

Eighth Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Draft Minutes of the Meeting (United Nations, New York, 20-21 June 2013)

1. The Eighth Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) was hosted in New York on 20-21 June 2013. It was opened and chaired by Mr. Peter Harper, Chair of UNCEEA and Deputy Australian Statistician.
2. The Eighth Meeting of the UNCEEA discussed the role of SEEA as measurement tool in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and various international policy initiatives. The Committee discussed the proposed medium-term work programme for the UNCEEA, considered the way forward on the implementation strategy of the SEEA and reviewed implementation tools, coordination issues and capacity building. The UNCEEA was informed about the outcome and recommendations of the just concluded international conference “Global Implementation Programme for the SEEA”. Progress towards a medium-term programme of work for the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting and in the work related to of the SEEA Applications and Extensions was discussed. The Committee received an update on the status of work on SEEA-Energy and the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual. The meeting reviewed advances in the development of environmental-economic accounts for agriculture. The meeting was informed of SEEA-related emerging issues, such as the use of geospatial information. The Committee discussed the communication strategy for the SEEA. Furthermore, the Committee was informed of current developments in the implementation of the Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics.
3. The Committee considered the composition of the membership of the UNCEEA Bureau and the chairmanship of the UNCEEA under agenda item 12.
4. The actions taken by the UNCEEA as agreed during the meeting are presented under the relevant agenda items. The annotated agenda, documents and presentations of the meeting are available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings/lod8.htm>

Agenda item 1 - Opening and objectives of the meeting

Summary of the opening statement:

5. In his opening statement, Mr. Harper remarked that with the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework by the Statistical Commission in 2012, the UNCEEA has reached an important milestone and will focus its attention on implementation. Mr. Harper acknowledged that significant policy demands for statistics linking information on the environment and the economy have greatly increased the interest in SEEA. He noted that

the just concluded international conference “Global Implementation Programme for the SEEA” has underlined the need for environmental-economic accounts and ecosystem accounting. Mr. Harper reminded the Committee of the need for the statistical community to be fully engaged in international policy initiatives, primarily in the post-2015 development agenda process, to demonstrate how SEEA can be used for assessing environmental and economic policy and serve as an underlying conceptual framework for many key indicators related to the process of defining sustainable development goals.

6. At the opening session Mr. Harper announced that he will be resigning as chair of the UNCEEA after the present meeting due to his new responsibilities at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. He noted that the arrangements for the succession of chair would be taken up by the Committee under agenda item 12 along with the discussion of the composition of the Bureau of the UNCEEA.

Agenda Item 2 – Post-2015 development agenda and broader measures of progress *(for discussion)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Noted with satisfaction the increased recognition of SEEA as an important measurement framework for monitoring targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.*
- *Recommended that UNCEEA enhance its short-term work to demonstrate the uses of SEEA, building on existing initiatives and material based on the SEEA Applications and Extensions, to seize the window of opportunity created by high-level government recognition of the key role of statistical frameworks in monitoring progress on sustainable development policies and the post-2015 development agenda.*
- *Encouraged UNCEEA members to engage at the country level in formulating national positions in the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs and the post-2015 development process and asked UNCEEA to identify existing material to help members in such activities.*
- *Agreed that UNCEEA follow closely the work of the Friends of the Chair (FOC) Group on the broader measures of progress.*

Summary of discussion:

A Global Dashboard for the New Post-2015 Development Agenda (Paula Caballero Gomez, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Columbia and Jimena Leiva Roesch, United Nations Mission, Guatemala)

UNDP Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Gabriel Normand, UNDP)

Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress (Claire Plateau, INSEE, France)

Strategy of Engagement from UNCEEA to the Post-2015 Process (Ivo Havinga, UNSD)

7. The presentation by Columbia and Guatemala provided an overview of their proposal for a global dashboard approach for the post-2015 development agenda. The presentation called for an agreement to the concept of a global dashboard as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework and the development of a discrete set of targets and indicators associated to each agreed goal that reflects key areas for development around which there is broad consensus. The presentation emphasized that input from statisticians is important for the post-2015 process. The policy community should partner from the outset with the international statistical community, starting with the Statistical Commission, since the selection of targets and indicators needs to be based on sound internationally agreed statistical standards, methods and practices to ensure international comparability across countries and regions.

