

Programme of work Technical Committee SEEA-CF - June 2014-June 2015

1. Introduction

1. At its 44th session in February 2013, the UN Statistical Commission adopted the implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework and urged the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) to agree on a medium term programme of work for the implementation of the SEEA, including advancing the issues on the SEEA Central Framework research agenda and the development of a core set of tables and accounts. It further requested the UNCEEA to develop diagnostic tools, compilation guidelines and training materials to support the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework and strengthening supporting statistics.
2. In March 2014 the Technical Committee for the SEEA-Central Framework (TC) was established under the auspices of the UNCEEA with regular oversight from the Bureau of the UNCEEA and secretariat support from UNSD. Regular reports are provided to the Bureau and the UNCEEA. The work of the Technical Committee will be closely coordinated with the work of the London Group on Environmental Accounting, other city groups and other technical expert groups, such as the OECD Task Force on the Implementation of the SEEA Central Framework, which will provide substantive input in the development of the tools/materials in support of the SEEA implementation.
3. This document contains the work programme of the Technical Committee for the SEEA-Central Framework for the period of June 2014 till June 2015 to be presented to the UNCEEA meeting at 25 June 2014. The work programme describes the different topics that will be addressed by the TC and concrete actions to be undertaken.

2. Mandate

4. As described in the Terms of Reference, the mandate of the Technical Committee is to:
 - (a) Advance the research agenda for the SEEA Central Framework;
 - (b) Advance the development of the implementation materials/tools, including the development of core tables and accounts and associated technical notes, in support of the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework and ensure consistency with the SEEA Central Framework;
 - (c) Lead the development of the communication strategy for the SEEA Central Framework.

Work programme

5. The Technical Committee as delegated by the UNCEEA, serves as the body responsible for overseeing the advancement of the research agenda related to the SEEA Central Framework

and for the technical coordination of the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework. Technical issues that arise during the implementation should be brought to the attention of the Technical Committee. The Committee should also provide a clearinghouse for statistical activities related to the implementation of the SEEA.

6. This section provides an overview of programme of work for the SEEA Technical Committee organized by the areas of work of the Committee.

a. Development of SEEA technical notes and core tables and accounts

7. The SEEA technical notes will provide guidance to countries on the steps to take to start the implementation of the SEEA. The Technical Notes summarise, for a given topic, a range of relevant features and considerations within approximately 10-15 pages. An integral part of these technical notes is the core tables and accounts that provide an overview of the key information and indicators that can be derived from the accounts and constitute the starting point for the development of common reporting tables. In 2012 and 2013 some initial work on the technical notes was done by the London Group on Environmental Accounts and others. The Statistical Commission at its last session in March 2014 stressed the importance of finalizing a set of core tables and accounts and technical notes to support countries in the implementation of the SEEA. This development work should be carried out in close cooperation with Eurostat and OECD Task Force on the SEEA implementation and other existing international initiatives to ensure that the structure and format of the core tables and accounts are common although different level of details may be necessary. Harmonizing environment statistics with the SEEA is an important issue (see also point e of the work programme) that will be addressed in the technical notes.
8. The main task of the TC will be advance the work on the technical notes and core tables in close collaboration with international organisations and the London Group on Environmental Accounts. In 2014 technical notes and core tables for the following topics will be developed:
 - Water accounting
 - Energy accounting
 - Material flow accounting
 - Waste accounting
 - Air emission accounting
 - Land accounting
 - Forest accounting
 - Environmental Protection Expenditures Accounting
 - Environmental Goods and Services Sector
 - Environmental taxes
 - Environmental subsidies
9. An editor will be recruited to edit the technical notes and tables based on material that is already available. The TC will provide overall technical guidance to the process by providing general guidelines, checking and reviewing the technical content of the draft SEEA technical notes and core table. The aim is to finalise a draft of a set of technical notes by the end of 2014 for the submission to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its next session in February 2015. The tables and accounts would need to be tested in countries to ensure their feasibility and may need to be adapted to ensure that selected SDG indicators, still being developed, can be derived from the tables as appropriate.

Concrete actions:

- Draft a paper proposing a generic structure, timeline and process for the drafting of the technical notes and core tables
- Support the appointed editor in the drafting of the technical notes
- Review the draft technical notes and core tables for the various topics

b. Reviewing and contributing to materials relevant to the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework

10. Beside the technical notes and core tables, numerous other documents are being developed by international organisations to support the implementation of SEEA. Examples include the SEEA implementation guide, the guidelines on water statistics and accounts, the SEEA training-the-trainer online module, Eurostat compilation manuals, etc. It is the task of the TC to review these documents with regard to their SEEA content. In order to get an overview of all materials that are being developed and assessment will be done of all activities of the various international agencies related to SEEA implementation.
11. Clearly, it is not possible for the TC to review in depth all these documents as they become available. Accordingly, the work of the TC will focus on addressing remaining methodological issues which may come up during the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework and only in some specific cases review longer documents, in order to keep the workload manageable.

