

Developing Programmes for Implementing the 2008 SNA, the 2012 SEEA and Supporting Statistics in the Pacific Region (Apia, Samoa, 20-23 August 2013)

I. Background

1. Development of evidence-based sustainable development strategies and policies relies on available and reliable statistics. Mainstreaming the measurement of natural capital as part of the regular data collection programs of national statistical offices would improve the ability of policy makers to make balanced policy choices for sustainable development. Not only will better information improve national decision making but it is also useful in monitoring and evaluating international sustainable development initiatives, such as the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which are being developed in the context of the post-2015 development agenda or the themes in the Barbados Programme of Action and Mauritius Strategy of Implementation.
2. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics agreed in 2010, to build the capacity of all countries in the region, by 2020, to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics. In that regard, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics endorsed the Core Set of Economic Statistics and Regional Programme on Economic Statistics as a means for improving national capacity to produce economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The implementation programme for the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) and supporting statistics is a key to strengthening the national statistical system (NSS) and establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics in support of improved policy making. Both the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics and Regional Programme on Economic Statistics are complementary as the latter will produce some of the statistics required by the former.
3. Linking environmental and socio-economic data is essential for policymakers. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is a multi-purpose information system which uses the accounting structure of the System of National Accounts to integrate environmental information. Because of the strength of the underpinning accounting structure, SEEA provide a strong data compilation framework and can serve a variety of monitoring purposes related to integrated policy-making, green economy and other sustainable development initiatives. The SNA and the SEEA provide the statistical framework for the broader measures of progress.
4. The discussions on the follow up of Rio+20 and the Post 2015 development agenda present an opportunity for scaling up the implementation of the SNA and SEEA in countries and directly link it to policy demands. It is clear that the implementation process has to take a bottom-up approach with countries taking ownership for the process. The statistical agenda and priorities should be policy relevant and remain policy relevant over time. As such the engagement of different stakeholders from the national policy community is important.

II. Purpose

5. The United Nations Statistics Division (DESA/SD), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), Samoa Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and in collaboration with Statistics New Zealand (SNZ), the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance

Centre (PFTAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), plans to provide technical assistance for developing a programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics and a strategy for the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework and supporting statistics in Apia, Samoa, from 19 to 23 August 2013. The technical assistance is organized for the SNA and SEEA simultaneously to ensure synergies between the two programmes and to ensure the development of an efficient data production process at the country level in support of both the SNA and the SEEA.

6. The purpose of the technical assistance is to assess the current status, needs and priorities of Pacific countries in the area of economic statistics and environment statistics, and to assist the Pacific countries with developing: i) a national programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, and ii) an implementation strategy for the SEEA and supporting statistics based on a self assessment of country priorities and data availability. The technical assistance will also include a discussion of how to maximize the impact of statistical development in the limited funding environment.

7. The outcome of the technical assistance will provide the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) with additional inputs for their consideration in overseeing the development of Phase II of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS). The meeting outcome will also provide expert feedback for further developing the implementation plan for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which will complement the national programmes for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, and the development of an Asia-Pacific regional programme on environment statistics.

8. The technical assistance is composed of two seminars – the economic statistics seminar in the context of the SNA and the environment statistics seminar in the context of the SEEA– which will be organized as back to back meetings over four days. In addition a 1-day national workshop/consultation on economic statistics will be organized on 19 August 2013 with the Samoa government.

III. Economic statistics in the context of the SNA

9. The implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics represents a global statistical initiative, which was mandated by the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session following the adoption of the 2008 SNA as the international standard for the compilation and dissemination of national accounts. With the 2008 SNA being flexible to accommodate all countries and economies, regardless of their level of statistical development, each country has to review the relevant recommendations of the 2008 SNA that are applicable to the country and consider its adoption. At the same time, the scope, detail and quality of the accounts and supporting statistics should be revisited.