8. During the discussion, the importance of SEEA as a measurement framework for monitoring the post-2015 agenda was recognized and the need of mainstreaming the SEEA was reaffirmed. Given the window of opportunity created by high-level government recognition of the key role of statistical systems in monitoring progress on the policies of the post-2015 development agenda, it was considered important in the short-term to enhance work on the SEEA that yields tangible results and appeals to policy makers.

9. The UNCEEA followed with great interest the presentation by UNDP on the ongoing consultation on post-2015 development agenda. It was noted that there has been an unprecedented effort to have an inclusive process. The MDG process provided a number of valuable lessons that have been applied in the development of the post-2015 agenda. In particular consultations with developing countries (ongoing currently in over 80 countries) during the early stages provided them with a greater sense of ownership. The bottom up approach in which countries drive the process will allow for quicker adoption of the agenda at the national level. Thematic consultations are also being held with experts as well as with the public at large through the use of various social media and internet websites.

10. Under this agenda item the UNCEEA welcomed the update on the work of the Friends of the Chair (FOC) group on broader measures of progress. The FOC group was created in 2013 by the Statistical Commission with the mandate to: 1) build a work programme to develop broader measures of progress based on a stocktaking exercise of practices in this field; 2) ensure that a robust statistical approach is incorporated from the outset in preparation for the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; and 3) report to the Statistical Commission its preliminary results in 2014. At its first informal meeting, the group recognized that significant work has already been done in this area and it stressed that it should monitor closely the developments around the SDGs and post-2015 development agenda. Statisticians should strive to be actively involved in formulating targets and indicators and providing professional advice on existing data. The FOC group also noted the importance of having a transparent programme of work.

11. The UNCEEA noted that the FOC will work closely with the Open Working Group (OWG) and inform it on statistical indicators related to the notes of the OWG thematic meetings. The group welcomes contributions by the UNCEEA to convey information to the OWG on the state of the art of indicators measuring the environment. The UNCEEA

agreed to closely follow the work of the FOC group and noted the importance of raising awareness of the SEEA within the various processes on the SDGs and post-2015 development agenda.

12. The UNSD presentation provided an overview of the various processes in the work on the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. It emphasized the need to bring the UNCEEA perspective into the ongoing discussions on the selection of targets, goals and related statistical indicators. It was considered important to demonstrate that the SEEA and SNA are useful tools that allow bringing cross-cutting issues together in a framework. The Committee agreed with the need to engage on multiple levels with the policy processes and work with partners within the countries to impact government positions.

Agenda item 3 – Broad discussion on indicators and the strategic role of the UNCEEA (for discussion)

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Recognized the need to communicate the role of SEEA and its sub-systems (e.g. SEEA-Water) in national planning.*
- *Recognized SEEA as a powerful tool for Green Growth type of analysis.*
- *Agreed to accelerate work on a set of SEEA core tables and accounts to provide guidance to countries in the compilation of environmental-economic accounts.*
- *Recommended that international agencies develop their reporting template based on an agreed set of SEEA core tables and accounts.*
- *Called for a coordinated approach to develop a common SEEA reporting template for the purpose of collecting internationally comparable data and reducing the response burden on national statistical systems.*

Summary of discussion

UN-Water Task Force (Keneti Faulalo, UNDSO)

OECD Implementation Programme for SEEA (Peter van de Ven, OECD)

13. The presentation by UNDSO provided an overview of proposals for water-related indicators and described the context of the intergovernmental process on SDGs on the water theme. The presentation informed on several international initiatives and forums that review water-specific themes and contribute to proposing goals, targets and indicators in the SDG framework. It was stressed that targets should be meaningful at both global and local level in order to obtain buy-in from countries. The presentation underlined the role of SEEA in defining water-related indicators.

14. The UNCEEA welcomed the presentation on water-related indicators and the relationship to the SEEA. The discussion highlighted the SEEA Central Framework as a

suite of accounts and the need to emphasize the importance of its sub-systems such as SEEA-Water for national planning. The discussion also pointed to the importance in communicating SEEA as an extension of SNA and build on the reputation, prominence and the universal acceptance of SNA by policy makers.

