



## Concept note

### **Seminar on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

*6-7 February 2014, Castries, Saint Lucia*

#### **Background**

1. The System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework is the internationally agreed framework for measuring the environment and its relationship with the economy. It utilizes agreed concepts and classifications consistent with those used in economic statistics to integrate environmental information in the framework. The strength of the SEEA is organizing and reconciling environmental information using accounting concepts and structure to obtain time series of consistent, comparable and coherent statistics and indicators and to facilitate the linkages with official statistics. In addition it provides the frame of reference for the development of basic official statistics on the environment. The SEEA Central Framework was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission as the international standard for the compilation and dissemination of environmental-economic accounts.
2. The SEEA Central Framework provides a strong data framework to generate a wide range of integrated data and consistent and coherent indicators that can be further adapted to countries' priorities and policy needs. The SEEA provides the framework for reversing the historical information sylo approach to statistics and for providing indicators that directly respond to the demand of integrated policy making. This framework has been recognized as being particularly important to inform green growth/green economy policies, beyond GDP measures, respond to Aichi targets on biodiversity, natural capital accounting, etc.
3. In the CARICOM region, there is limited experience with the SEEA. This seminar will help to raise awareness of SEEA and its applications for policy applications and for providing the statistical reference for the development of basic statistics. It will support an ongoing dialogue among statistical producers and the various levels of government, business sector, the academic community, and the general public about user needs for environmental economic accounts and the progress in meeting those needs.

Engagements between the producers of statistical outputs and the providers of basic data on one hand and the users of environmental-economic accounts on the other will reinforce a better funded and more effective environmental-economic accounts programme that provides reliable data for an evidence-based policy formulation.

### **Purpose**

4. The purpose of the seminar is (i) to raise awareness of the SEEA among CARICOM countries, (ii) to discuss the growing policy demand for information to monitor the relationship between the environment, the economy and other human activity (iii) to enable an understanding of basic data sources and resource requirements to produce these accounts and in general to raise awareness of the relevance and utility of the SEEA in responding to these demands.

5. The seminar aims to raise awareness of the SEEA framework so that participants can acquire an understanding of the statistical information, other resource requirements and the preparatory work that should be put in place in order to commence the process of considering the development of regional and national strategies for the SEEA implementation and how these can inform policy needs on the interactions of the environment and the economy.

6. The seminar is expected to discuss the way forward on how to engage national, sub-regional, regional and international organizations and institutions in the development of multi-year strategies for the SEEA Central Framework, with the objective of strengthening the national statistical system (NSS) in support of developing comparable environmental-economic accounts for policy making. The seminar will also discuss key issues that have emerged out of the last meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians, which are most likely to affect the SEEA implementation including the lack of capacity of countries and the resource requirements needs in small countries like those of the CARICOM Region.

### **Organizers of the seminar**

7. This seminar will be jointly organized by the CARICOM Secretariat, ECCB, ECLAC, Statistics Canada, UNDP Barbados and the OECS, UNEP, UNSD, the World Bank and UNWTO, and hosted by the Saint Lucia Government Statistics Department. This seminar will provide an opportunity to bring together the users and producers as well as the technical and financial partners who are involved in the area of environmental economic accounts.

### **Participants**

8. Senior managers from national statistical offices and senior representatives from government agencies using environmental information for policy setting and analysis in selected CARICOM member states and associate members are invited.

## **Organization of the programme**

9. The seminar will be organized over 3 days as a back-to-back meeting with a seminar on national accounts. The first day (5 February) will be a national seminar focusing on policy needs and priorities of Saint Lucia. The second and the third days (6-7 February) will be a regional meeting focusing on raising awareness of the SEEA and its relevance in terms of policy needs, in particular related to the economy and environment interaction for CARICOM countries.

10. The programme of the seminar will be organised around the following themes:

- i) Policy demands and priorities to monitor the effect of economic and other human activity on the environment at the national and international level;
- ii) Overview of the SEEA family and its principles and components, the implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework, and the relevance and utility of SEEA to meet policy demands;
- iii) Presentation of core tables and accounts for selected SEEA modules;
- iv) A discussion among countries on national policy priorities, major stakeholders and data availability using a rapid diagnostic tool to assist in the discussion;
- v) The way forward – building partnerships at the national, sub-regional and national level towards regional and national initiatives for the SEEA Central Framework and the development of environmental economic accounts;

## **Expected outcome**

11. The seminar is expected to explore with participants the way forward in considering sub-regional and national institutional mechanisms, resource requirements and country capacity on the potential for moving towards the development of environmental-economic and ecosystem accounts in the Caribbean countries on the basis of the countries' discussion and initial self-assessment.