



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION  
UNITED NATIONS

---

**Sixteenth Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on  
Environmental-Economic Accounting  
New York, 15-17 June 2021**

**Cover Note for the UNCEEA Working Group on Implementation and Statistical Capacity  
Building (Area D)**

Draft paper prepared by UNSD

*(for discussion)*

# UNCEEA WORKING GROUP ON IMPLEMENTATION AND STATISTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING (AREA D)

---

The current activities of Area D include administration of the Global Assessment of Environmental Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics and supporting capacity building activities to advance the implementation of the SEEA in countries. This note describes progress in these two areas over the past year and proposes new activities for the upcoming programme of work for Area D (2021-2025). In addition, it proposes to build in two workstreams into the programme of work.

## Global Assessment of Environmental Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics

The Global Assessment has been administered every 3 to 4 years, with the last administration of the Assessment completed in 2020. The Assessment is crucial for data collection for two Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators focusing on the SEEA (12.b.1 and [15.9.1](#))<sup>1</sup> and understanding the current status of SEEA implementation. In addition, the Assessment helps the UNCEEA understand countries' priorities and needs for technical assistance and provides input into the development of supporting materials.

Given the monitoring needs for the SDGs and the rapid pace of implementation of environmental-economic accounting, there is a need to gather information on implementation on an annual basis. It is suggested that a shorter questionnaire (Global Assessment "light") be administered on an annual basis, in-between the benchmark years. Compared to annual administration of the full Assessment, a shorter questionnaire between benchmark years would minimize the response burden placed on National Statistical Authorities. A pre-filled questionnaire which asks for changes since the last questionnaire would help further minimize response burden.

It is recommended that all the questions from the introduction and "implementation" section of the current survey be included in the light questionnaire.<sup>2</sup> The "implementation" section includes questions on overall compilation/publishing status as well as compilation of specific accounts (i.e. indication of which accounts have been compiled for which reference years). Thus, the light questionnaire would leave out information on future plans, institutional mechanisms, technical assistance, use of the accounts, etc.

In terms of administration of the survey, the Secretariat could administer the questionnaire globally. However, given their close connection to countries, regional commissions could assist

---

<sup>1</sup> These two indicators measure the implementation of tools to monitor sustainable tourism and the mainstreaming of biodiversity values into policy and accounts, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The 2020 Questionnaire may be found here for reference:

[https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/global\\_assessment\\_of\\_environmental-economic\\_accounting\\_and\\_supporting\\_statistics\\_2020\\_-\\_2021-5-17\\_23-26\\_4881\\_1.pdf](https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/global_assessment_of_environmental-economic_accounting_and_supporting_statistics_2020_-_2021-5-17_23-26_4881_1.pdf)

the Secretariat (to the extent their resources allow), for example by reviewing prefilled questionnaires and following up with respondents.

## Publishing Global Assessment Results

There is demand from stakeholders for more detailed information on implementation than is currently reported in the Global Assessment reports. Sharing more detailed information can address this demand and can help spur collaboration among countries and between countries and international organizations. Thus, UNSD proposes to publish more detailed results on the SEEA website.<sup>3</sup>

This information could include an overview of which countries are compiling which accounts, and the stage of implementation they are in. For example:

Country name	Programme currently active	Stage of implementation (SDG 15.9.1)	Compiling institution	Compiling SEEA CF?	Compiling SEEA EA?	Website(s)	Separate columns for thematic areas, with a check mark indicating compilation

- Separate columns for the thematic areas could include: water, air emissions, energy/minerals, land, material flow, environmental activity, agriculture/forestry/fisheries, and ecosystems.