15. The presentation by OECD provided an overview of OECD Green Growth Strategy and a conceptual framework for measuring progress with a list of indicators. SEEA was recognized as a powerful tool for Green Growth type of analysis. The OECD plan for implementation was presented and the primary goal of the plan is to arrive at a first set of tables according to SEEA for OECD member countries. The SEEA tables would be selected based on the criteria of relevance, data availability and consistency, where air emission and natural resources table were considered as two prioritised areas. The importance to arrive at a set of commonly agreed reporting template of SEEA core tables was stressed.

16. Members commented on the OECD plan of implementation and welcomed the prioritization of the air emission accounts but raised concerns on some of the methodological issues of compiling the natural resources account. It was confirmed that valuation of natural resources is consistent between SNA and SEEA but at the same time the challenge for SNA and SEEA to measure the impacts of natural resource prices on natural resources volume was recognized. The connection with work of the Oslo Group was seen important in this regard. Some members suggested water accounts as another priority area.

17. The UNCEEA agreed with the OECD proposal on the urgency to develop a set of SEEA core tables and accounts to provide guidance to countries in the compilation of environmental-economic accounts. Members also recommended that international agencies develop their reporting template based on an agreed set of SEEA core tables and accounts. Several members called for the development of a common SEEA reporting template for the purpose of collecting internationally comparable data. Members also called for a coordinated approach by international agencies in developing a common SEEA reporting template to reduce the response burden on national statistical systems of international data reporting.

Agenda item 4 – Towards a medium-term programme of work for the implementation of the SEEA (for discussion)

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed appreciation to the SEEA Editor and the Secretariat for preparing the proposals on the medium-term programme of work of UNCEEA and the various implementation tools of the SEEA and requested finalizing the documents by taking into account the comments made at the meeting.*
- *Expressed strong support for the medium-term programme of work of UNCEEA to be organized around six areas: (a) coordination; (b) methodological development for standards and other research; (c) development of databases; (d)*

- implementation of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics and statistical capacity building; (e) promotion; and (f) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues.*
- *Agreed to create a steering committee within UNCEEA for the oversight and coordination of work on the research agenda.*
 - *Recommended an active and coordinated approach to be taken by the UNCEEA to secure resources for the medium-term programme of work on the implementation of the SEEA.*
 - *Recommended developing further details on the proposal of creating a partnership of stakeholders in the development and use of the SEEA to foster collaboration, integration and complementarity of programmes.*
 - *Recognized the need to focus on the SEEA Central Framework and priority activities (translations, classifications, core tables, implementation guide).*
 - *Welcomed the proposal on the development of the SEEA implementation tools to assist countries in the implementation of the SEEA and recognized the need to build on existing material where applicable.*
 - *Expressed overwhelming support for conducting the 2013 SEEA Implementation Global Assessment Survey and requested making the preliminary results available to the UNCEEA.*
 - *Welcomed the proposal on training the trainers as an important step in building capacity for the SEEA and expressed support for formalizing by UNCEEA the coordination of training activities of different organizations and initiatives.*
 - *Expressed appreciation to the ten international agencies that co-organized the international conference “Global Implementation Programme for the SEEA”.*
 - *Recognized that the conference provided an important forum for national, international and non-governmental organizations and experts from scientific and academic institutions to discuss the implementation programme of the SEEA Central Framework and the testing and research agenda of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting.*
 - *Noted that the recommendations of the international conference are finalized by the United Nations Statistics Division after consulting with conference participants.*
 - *Also noted that the finalized recommendations will be provided to the UNCEEA for consideration in the development of its programme of work.*

Summary of discussion:

Towards a Medium-Term Programme of Work for the UNCEEA (2013-2020) (Alessandra Alfieri, UNSD)

Implementation Tools for the SEEA (Carl Obst, SEEA Editor)

Proposed SEEA Global Assessment (Julian Chow, UNSD)

Proposed Training the trainers (Anthony Dvarskas, UNSD)

Outcome of the International Conference “Global Implementation Programme for the SEEA” (Peter Harper, Chair of UNCEEA)

18. The presentation by UNSD provided an overview of the proposed medium-term programme of work of the UNCEEA organized around six areas: (a) coordination; (b) methodological development for normative standards and other research; (c) development of databases; (d) implementation of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics and statistical capacity building; (e) promotion; and (f) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues.