10. The objective of the SNA technical assistance is to assist Samoa and selected countries in the Pacific region with developing a national programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. At its forty-second session the Statistical Commission stressed the importance for Member States to establish their national implementation programmes for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics in line with the regional and global implementation programmes.¹ The first part of the technical assistance involves a national seminar and discussions with those involved in the Samoa statistical system focusing on the policy needs and

¹ E/2011/24-E/CN.3/2011/37 Chapter I B paragraph 42/103 (n); available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc11/Report-Final-E.pdf>.

priorities of a lead country. The second part brings together countries in the Pacific region to discuss, with the senior managers on economic statistics and national accounts from these countries, the development of a national implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. The aim is also to share with the countries the experience from the first part of the mission and to facilitate cooperation amongst the neighbouring countries for supporting the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics in the region.

IV. Environment statistics in the context of the SEEA

11. Climate change, oceans and environmental issues pose some of the most pressing problems in the Pacific. Policy makers need comprehensive and accurate statistical information on the environment and the way it interacts with social and economic elements of development. This has created a demand for more systematic production of environmental indicators. Yet, environment statistics often are not included in the regular work programme of national statistical offices. As the head of national statistical systems, national statistical offices should work with partners to ensure that environmental data collection results in integrated information system on the environment and its links to the economy and human activity which is high-quality and policy relevant.

12. This seminar will include an overview and discussion of environment statistics in the Pacific and raise awareness of the importance of compiling policy-relevant indicators which result from an integrated statistical system. The seminar aims to initiate a dialogue on building regional strategy for improving environment statistics through the SEEA implementation. This dialogue among data producers and users will benefit the development of an Asia-Pacific regional programme on environment statistics linked to existing initiatives on the SNA implementation and the programme on the improvement of agriculture statistics and help set the direction for mainstreaming environment statistics in Pacific countries.

13. The SEEA Central Framework was adopted as an international statistical standard by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 44th session in February 2012. At the following session in February 2013, the UNSC adopted the implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework and welcomed the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting as an important first step in the development of a statistical framework for ecosystem accounting, and encouraged its use by international and regional agencies and countries wishing to test and experiment in this new area of statistics. 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.

14. The objective of the seminar is to assist countries in the Pacific region with developing an implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework on the basis of policy priorities and statistical development as well as to develop a sub-regional implementation strategy. The seminar brings together senior managers from national statistical offices and senior representatives from government agencies using environmental information for policy setting from countries in the Pacific region to discuss the development of an implementation strategy for the SEEA. The aim is also to share experiences among countries in the region and facilitate cooperation amongst the neighbouring countries as well as north-south and triangular cooperation in support of the SEEA implementation strategy in the Pacific region.

V. Target audience

15. Target audience include Government Statisticians or senior managers from the national statistical offices; high-level participants from either central banks, ministry of finance or other relevant line ministry; senior representatives from lead government agencies using environmental information for policy setting and analysis and senior representatives from ministries of agriculture from each invited country.

16. The following countries will be invited: Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Samoa will co-organize the meeting.

17. As the meeting will be co-hosted by the Government of Samoa, additional participants from the statistical office and a number of different line ministries of Samoa will also be invited.

VI. Expected outcomes

18. The outcome of this meeting will provide the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) with additional input for their consideration in overseeing the development of Phase II of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS). The meeting outcome will also provide expert feedback for further developing the implementation plan for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which will complement the national programmes for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, and for the development of an Asia-Pacific regional programme on environment statistics.