In addition, the information provided on the SEEA website could serve as input to the UNECE online inventory of “satellite accounts” through their Stats Wiki (<https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SAOI/Satellite+Accounts+-+Online+Inventory+Home>). The UNECE wiki of “satellite accounts” is run by the national accounts section at UNECE and is designed to provide information on accounts such as the SEEA as well as distributional, social, tourism accounts, etc. In the past, the [page on the SEEA](#) has been populated through a UNECE survey on SEEA implementation. The page provides an overall list of the countries compiling the accounts as well as lists for thematic areas. Given the overlap with the Global Assessment and the higher response rate of the Global Assessment, UNECE and UNSD have suggested to use Global Assessment data to populate the table instead.

It is suggested to disseminate the same information on both the SEEA website and UNECE wiki. This will minimize confusion and ensure that the information disseminated on the UNECE wiki is consistent with the framework. For example, the current grouping of the thematic areas is unclear and does not neatly correspond to the SEEA framework (e.g. ecosystem accounts are

<sup>3</sup> In the most recent administration of the Global Assessment, respondents were given the option of keeping their information confidential. No respondents chose this option.

grouped in the same category as land and water accounts). In addition, some of the data items included in the current tables are not readily available from the Global Assessment.

## Advancing Implementation

Looking forward, there is a need to focus on capacity building and advancing implementation, particularly for the SEEA EA. A number of activities can be envisioned in advancing the implementation of the SEEA EA. For example, these involve coordinating training and E-learning, maintaining close communication with the SEEA focal points in countries, organizing webinars for relevant topics, (e.g. the monitoring framework of the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework bringing together relevant stakeholders in countries, ARIES for SEEA Explorer in-depth illustration of how to use it, etc.).

In addition, recent years have seen the development of regional Communities of Practice (COPs) for the SEEA, which have brought together practitioners and users from different areas. Regular opportunities for NSOs to share experiences (webinars, newsletters, WhatsApp/Telegram groups) have shown to be extremely useful for knowledge and information sharing.

For example, the Africa COP started at the end of 2019 and now includes more than 250 participants from African countries and regional/international organisations and is supported by 11 partner organizations. Members of the Africa share information and news through regular webinars, a Telegram group and a dedicated newsletter. The Africa COP also has a dedicated website hosted by UNECA.<sup>4</sup>

The African Community of Practice joins the ECLAC Community of Practice for environmental statistics and accounts, which consists of a very active WhatsApp group named “Red Carioca Est. Amb. AmL”, with over 200 participants from ECLAC countries and organisations. In addition, in Latin America there is also an informal network of NCA practitioners called Comunidad Latinoamericana de Contabilidad del Capital Natural (ComLAC) which also communicates through a WhatsApp group, maintains a website,<sup>5</sup> and organizes regular monthly webinars to exchange information and discuss topics related to NCA implementation and use.

Given the regional nature of capacity building, a rotating co-chair from the UN Regional Commissions focusing on the coordination of capacity building activities would be beneficial. Thus, it is suggested that this work stream is chaired by a member of a Regional Commission and the Global Assessment work stream remains chaired by Statistics South Africa.

---

<sup>4</sup> See <https://ecastats.uneca.org/ncacop>.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://comlac.website/>.

## Questions to the Committee:

### Global assessment

Does the Committee agree:

- 1) With the proposed frequency and scope of the Global Assessment “light”?
- 2) To prefill the previous year’s answers for those countries which responded and ask respondents what has changed?
- 3) That the Secretariat should administer the Global Assessment “light” with the support of regional commissions?

With regards to dissemination of the global assessment data, does the Committee agree with the following proposal?

- (a) Disseminate the Global Assessment results following the proposed table on pg. 2.
- (b) Improve the messaging on UNECE SEEA wiki page, including the title, the graphics and the explanatory text to reflect the current views that the SEEA is not a satellite of the SNA, but a system in its own right;
- (c) Change the page structure/typology of accounts on the UNECE SEEA wiki and modify the data items to correspond to what is disseminated on the SEEA website. This would also improve the current presentation.

### Advancing implementation

UNCEEA members are asked to consider the following questions regarding advancing implementation:

- 1) What are members’ views on a rotating co-chair arrangement for the capacity building work stream?
- 2) Is there an interest for Regional Commissions to start their own COP?