19. The proposed medium term programme envisaged that the Committee will focus on developing mechanisms and tools in support of the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework, while continuing to advance the associated research agenda. At the same time, in response to the increasing demand of information on ecosystem services and conditions and their linkages to economic and other human activities, the UNCEEA will work on the development of tools to assist countries to test the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting and on the basis of lessons learnt from experimentation, it will advance the research agenda of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. Considering the multidisciplinary nature of the work, mechanisms bringing together the scientific, economic and policy making communities are required.

20. The presentation also discussed a proposed management and governance structure for the programme of work of the UNCEEA on the implementation of the SEEA. It was proposed that a steering committee consisting of a limited number of members and reporting to the UNCEEA and its Bureau, be established with the task to advance the research agenda and review and advice on compliance with the SEEA of the implementation materials/tools that will be developed.

21. It was also proposed that a statistical partnership be created to ensure coordination of implementation activities including raising the demand for SEEA, pooling resources and stepping up the efforts to ensure that a core set of tables and accounts are compiled and reported at the global level and more detailed accounts and tables are developed in support of national policies.

22. The UNCEEA expressed appreciation to the SEEA Editor and UNSD for preparing the proposal on a medium-term programme of work and on various components and tools of the implementation of the SEEA. It requested finalizing the documents taking into account the comments made at the meeting.

23. The Committee expressed strong support for the proposal that the medium-term programme of work of UNCEEA focus on the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework and expressed the need to prioritize activities. Some members considered the programme ambitious and were concerned that creating new subcommittees may add to the already complex governance structure. Members called for an active and coordinated approach to be taken by the UNCEEA to secure resources for the SEEA implementation programme. The urgency to finalize translations of the SEEA, develop classifications,

core accounts, standard reporting templates and implementation guide to assist countries in the compilation of environmental-economic accounts was also pointed out.

The presentation by the SEEA Editor provided an overview of the proposed implementation tools for the SEEA. The proposal suggested that a number of activities and outputs be developed in a coordinated fashion among the various stakeholders. These include:

- SEEA implementation guide
- Diagnostic tools
- Topic specific Technical Notes
- Designated core accounts
- Reporting tables
- SEEA presentations
- SEEA “Knowledge Base”
- Training materials, including “Training the Trainers”

24. The SEEA Implementation Guide is envisaged to be a summary document that conveys sufficient information regarding the steps for implementation and provides links to relevant, more detailed material as required. One reason for providing such a summary document is that while there are many aspects of implementation of the SEEA that might be considered generic, the modular nature of the SEEA means that there will be different issues that must be considered depending on the specific account that is the focus of implementation. The presentation explained the scope of the implementation guide to include ecosystem accounts and provided an annotated outline of the chapters.

25. In order to support implementation for specific types of accounts it was proposed to prepare a series of SEEA Technical Notes covering the main aspects of measurement and compilation in various accounts of the SEEA, for example water accounting, land accounting, accounting for energy, etc. The aim of these notes is to provide a starting point for implementation of specific accounts by summarizing key aspects and linking to relevant material and they are not considered compilation guides per se. The proposed timeline is to have initial drafts of technical notes for each proposed topic by October 2013.

26. The presentation also provided details on the diagnostic tool aimed at providing a framework to facilitate the relevant stages of implementation. As an indication of the type of material that could be incorporated, advanced drafts of two sections of the diagnostic tool have been provided as background documents. An associated rapid diagnostic tool has been developed that could be used to lead relevant parties quickly through the implementation process and required steps subject to further refinement and testing.

27. The UNCEEA welcomed the proposed development of the SEEA implementation tools to assist countries in the implementation of the SEEA. Members recommended for the development of the Implementation Guide, Technical Notes and Diagnostic Tool to keep them concise and build on existing material such as those developed by Eurostat. It was also pointed out that the technical notes should be consistent with the SEEA Central Framework.

