

Concept note
Seminar on Developing an Implementation Strategy for the
System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central
Framework for ECOWAS, EAC and COMESA countries
11-13 December 2013, Kampala, Uganda

Background

1. The Implementation Strategy for the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework represents a global statistical initiative, that was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session following the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework 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 implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework reflects the need for regional and national coordination and advocates that the accounts should be implemented with a flexible and modular approach, giving full consideration to national circumstances and requirements. Four distinct phases are identified for the flexible and modular approach for SEEA implementation through a multi-year programme, as follows:
 - i) Phase I – Establishment of appropriate national institutional arrangements based on agreed policy priorities that determine the scope and detail of the accounts and tables and will drive and support the implementation strategy. Identify whether there is a commitment and potential to sustain the programme over time is an important aim of the first phase;
 - ii) Phase II – Self-assessment, for which a diagnostic tool will be designed to identify which accounts can be implemented and what basic data sources are needed for that purpose;
 - iii) Phase III – Data quality assessment of basic data needed for the compilation of the accounts; and
 - iv) Phase IV – Drafting the development strategy for environmental accounting, which contain a prioritization of types of accounts and improvement activities related to the source data.
3. The efficiency and sustainability of the implementation for the SEEA Central Framework rest on the agreed principles of the implementation strategy, namely: (a) coordination, monitoring and reporting; (b) strategic planning; and (c) improving statistical system and the development of data sources. It acknowledges the need for coordinated action, not only at the international level but also at regional and national levels, and emphasizes the need for close cooperation among different stakeholders.
4. The implementation programme can be facilitated by advocacy activities. Advocacy aims to raise the awareness of SEEA and to support an ongoing dialogue

among statistical producers, 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

5. The purpose of the seminar is to discuss the growing policy demand for information to monitor the relationship between the environment, the economy and other human activity and to raise awareness of the relevance and utility of the SEEA in responding to these demands.

6. The seminar aims to build capacity to develop national and regional strategies for the SEEA implementation in response to policy needs for more comprehensive and accurate statistical information on the interactions of the environment and the economy.

7. The seminar is expected to initiate the formulation of a regional and national implementation strategy 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. It is expected that this initiative would lead to a formulation of the initial strategy for the implementation for the SEEA Central Framework leading to a multi-year statistics programme to develop environmental economic accounts for countries in Africa.

Organizers of the seminar

8. This seminar will be jointly organized by AfDB, ECA, UNDP, UNEP, UNSD and the World Bank and hosted by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). 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

9. Senior managers from national statistical offices and senior representatives from government agencies using environmental information for policy setting and analysis in selected COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS countries are invited.

Organization of the programme

10. The seminar will be organized over 3 days as a back-to-back meeting with a seminar on national accounts. The first day (11 December) will be a national seminar focusing on policy needs and priorities of Uganda. The second and the third days (12-13 December) will be a regional meeting focusing on priorities for COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS countries.

11. The programme of the seminar will be organised around four 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) Self-assessment concerning the implementation for the SEEA Central Framework and the SEEA diagnostic tool;
- v) Regional and national initiatives for formulating strategy for the implementation for the SEEA Central Framework and the development of environmental economic accounts;

12. The seminar will discuss the growing policy demands and priorities to monitor the relationship between the environment, the economy and other human activity at the national and international level. Several initiatives have demonstrated that continuing economic growth and human welfare are dependent upon the services provided by the environment and there are growing concerns about the effect of each country's economic activity upon the global and local environment.

13. The seminar will provide an overview of the SEEA and discuss the relevance and utility of the SEEA in meeting such policy demands. The SEEA is a multi-purpose system and is relevant for policy development and evaluation. Because of the strength of the underpinning accounting structure, SEEA Central Framework provides a statistical framework to generate integrated statistics and coherent and consistent indicators that can be further adapted to countries' priorities and policy needs.

14. Recognizing the utility and relevance of the SEEA, the seminar will discuss in greater details the implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework, focusing on the first and second phases. The aim of the implementation strategy is to assist countries in the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework and to establish the technical capacity for regular reporting on a core set of tables and accounts. The seminar will present the SEEA diagnostic tool, which is critical for countries to carry out a self-assessment concerning their SEEA implementation for selected modules and to determine which accounts are to be prioritized depending on policy demands and data availability.

15. The final part of the seminar will call for the establishment of a regional and national institutional mechanism and an initial statement of strategy strategy for the SEEA implementation, and seek commitments from all stakeholders in the countries and international donors for the development of environmental economic accounts for selected COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS countries.

Expected outcome

16. The seminar is expected to reach consensus among participants on the basic characteristics of a regional programme for the implementation for the SEEA Central Framework for COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS countries. It is expected that the development strategy for the national implementation for the SEEA Central Framework will be formulated as an outcome document that contains:

- i) An agreement from all stakeholders in the countries of the policy questions and identification of types of accounts and tables to answer the policy questions.
- ii) Commitments from participating countries to develop an initial statement of strategy outlining the policy priorities, institutional framework, accounts to compile and identifying constraints and opportunities for the SEEA implementation;
- iii) Commitment to develop a regional strategy for the SEEA implementation based on policy priorities.