



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

Nineteenth Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting 25-26 June 2024

Report of the Meeting

Introduction

1. The 19th Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) took place virtually from 25-26 June 2024. The Committee discussed the progress in its work programme and planned activities since its last meeting in June 2023 and as a follow up to the decisions of the UN Statistical Commission at its 55th session in March 2024. The agenda was organized around the following items: (i) Review of the mandate and governance of the UNCEEA; (ii) Area B1 – SEEA Central Framework with focus on the progress of work for the update of the SEEA Central Framework; (iii) Area A – Coordination and Communication; (iv) Area C – Development of Global Databases for the SEEA; (v) Area B2 – SEEA Ecosystem Accounting; (vi) Area D – Implementation and Statistical Capacity Building; and (vii) Data Gaps Initiative III and the SEEA.
2. This report provides an overview of the conclusions of the discussion. The agenda of the meeting and list of participants are included in Annexes I and II, respectively.

Opening remarks and objectives of the meeting

3. The meeting was opened by Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and Mr. André Loranger, Chair of UNCEEA and Chief Statistician of Canada.
4. In his opening remarks, Stefan Schweinfest highlighted the UNCEEA's achievements since its establishment by the UN Statistical Commission in 2005 and the relevance of its work to advance the conceptual and practical implementation of environmental economic accounting for policy and decision making. He also underscored the importance of updating the SEEA Central Framework for alignment with the 2025 SNA and emerging policy demands.

5. André Loranger welcomed participants and reflected on the progress of the Committee over the past year and the tasks ahead, such as the update of the SEEA Central Framework.

Agenda item 1 – Review of the mandate of the UNCEEA

6. This session focused on reviewing the mandate of the UNCEEA to assess if adjustments were needed to better reflect its current activities and priorities. The proposed changes to the mandate of the UNCEEA were reviewed and the outcome of the discussion is below.

Outcome and actions:

7. The Committee:

- Welcomed the Bureau's review of the Mandate and Governance document, noting the importance of ensuring that the documents reflect the work of the Committee and its current priorities and practices;
- Suggested to include in the Mandate and Governance a reference to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, indicating that the maintenance of the SEEA will also be done in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;
- Agreed that the formalization of a Steering Group, consisting of the Bureau's representatives to the UN Statistical Commission, would provide an important vehicle for the Committee to regularly communicate the importance of the SEEA to high-level officials and strengthen buy-in and engagement, as well as provide an opportunity for Steering Group members to provide feedback and direction, and help the Committee build better linkages to related areas of work and priorities within statistical offices;
- Agreed to include in the mandate the option for the Chair to recommend to the Committee the designation of a Co-Chair (rather than Co-Chair/Deputy Chair) to share chairing responsibilities;
- Suggested to explicitly mention that the Bureau includes, as a permanent member, the Chair of the London Group on Environmental Accounting, given the close relationship between the UNCEEA and London Group;
- Agreed to include some text in the Mandate and Governance on ensuring communication between the different groups of the Committee and with the broader Committee;
- Endorsed the Mandate and Governance document, subject to editing to include the suggestions made during the meeting, as well as its further submission to the UN Statistical Commission; and
- Supported the Bureau's plans for the Operational Guidelines, suggesting that, to enhance transparency, the procedures for determining membership be clarified in the document, and noted that the composition of the working groups and technical committees should be posted on the SEEA website.

Agenda item 2 – Area B1 – SEEA Central Framework

8. The session discussed the work of Area B1 and in particular the update of the SEEA Central Framework, focusing on the project management framework and the global consultation on the initial list of issues. Given the great emphasis on the coordination of the revision processes across relevant international standards, the session also provided an update on the COFOG and GFS revision processes, and the work of the OECD Expert Group on Natural Capital and of the London Group on Environmental Accounting.

