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (NCAVES) project

- This is why UNSD are working with different partners and countries in advancing the development of methodological development and the implementation of the SEEA. To advance the implementation of the SEEA, UNSD has launched the EU-funded project on Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project in the 5 project countries, namely Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.
- In China, the project will support China to strengthen the national compilation of natural resource balance sheet on land, water and forestry, and pilot ecosystem accounting in the Guizhou and Guangxi provinces using the SEEA framework.
- It is my hope that the project will not only contribute to the advance of natural capital accounting in the five project countries, but that the experiences that we will learn in from the project countries will contribute and provide a strong input to the global development process on ecosystem accounting

Internal Seminar on Natural Capital Accounting

- This Seminar provides a unique opportunity to explore the emerging opportunities for NCAVES project country to present and share their early highlight on the implementation of natural capital accounting. Various discussion sessions are organized to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lesson learnt from NCAVES project countries the mainstreaming and implementation of the Natural Capital Accounting.
- In addition, the seminar will present the emerging development on ecosystem valuation, scenario analysis and indicators in the context of the SEEA EEA framework. It is hope that after the seminar you will have a better understanding of in these important areas.
- As you know, this seminar is organized as part of NCAVES and as part of a series of events organized under the project on strengthening statistical capacity development in China and other developing countries funded by the Chinese Government. Throughout the past years, a large number of events, study visits and workshops have been organized, which have benefited many experts at national and international level. UNSD looks forward to continue our collaboration with NBS while building on these successful activities.

Closing

- To conclude, I would like to thank all our colleagues at the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the China International Statistical Training Centre for their excellent organization of this event.
- Moreover, I like to express our gratitude to the European Union who provides funding for the NCAVES project.
- I would also like to thank all experts and participants who have traveled to Beijing.
- Wishing you all a pleasant stay in Beijing and a very fruitful and successful Seminar.