28. It was suggested that the implementation guide for the SEEA Central Framework and the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting are kept separate considering the different needs of countries for implementing the standard and for testing ecosystem accounting.
29. The presentation by UNSD on the proposal for the 2013 SEEA Implementation Global Assessment Survey explained the objective of the new survey which will provide an update on the countries that completed the 2006 survey and, importantly, serve as a baseline as the SEEA 2012 implementation strategy moves forward. The survey will cover all United Nations member states and the results will be reported to the Statistical Commission in 2014.
30. The UNCEEA expressed overwhelming support for conducting the 2013 SEEA Implementation Global Assessment Survey. Members commented on the proposed timeline and requested that the preliminary result of the survey should be available by the second half of 2013 so that it can serve as a timely statistical input for the discussions of the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress and inform intergovernmental processes such as the Open Working Group. Some members offered to provide written comments on the proposed survey questionnaire.
31. The UNSD presentation on training the trainers introduced the proposal for the training component of the SEEA implementation tools. The envisaged training activities will target different audiences that will need different trainers from a pool of experts. As next steps, the proposal included forming a training subcommittee of UNCEEA, securing funding and hiring a consultant to lead training activities.
32. The discussion centered on securing resources and issues of coordination. Some members questioned the need for a subcommittee. It was suggested that the proposal be more specific on who will do the training. The UNCEEA agreed that training was a very important element of capacity building and requested further detail and clarification on coordination and funding. Members underlined the need to build on existing training material and collaborate with regional commissions, various organizations and initiatives. It was considered useful to collect information on training needs through the 2013 SEEA Implementation Global Assessment Survey.
33. UNCEEA members were briefed about the outcome and provided with the draft recommendations of the international conference “Global Implementation Programme for the SEEA” (17-19 June 2013, New York) for review and comment. Members of the UNCEEA discussed the process of taking forward the recommendations of the conference. Some members also provided specific comments on the draft recommendations which will be taken into account by the Secretariat.
34. Several members of the UNCEEA expressed concern about the formal language of the recommendations. Members commented that the role of the UNCEEA in relation to the recommendations of the conference should be clarified. It was also noted that the recommendations are not a UNCEEA document but a document of the conference and after finalization by the conference participants, the recommendations will be provided to the UNCEEA to be considered in the development of its work programme.

35. Some members considered it important to have a clear delineation between recommendations on SEEA Central Framework and those on SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. One member requested that the recommendations should contain explicit language about the WAVES partnership. Some members also suggested how certain recommendations should be clarified or rephrased in order to avoid potential confusions that might arise.

Agenda item 5 – Towards a medium-term programme of work for the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (for discussion)

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed appreciation to the Editor, the Editorial Board and the Secretariat for the significant progress in the drafting of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting.*
- *Expressed strong support for testing and experimentation in ecosystem accounts using SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting.*
- *Agreed that the UNCEEA create a steering committee to guide and manage the progress on the research agenda and provide a focal point for communication and engagement on the research agenda.*
- *Noted that given the importance of experimentation in this area, it is not necessary at this point to create technical expert groups.*
- *Agreed with the proposed short to medium term priority areas of the research: (1) spatial units, (2) methods of measuring ecosystem services and assets, (3) presentation and structure of the accounts and information in the accounts, (4) linking to socio-economic data, (5) valuation of ecosystem services.*
- *Agreed with the proposed medium to long term research priorities: (1) accounting concepts, (2) connection between ecosystem services and ecosystem condition, and (3) aggregation and ecosystem-wide indicators.*
- *Expressed support for organizing a forum of experts in late 2013 and an international conference in late 2015 to discuss issues related to ecosystem accounting.*

Summary of discussion:

Towards a Medium-Term Programme of Work on the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting – Testing and Research Agenda (Alessandra Alfieri, UNSD)

36. The presentation by UNSD provided an overview of the proposed medium-term program of work for SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA). It was noted that the Statistical Commission “welcomed the SEEA EEA as an important first step in the development of a statistical framework for ecosystem accounting, and

encouraged its use international and regional agencies and countries wishing to test and experiment in this new area of statistics”. It also “recognized the policy demand for information on ecosystem accounting, and requested the Committee of Experts to set priorities and develop a medium-term programme of work with timelines and deliverables as well as a proper mechanism to address these issues, considering the multidisciplinary nature of the topic”.