Outcome and actions:

9. The Committee:

- Welcomed the work done by the Technical Committee on the SEEA Central Framework (SEEA CF TC) on the list of issues and project management framework for the update of the SEEA CF;
- Endorsed the proposed initial list of issues and agreed that it can be sent for global consultation;
- Agreed with the proposal for the SEEA CF TC to summarize the results of the global consultation and revise the list of issues and prioritization accordingly, also taking into consideration the amount of resources secured for the revision;
- Agreed with the proposed process to finalize the list of issues for the update of the SEEA CF, which include a review by the Bureau and then by broader UNCEEA, before being presented to the UN Statistical Commission at its 56th Session in March 2025;
- Emphasized the importance of reaching a wide audience during the global consultation and encouraged the SEEA CF TC to reach out to different producer and user communities, as well as to help facilitate national-level outreach;
- Noted that, in order to better engage with different communities, communication on the global consultation could be tailored to these communities by highlighting the specific issues of relevance for them;
- Suggested to include a cover note for the global consultation that provide a short description on the SEEA Central Framework, including its purpose, uses and policy relevance;
- Endorsed the project management framework, which will be presented to the UN Statistical Commission at its 56th Session;
- Took note of the engagement by members in the revision processes of the 2025 SNA, CEP, COFOG and GFS, as well as in the review process of the Statistical Guideline on Measuring Flows of Plastics Along the Life Cycle; and
- Welcomed the engagement of the London Group in advancing the discussion on selected issues for the update of the SEEA Central Framework and the coordination with the SEEA CF TC.

Agenda item 3 - Area A – Coordination and Communication

10. The session reviewed the progress of work of Area A and in particular on the landscape assessment and the series of policy-oriented webinars coordinated by the working group and the proposed future activities.

Outcome and actions:

11. The Committee:

- Welcomed the progress made by Area A on Coordination and Communication over the past year and endorsed its work plan for the upcoming year which includes the continuation of the webinar series, maintenance of the landscape assessment, communication/coordination of key ongoing initiatives and coordination of the communications on the update of the SEEA Central Framework;
- Commended the strong engagement from the biodiversity community and statistical community in the first two webinars of the series, which focused on the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting and Monitoring Framework of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;
- Agreed on the group's plans for future webinars on sustainable finance and business accounting and further suggested possible webinars on policy uses related to taxes and subsidies; renewable energy; and the compilation and use of the accounts at a subnational level; and
- Noted the suggestion to add the Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on Implementation of the SEEA to the landscape assessment.

Agenda item 4 - Area C – Development of Global Databases for SEEA

12. This session reviewed work of Area C in advancing on the compilation of global databases for the priority areas identified by the UNCEEA, namely air emissions, material flow, water, land, and energy accounts.

Outcome and actions:

13. The Committee:

- Welcomed the progress made by Area C over the past year, particularly in advancing the global data collection and dissemination for air emission, physical energy flow and material flow accounts;
- Agreed to the group's plans to pilot the land cover questionnaire and complete the feasibility study on water accounts, noting the importance of exploring the links between these accounts with the related SEEA Ecosystem Accounts when carrying out these plans;
- Agreed with the group's suggestion to re-assess the current list of priority accounts and make a proposal on priority accounts for the next five-year period (2026-2030) at the next meeting of the UNCEEA in 2025;

- Agreed on the importance of aligning the priority accounts with the SEEA-relevant policy priorities of countries and noted that the 2024 Global Assessment on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics could be used to provide insight into this; and
- Noted the need to coordinate the designation and collection of new priority accounts with the update of the SEEA Central Framework as appropriate and agreed on the importance of coordination between the Working Group and SEEA CF TC in this regard.

Agenda item 5 – Area B2 – SEEA Ecosystem Accounting

14. This session reviewed progress of Area B2 on the implementation of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, the development of practical guidance for countries, and the work on forest and ocean accounts. It also provided an overview of the work on the development of the metadata for SEEA-related headline indicators of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework monitoring framework.