19. Participants in the SNA seminar will learn to develop a national programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. It is expected that this knowledge would lead to a multi-year statistical programme to move countries over to the 2008 SNA and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics with quality “fit for purpose”. The SNA seminar should also serve as a catalyst for intra regional cooperation aimed at curbing variation in approaches among countries in the region and to further the consistent implementation of the 2008 SNA. Effective adaptation and use of well developed national accounts statistics and convergence with corresponding established international standards are key elements for the development of standardised and comparable statistics in the region and worldwide. Consistent application and adaptation of the 2008 SNA is a key element in enhancing statistical capacity of participating countries. It is expected that the Samoa Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with national partners and in consultation with UNSD, ESCAP and SPC, will prepare an outcome document which will contain:

- (a) an initial assessment of the current capacity of the NSS to produce and disseminate a core data set of annual and high frequency statistics consisting of economic statistics and national accounts in support of national policy programmes;
- (b) a consolidation of the statistical requirements, assessment and actions for preparing a national implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics; and
- (c) a proposed institutional arrangement to coordinate activities in the formulation of the statistical implementation programme for economic statistics and national accounts

20. The SEEA seminar is expected to reach consensus among participants on the basic characteristics of a regional programme for the implementation for the SEEA in the Pacific region. Participants in the SEEA seminar will learn to: (a) make a self assessment of the policy frameworks and priorities as well as data availability in the countries; (b) to map the institutional environment in the countries; and (c) to develop an implementation strategy for the SEEA. It is expected that this knowledge would initiate the formulation of a regional and national implementation strategy for the SEEA for countries in the Pacific region, with the objective of strengthening the national statistical system (NSS) in support of developing comparable environmental-economic accounts for policy making. Participating countries are expected to initiate the national self-assessment on institutional environment, data availability and data requirements for the implementation of selected SEEA modules. It is expected the development strategy for the national implementation for the SEEA will be formulated as an outcome document that contains:

- (a) An agreement by all stakeholders in the countries on the policy questions and types of accounts and tables required to answer the policy questions.
- (b) Commitments from participating countries to develop a statement of strategy outlining the policy priorities, institutional framework, accounts to compile and strategies for improving data availability;
- (c) Commitment to develop a regional strategy for the SEEA implementation based on policy priorities.

VII. Partners

21. This technical assistance will be jointly organized by UNSD, UN-ESCAP, Samoa Bureau of Statistics, ABS, SPREP and SPC in collaboration with SNZ, PFTAC, and FAO. Invited partners will include United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), European Union (EU) delegation in the Pacific and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

VIII. Supporting documents

22. UNSD has developed a number of tools to support the development of a programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. These include:

- (a) The note: *Developing a global programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics*;
- (b) Statistical System Information fact sheet;
- (c) Diagnostic Framework for National Accounts and Supporting Economic Statistics (DF-NA&ES); and
- (d) Status of National Accounts and Supporting Economic Statistics

23. At its forty-second session in 2011 the UNSC adopted an update of the milestone and data set measures to assess the scope and compliance with the 2008 SNA² and initiated a review to accommodate a broader scope of economic statistics and short term economic statistics, including quarterly national accounts, for early warning of exposures and risks³. The ISWGNA organizations also apply other generally accepted frameworks in performing or facilitating data

² Guidelines for monitoring the 2008 SNA implementation available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/docs/guidelines.pdf>

³ Report on Short term Economic Indicators to the 2011 UNSC available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc11/2011-11-Short-termEcoIndicators-E.pdf>

quality assessments for national accounts and supporting data sets, which include the IMF's GDDS and SDDS metadata, information gleaned in the discovery process during quality assessment reviews, including self assessments, peer reviews, as well as IMF data modules of the (ROSC, and periodic international surveys.

24. To support the SEEA implementation, UNSD is developing a series of tools some of which are available in draft form⁴ and will be tested during the seminar in Samoa. These include:

- (a) Implementation strategy for the SEEA;
- (b) SEEA implementation guide;
- (c) Diagnostic tool for the SEEA-Central Framework;
- (d) Technical notes on selected resources;
- (e) Briefing note on SEEA-Central Framework
- (f) Briefing note on the SEEA-Experimental-Ecosystem Accounting
- (g) Briefing note on the SEEA-Water.

25. More information on the ESCAP Regional Programme on Economic Statistics is available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/index.asp>.

⁴ The documents mentioned below are available at:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/workshops/SEEA_Conf_2013/main.htm