37. The short to medium term priorities of the proposed programme of work are: (1) spatial units, (2) methods of measuring ecosystem services and assets, (3) presentation and structure of the accounts and information in the accounts, (4) linking to socio-economic data, and (5) valuation of ecosystem services. The medium to long term priorities of the proposed programme of work include: (1) accounting concepts such valuation of degradation, allocation to sector, sequence of accounts, integration in balance sheets, treatment of expenditures on ecosystem enhancement; (2) connections between ecosystem services and ecosystem condition and dependencies between ecosystems; (3) aggregation and the formation of ecosystem wide indicators.

38. The presentation also discussed a proposed management and governance structure for the programme of work of the UNCEEA on ecosystem accounting. It was proposed that a steering committee be created under the auspices of UNCEEA responsible for guiding and managing progress on the research agenda and providing a focal point for communication and engagement on the research agenda. A forum of experts in ecosystem accounting should be convened in late 2013 to carry the momentum of experimentation and give an opportunity to practitioners to share experiences.

39. The presentation also proposed that 5-6 technical expert groups are created, each covering a particular area of the research agenda and agree on a timeline for deliverables. Further, an initial list of relevant testing opportunities at national and international level would be compiled and updated to ensure ongoing management of this list and connection to the research program. These initiatives would lead to a major international conference in 2015 to bring together the various communities working on ecosystem accounting.

40. The UNCEEA expressed their appreciation to the Editor, the Editorial Board and the Secretariat for the significant progress in the drafting of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. The discussion focused on the proposed list of priorities and on the proposed governance mechanism.

41. The UNCEEA expressed strong support for testing and experimentation in ecosystem accounting. Members noted that it is of outmost importance that the framework presented in the document is put into practice. Many members agreed with the proposed short to medium term research priorities as well as the medium to long term research priorities. Member in particular mentioned the importance of experimentation on issues related to statistical units, aggregation and valuation with the later two being of particular importance for national reporting. Several members noted that while valuation is important, ecosystem accounts in physical terms are key and provide a good base for experimentation and research. Furthermore it was noted that, as required by law, in Europe ecosystem accounts are currently compiled only in physical terms by Eurostat. Several members noted that it is important to communicate with relevant stakeholders

that valuation is but one of the many potential components of ecosystem accounting. Other members noted that for purposes of national reporting and of impacting macroeconomic policy valuation is necessary. Members also mentioned that it was important to involve the national accounts community in discussion on valuation and aggregation. Just as important, national statistical offices should also be involved to ensure that the process is rigorous and moves forward in a way that is conducive to future collaboration and eventual standardization of ecosystem accounting.

42. On the proposed governance mechanism, UNCEEA agreed that a steering committee should be created. UNCEEA also agreed that at this juncture, the creation of the technical expert groups was not necessary, rather a light governing structure was preferred and many members expressed concern at the number of committees being created as part of the work programme. Members noted that expert meetings should be held regularly to share experiences and expressed support for organizing a forum of experts in late 2013 and an international conference in 2015.

Agenda item 6 – SEEA Applications and Extensions *(for discussion)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed appreciation to the Editor, the Editorial Board and the Secretariat for the significant progress in the drafting of the SEEA Applications and Extensions.*
- *Endorsed the draft SEEA Application and Extensions subject to the completion of the annex of examples, references and introductory materials, and checking the draft for general readability.*
- *Noted that the SEEA Applications and Extensions is to be published as a print document and requested that UNSD maintain and update a web platform with examples and applications of environmental economic accounting.*
- *Recognized that input-output analysis is an important application of SEEA and requested to be kept aware of developments in the area of input-output analysis.*

Summary of discussion:

Progress on SEEA Applications and Extensions (Carl Obst, SEEA Editor)

43. The presentation provided an update to the Committee on the progress made in completing SEEA Applications and Extensions and highlighted the next steps of the work plan. A preliminary draft was discussed at the 18th meeting of the London Group; members of the London Group requested that the draft include clear examples and links to the SEEA Central Framework. A broad consultation on the draft was held in December 2012-January 2013 where 34 countries and agencies provided comments. The consultation draft was also submitted as a background document to the Statistical

Commission which welcomed the draft and agreed with the process for finalizing the document.

44. The editor in close collaborations with the editorial board has made significant progress since the consultations draft including: strengthening the technical aspects of chapter 3; clearer introductions to different chapters; clarifying examples; and adding text to the annex explaining examples and data requirements.