Outcome and actions:

15. The Committee:

- Commended the work done by the Technical Committee on the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA TC) over the past year, in particular on the work related to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) headline indicators;
- Welcomed the progress of work of the SEEA EA TC and its Working Groups and Task Teams and encouraged the SEEA EA TC to continue the implementation of its work programme, including the development of practical guidance notes to support the compilation of accounts;
- Emphasized the importance of biophysical ecosystem accounts for supporting a range of value perspectives on biodiversity and ecosystems, of which monetary values are one perspective;
- Highlighted the need to advance the research agenda on valuation for SEEA EA, taking into account country experiences and different approaches to monetary values connected to ecosystems and their services and building on the work being carried out in the London Group;
- Suggested to the SEEA EA TC to further clarify the focus of the development of practical guidance notes for countries and of the outstanding aspects related to the GBF indicators, such as the aggregation method for ecosystem services; and
- Noted the potential role of the SEEA Central Framework in supporting some of the GBF indicators and encouraged the Technical Committee to build on the experience of Eurostat with the environmental protection expenditure accounts, especially related to biodiversity expenditures.

Agenda item 6 – Area D – Implementation and Statistical Capacity Building

16. This session focused on the Area D efforts to revitalize the SEEA Focal Points Network and plans for the Global Assessment on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics for the year.

Outcome and actions:

17. The Committee:

- Welcomed the work of Area D over the past year, in particular the work on the Global Assessment and on revitalizing the Focal Point network, as well as stressed the increased importance of the coordination of capacity building activities globally;
- Endorsed of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Focal Point Network included in the annex to the cover note and encourages Area D and the Secretariat to engage more systematically with the Focal Points;
- Agreed to the expansion of membership of Area D with the suggested international organizations, regional development banks and countries ensuring regional representation;
- Agreed with the priorities for the workplan of Area D for 2024-2025 and suggested to Area D to explore possibilities for making the Focal Points publicly available on the SEEA website; and
- Suggested including in the 2024 Global Assessment some questions to inform on the priority areas for developing global databases (see conclusion in para 13) and assess the scale of compilation of ecosystem accounts (i.e., national or subnational scales).

Agenda item 7 – Data Gaps Initiative III and the SEEA

18. This session provided a progress update on the Data Gaps Initiative III (DGI-3), specifically addressing the recommendations related to climate change data gaps and their links with the SEEA.

Outcome and actions:

19. The Committee:

- Welcomed the collaboration between the Committee and the Third Phase of the Data Gaps Initiative (DGI-3) and encouraged the continued involvement of the Committee in the recommendations related to climate change (recommendations 1-7), to ensure use of the SEEA for these recommendations, as appropriate;
- Noted that the methodological work on the DGI-3 climate change recommendations would be an important input for consideration for several SEEA CF update issues, as well as issues under the GFS and COFOG updates; and
- Took note of the plans for DGI-3 communication releases, which are focused on data and analytical takeaways, and noted that circulation of these releases could be an opportunity to further highlight the policy uses of the accounts.

Annex I: Agenda

Tuesday, 25 June 2024

7:30 – 7:40: Opening remarks and objectives of the meeting

7:40 – 8:40: Review of the mandate of the UNCEEA (UNCEEA Chair)

This session will review the mandate of the UNCEEA with a view to assess if changes are needed to reflect the current activities and priorities of the UNCEEA. The Bureau initiated this review and will propose adjustments to the mandate of the UNCEEA for discussion.

8:40 – 9:55: Area B1 – SEEA Central Framework (Area lead: Statistics Netherlands)

The session will discuss the update of the SEEA Central Framework, focusing on the project management framework and the global consultation on the list of issues. The session will also provide a summary of the state of play of relevant revisions processes such as the revision of COFOG and GFS and the work of the OECD Expert Group on Natural Capital.

9:55 – 10:05: Break

10:05 – 11:00: Area A – Coordination and Communication (Area lead: Australian Bureau of Statistics)

This session will review the work on the landscape assessment and the series of policy-oriented webinars that the working group is coordinating.

Wednesday, 26 June 2024

7:30 – 7:50: Review of previous day’s conclusions

7:50 – 8:40: Area C – Development of Global Databases for SEEA (Area lead: OECD)

This session will review the progress made in the compilation of global databases for air emissions, material flow, water, land and energy accounts.