Concrete actions

- Make an assessment of the activities of the various international agencies related to the work of the TC
- Review of documents / training materials related to SEEA-CF implementation (in the short term the guidelines on water statistics and accounts and the SEEA implementation guide)
- Provide input in the development of a platform that will include all material related to the SEEA implementation being developed by UNSD.

c. Addressing remaining methodological issues related to the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework

12. The TC shall act as the recognised "place" where questions on the SEEA CF can be posed by those working on implementing SEEA or developing manuals, handbooks. The TC will provide technical/conceptual direction in cases where the SEEA Central Framework seems unclear, inconsistent, incomplete or otherwise deficient.

Concrete actions

- An inbox shall be established to collect all the questions related to technical issues related to SEEA implementation. The inbox could either be interactive in the knowledge base or simply in the interim using the seea@un.org.
- The questions addressing remaining methodological issues which may come up during the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework will be discussed by the TC.
- The role of the TC Addressing remaining methodological issues related to the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework will be advertised.

d. Advancing the research agenda for the SEEA Central Framework

13. As the environment and the economy change, as understanding of the links between the environment and the economy develops, and as policy and analytical requirements evolve, the SEEA Central Framework must be reviewed to assess its ongoing relevance. In addition, as implementation of the SEEA Central Framework occurs increasingly across the world, the range of experience gained will offer new insights to the conceptualisation of the environmental and economic accounts that should be considered.
14. As outlined in annex 2 of SEEA CF, the process for reviewing and updating the SEEA Central Framework will follow standard processes that have developed for the review of international standards. Thus, there will be consideration within the United Nations statistical system of (i) the relative importance of updating the standard to ensure its ongoing relevance; (ii) the consequences of making any changes and the potential impact on implementation; and (iii) the extent to which research into a proposed area of change has been completed. The process for selecting topics for investigation and determining the appropriate changes to the SEEA Central Framework is one that will involve widespread consultation and involvement of compilers and users.
15. The SEEA Central Framework included a research agenda (annex 2) which lists major topics that were identified during the preparation of the SEEA Central Framework as being those which would benefit from further consideration within the international statistical community.
16. Based on the SEEA research agenda and additional considerations within the TC, the following priority issues have been identified :
 - The classification of Environmental Activities and the Environmental Goods and Services Sector
 - The classification of land cover/land use
 - Issues including the classification of waste
17. The main task of the TC is, together with the London Group on Environmental Accounts, to advance the work on the research agenda and review the forthcoming documents.

Concrete actions

- Prioritise the work programme on the SEEA-CF research agenda
- Identification of appropriate lead agencies/countries to undertake relevant research and development work (together with London Group members)
- Review forthcoming issue papers

e. Harmonizing environment statistics with SEEA and mainstreaming the SEEA into the statistical systems

18. Harmonizing environment statistics with the SEEA is important to ensure that the basic data is generated in such a way to be used in the accounting framework without ad-hoc transformation. The TC recognised this as a high priority area.
19. The harmonization of environment statistics with the SEEA involves two streams of work. For international agencies, the process involves mainstreaming the SEEA as part of the regular collection and compilation of statistics. This involves in particular harmonization of

concepts definitions and classifications with the SEEA and, in the short term, development of bridge tables allowing to develop statistics consistent with the SEEA with existing data collection process. Mainstreaming of the SEEA at the international level implies its adoption as the information system supporting various policies, including the post-2015 development agenda, the green economy/green growth, etc.

20. For national statistical offices, mainstreaming of the SEEA involves moving towards an integrated statistics programme which involves an integrated production process of basic statistics using common business architecture. In addition to full harmonisation with environment statistics, it is of particular relevance to integrate SEEA-related issues into various areas of mainstream statistics, especially national accounts, agriculture, business, energy, transport statistics etc.

Concrete actions

- Draft two concept papers one focusing on mainstreaming the SEEA in the collection and compilation of basic statistics and the other dealing with the adoption of integrated statistics programme at the national level.

f. Advancing the communication strategy for the SEEA Central Framework

21. The communication strategy of the SEEA is a key component of the overall implementation strategy for the SEEA-CF. It will provide a vehicle for raising awareness and gaining support among key groups for the implementation of environmental-economic accounts. Second, it will allow for the communication on scope, detail and compliance of implementation, projects, scientific progress and related events. The task of the TC will be to support the development of the communication strategy, in particular reviewing and providing comments on material being developed by a communication company that has been recruited to carry out this work and in ensuring that a common message is used.

Concrete actions

- Reviewing material being developed and provide inputs as needed.

Annex

The technical committee consists of Peter Williams (Australia), Carolyn Cahill (Canada), Sjoerd Schenau (Netherlands), Joe St Lawrence (London Group on Environmental Accounting), Anton Steurer (Eurostat), Josef Schmidhuber (FAO), Kimberly Zieschang (IMF), Pierre Alain Pionnier (OECD), Juan Pablo Castañeda (World Bank) and Carl Obst (SEEA Editor).

UNSD provides secretariat to the committee.