45. The presentation outlined the next steps toward the white cover publication of the document including: (a) completion of the annex of examples, (b) drafting of references and introductory materials, and (c) checking the draft for general readability. The aim is to complete the white cover publication by July 2013.

46. The UNCEEA congratulated the Editor and Editorial Board on the progress and expressed appreciation for their work and for the secretariat support provided by UNSD.

47. The UNCEEA endorsed the draft of SEEA Application and Extensions subject to the completion of the annex of examples, references and introductory materials, and checking the draft for general readability.

48. Some members requested that as there are more examples of applications and extensions of environmental economic accounts, such examples be collected in a central location for easy access to practitioners and other with an interest in the accounts.

Agenda item 7 – SEEA-Energy and Energy Statistics Compilers Manual *(for discussion)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed appreciation to the Expert Group on Energy Accounts and the Secretariat for progress made towards the finalization of SEEA-Energy.*
- *Agreed with the proposed timeline for the completion of SEEA-Energy and noted that the Statistical Commission has agreed to a proposed procedure for approval of SEEA-Energy.*
- *Noted that SEEA-Energy should be fully consistent with SEEA Central Framework.*
- *Followed with interest the presentation by UNSD providing an update on the status of the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual.*
- *Noted that the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual will be a useful tool in the compilation of energy accounts; it further noted that the complete draft will be circulated to the UNCEEA before finalization.*

Summary of discussion:

Finalizing SEEA-Energy (Sokol Vaco, UNSD)

Energy Statistics Compilers Manual (Ilaria Di Matteo, UNSD)

49. The Committee received an update on the progress made towards the completion of SEEA Energy. The global consultation on the draft was held in January-February 2013 with 48 countries and international agencies providing comments. The comments received were largely editorial. A number of substantive issues were also raised including issues related to own use of energy, the scope of energy assets accounts and, losses and residual. The secretariat prepared a summary of the outcome of the global consultation which was circulated to the Expert Group on Energy Accounts.

50. The expert group on energy accounts has been actively involved in reviewing and updating the draft. In particular, the group has had extensive discussions via email and telephone on the list of substantive issues, agreeing to the way forward and resolving all major outstanding substantive issues. The secretariat is in the process of finalizing the draft taking into account the outcome of the global consultation as well as the follow-up discussions of the expert group.

51. The presentation also noted the steps toward the completion of SEEA-Energy: (1) the secretariat will send the draft to the expert group for final review; (2) draft to be circulated to UNCEEA members; (3) the secretariat will update the final draft and submit to the Bureau of UNCEEA for its approval. The final draft will also be reviewed by the editor of the SEEA to ensure full consistency between SEEA-Energy and SEEA Central Framework. Once the draft has been approved by the Bureau of the UNCEEA it will be forwarded for adoption by the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, as agreed to at its 43rd session.

52. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the expert group on energy accounts and the secretariat for the progress made towards the completion of the draft and it agreed with the proposed procedure for finalization of SEEA-Energy.

53. The UNCEEA received a briefing on the plans for the completion of the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual (ESCM). The presentation emphasized the multipurpose character of the manual as being part of the implementation process of both IRES and the SEEA-Energy. The Committee was informed of the process of drafting the ESCM. For each of the 9 chapters of the manual, a team composed of a coordinator and representatives from different countries/organizations has been tasked with drafting each chapter. Draft chapters are being reviewed by the Oslo Group according to an agreed timeline.

54. The presentation included the timeline for the completion of ESCM. A complete draft will be reviewed by the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics in September 2013

followed by consultations with the London Group in November 2013. It is expected that the manual will be finalized by the end of 2013.

55. The UNCEEA appreciated the update on the plans for the preparation of the ESCM. The Committee noted that the manual will provide guidance also for the compilation and implementation of the SEEA-Energy and the complete draft will be circulated to the UNCEEA before finalization.