8:40 – 9:40: Area B2 – SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (Area lead: South Africa)

This session will review the progress made towards the implementation of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, its work on practical guidance notes for countries and the work on forest ecosystems and oceans accounts. The session will also provide an overview of the work on the metadata for the SEEA-related indicators of the monitoring framework of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

9:40 – 9:45: Break

9:45 – 10:30: Area D – Implementation and Statistical Capacity Building (Area leads: SIAP and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics)

This session will focus on the working group's efforts to revitalize the SEEA Focal Points Network as well as plans for this year's Global Assessment on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics.

10:30 – 10:50: Data Gaps Initiative III and the SEEA (IMF)

This session will provide a progress update on the Data Gaps Initiative III (DGI-3), in particular, with respect to the recommendations related to the DGI-3 climate change data gaps and the links with the SEEA.

10:50 – 11:00: Closing remarks

Annex II: List of participants

Countries

Australia

Jonathon Khoo
Australian Bureau of Statistics

Luisa Ryan
Australian Bureau of Statistics

Brazil

Gabriela Cavalcanti de Araujo
Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística

Rebeca de La Rocque Palis
Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística

Canada

André Loranger (Chair)
Statistics Canada

Augustine Akuoko-Asibey
Statistics Canada

China

Shi Faqi
National Bureau of Statistics

Denmark

Ole Gravgård
Statistics Denmark

Estonia

Kaia Oras
Statistics Estonia

Finland

Johanna Pakarinen
Statistics Finland

France

INSEE FRANCE

Germany

Sven Kaumanns
Federal Statistical Office of Germany

Italy

Aldo Femia
National Statistical Institute

Angelica Tudini
National Statistical Institute

Indonesia

Ria Arinda
Badan Pusat Statistik

Etjih Tasriah
Badan Pusat Statistik

Jamaica

Cherice Bryan
The Statistical Institute of Jamaica

Mexico

Jose Eduardo de la Torre Barcena
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía

Raoul Figueroa Diaz
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía

Jose Federico Gonzalez Medrano
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía

Virginia Natalia Del Campo Sanchez
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía

Mongolia

Bayarmaa Baatarsuren
National Statistics Office of Mongolia

Morocco

Lamia Laabar
Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP)

New Zealand

Stephen Oakley
Statistics New Zealand

Norway

Martin Lundeby Grimstad
Statistics Norway

Philippine

Mark Pascasio
Philippine Statistics Authority

Saudi Arabia

Abdullah Al Thunayan
General Authority for Statistics

Russian Federation

Igor Repin
Federal State Statistics Service

Ksenia Serebriakova
Federal State Statistics Service

South Africa

Riaan Grobler
Statistics South Africa

Mandy Driver
Independent consultant

Sweden

Nils Brown
Statistics Sweden

The Netherlands

Sjoerd Schenau
Statistics Netherlands

United Kingdom

Alexandra Christenson
Office for National Statistics

Rosie Maslin
Office for National Statistics

Gemma N. Thomas
Office for National Statistics

United States

Dennis Fixler
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

International Organizations**Eurostat**

Arturo De la Fuente Nuno

European Environment Agency

Ovunc Uysal

**Food and Agricultural Organization of
United Nations (FAO)**

Valerie Bizier

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Valentina Stoevska

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Alessandra Alfieri

Francien Berry

P. Bhanumati

Darja Milic

**Organization for Economic Co-operation and
Development (OECD)**

Roberto Astolfi

Blanche Cartier

Bram Edens

Ivan Hascic

Mikaël Maes

Mauro Migotto

Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP)

Sokol Vako

UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD)

Jillian Campbell

Kieran Noonan Mooney

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Ludgarde Coppens

Therese El Gemayel

Dany Ghafari

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Michael Nagy

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Rikke Munk Hansen

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)

Wafa Aboul Hosn

Nibal Idlebi

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Yanchun Zhang

UN Tourism

Pedro Aramburu

Eric Hernandez Corona

Leandry Moreno

Clara Van Der Pol

United Nations Statistics Division

Ilaria Di Matteo

Elsa Marcela De Larrea Begne

Jessica Ying Chan

Marinella Cirillo

Emil Ivanov

Marko Javorsek

Marcus Newbury

Reena Shah