

Concept Note
Expert Group Meeting (EGM) for Guidelines for
Water Accounts and Statistics
November 20-22, 2013
New York, NY

DRAFT

Background

1. At its 38th session in 2007, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) adopted the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEA-Water) recognizing a significant demand from the users' community. The SEEA-Water was adopted as an interim standard, pending the adoption of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA).. The UNSC encouraged the implementation of SEEA-Water in countries. As a result, today more than 60 countries in the world are implementing or planning to implement water accounts.
2. After the adoption of the SEEA-Water the UNSC requested the United Nations Statistics Division to develop and submit to the Statistical Commission at its 39th session in 2008, an implementation strategy for the SEEA-Water, taking into account the fact that countries were at different stages of development of environment statistics and environmental-economic accounts.
3. After an extensive consultation with countries and discussions at the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA), the London Group on Environmental Accounting, as well as at six workshops or training programmes on water accounts held during 2007, the strategy for the implementation of the SEEA-Water was presented to the UNSC at its 39th session in 2008.
4. The strategy aims at integrating SEEA-Water into the national policy framework of integrated water resources management within national statistical systems. It puts great emphasis on linking the implementation of water accounts to users' demand as well as more broadly into national economic policies. The Statistics Division (UNSD) is working in close collaboration with countries and international agencies developing synergies and supporting statistical initiatives to improve water statistics programmes.
5. The **implementation strategy** comprises the following **four components**:
 - a) Development of the International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS), accompanied by guidelines on supplementary data collection and compilation;
 - b) Development of training and promotional material;
 - c) Development of a technical cooperation programme consisting of regional activities as well as pilot projects in selected countries in various regions;
 - d) Harmonization of international data collection activities with the SEEA-Water concepts and definitions.
6. As part of the implementation strategy, the International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS) were developed and after a thorough consultation process the IRWS were adopted by the UNSC at its 41st session in 2010.

7. The implementation strategy has focused on the development and strengthening of the processes for the collection and compilation of basic data, integration of data in the SEEA-Water framework for analysis and interpretation, and the derivation of policy relevant indicators. Considerable efforts have been made in understanding the data development processes in countries, definitions, classifications, as well as data availability and quality. Furthermore developing partnerships with the various data producers and users has been key in the success of the projects.
8. The recent elevation of the SEEA to a statistical standard is expected to renew interest in the implementation of environmental-economic accounts in countries, and in particular water accounts due to the importance of water for development, and the increasing water stress in many countries and regions.
9. The UNCEEA has recognised the importance of developing compilation guidelines to assist countries with the development of water accounts and statistics, considering the high demand for supporting materials on the implementation of water accounts and statistics. The ad-hoc training materials developed for workshops held in several countries provide the basis for developing the Guidelines.
10. The Guidelines should provide country experts and trainers with a comprehensive and reliable set of materials for assisting the staff of National Statistics Offices, Water Ministries and Agencies and other stakeholders in countries with the process of implementation of water accounts and statistics for developing a monitoring system for water policies.
11. In order to steer the process of elaboration of the Guidelines, as well as to provide inputs to the document, an **Editorial Board**, has been created. The editorial board will have periodic meetings mostly by teleconferences.
12. An **Expert Group** will be formed to review the complete draft of the document. The document will also undergo a broad consultation among key stakeholders, and then be submitted to the UNSC for endorsement.

Purpose

13. The purpose of the EGM will be to bring together producers and users of water information from various countries and organization in order to review the guidelines for the compilation of water accounts and statistics.
14. Through the meeting discussions, participants will seek agreements on how to improve the guidelines and make it applicable to countries and territories in the different regions of the world.
15. The participants in the EGM will also provide feedback about the practical examples of application in different countries to illustrate the Guidelines.

Organizers

16. The meeting will be organized by the UNSD.

Participants

17. Participants in the meeting will include experts in the area of water resources management, statistics, and national accounts.

18. Participants may come from government agencies and ministries (e.g., National Statistical Offices, Ministries or Agencies of Water or Environment), non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and academia.

Organization of the Workshop

19. The workshop will be held back-to-back with the planned 18-20 November 2013 workshop on Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. It will consist of half-day on **20 November** and two full days on **21-22 November**.
20. The workshop will consist of discussions about each of the sections of each of the chapters of the guidelines, and the exercises provided. Participants will evaluate the need of further improving some sections of the guidelines, and or the exercises, and examples.
21. The workshop will conclude with development of a timeline to finalize the guidelines, with the inclusion of additional examples, if necessary, or seeking agreement on points of discussion not fully resolved during the workshop.