Agenda item 8 – SEEA-Agriculture *(for discussion)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed its appreciation to FAO for coordinating the drafting of SEEA-Agriculture.*
- *Welcomed the proposal that an update on the progress of work be presented at the next London Group meeting.*

Summary of discussion:

SEEA for Agriculture – Current FAO Activities *(Sachiko Tsuji, FAO)*

56. The UNCEEA received an overview of SEEA-Agriculture which is envisioned as an extension and subsystem of the SEEA Central Framework. SEEA-Agriculture will expand and provide more details on accounting concepts and definitions related to agriculture management and monitoring. It will link with: activities in all sub-sectors of agriculture including crop and livestock production, fisheries and forestry; utilization of natural resources; and other data such as economic data based on the SNA and natural resource use based on the SEEA Central Framework. Links will also be made to food security, social dimensions (e.g. poverty, rural livelihood, and gender), sustainability and disaster impact assessment. The need for the development of indicators was also mentioned in order to aid in the better management of agriculture.

57. One of the aims of SEEA-Agriculture will be to provide a common framework with shared concepts, classifications and data collection by integrating various surveys and census. It was also noted that integrated databases and multipurpose information systems are important steps towards integration of agriculture data and information.

58. The presentation also gave an overview of the main areas of FAO activities including ongoing work on harmonizing classifications and revising data collection and processing. In particular there is ongoing work on: revising the land use and irrigation questionnaire; land cover classification; global land cover data base; green gas emission account; water related data; and the revision of the handbook of Standard Aquaculture Monitoring and Statistics.

59. UNCEEA welcomed the presentation from FAO and noted the importance of SEEA-Agriculture in the overall suite of SEEA related publications. Members mentioned that linkages could be drawn between SEEA-Agriculture and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting given the nature of agriculture. On the issue of subsidies, it was noted that they will be discussed in the manual. The process for completion was also discussed. Members requested that the London Group is updated on the progress of work at its next meeting.

Agenda item 9 – Emerging issues related to SEEA: Use of geospatial information *(for discussion)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Appreciated the information presented by the representatives of UN-GGIM and Australia.*
- *Requested that the UNCEEA is kept informed of the developments in the area of geospatial information in the context of UN-GGIM and the soon to be established expert group on integrating geospatial information with statistics.*

Summary of discussion:

Global Geospatial Information Management: Geospatial Information and the SEEA (Greg Scott, UNSD)

Statistical Spatial Framework: Connecting People, Society and the Economy to a Location (Peter Harper, Australian Bureau of Statistics)

60. The UNCEEA received information on two ongoing initiatives in the area of geospatial information: United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), and the programme review of geospatial data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. UN-GGIM is a formal mechanism with a United Nations mandate to discuss, enhance and coordinate Global Geospatial Information Management. Objectives and goals of GGIM included among others: having sustainable production of GGIM data; working with governments to improve policy, institutional arrangements and legal frameworks; develop capacity in countries; implement and adopt international standards and interoperability; and establish a global geospatial information platform. In the context of SEEA, integrating environmental-economic accounts data with location information adds value and allows for better decision making by policy makers.

61. The program review of geospatial data undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics underlined that following Rio+20 and in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, there has been an increase in demand for integrating statistics and geospatial information. The presentation by ABS noted that geospatial capabilities and institutional arrangements across the national statistical organizations vary. There is a

strong need for an overarching, internationally agreed framework to guide NSOs towards better integrating location data with other data that is already collected. Having a framework would facilitate integration and lead to improved decision making. Currently terms of reference are being drafted for an expert group to begin work on a framework for integrating geospatial information with statistics.

62. UNCEEA expressed its thanks for and followed with great interest the two presentations. It noted the importance of this area of work in the context of the SEEA. Several members noted the technological challenges of integrating geospatial and statistical data. Other noted the difficulties with data confidentiality. It was further noted that there are difficulties in bringing together the geospatial and statistical communities.

Agenda item 10 – Communication strategy of the SEEA (for discussion)

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed general support for the proposed communication strategy.*
- *Requested that UNSD develop a list of priorities within the communication tools, refine target groups and develop the core message.*
- *Stressed the importance of proper communication with relevant stakeholders and the public at large in the overall implementation of SEEA.*
- *Noted the need for dedicated resources and communications and marketing experts to provide inputs into various communication tools and requested that countries and international organizations provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the communication strategy.*

Summary of discussion:

Communication Strategy for the SEEA (Ivo Havinga, UNSD)

63. The presentation by UNSD discussed the overall vision for the SEEA communication strategy for advocating and mainstreaming that rests on four pillars: (1) monitoring and reporting on international, regional and national policy making for sustainable development; (2) the use of the most efficient, effective and inspiring communication tools and tactics available; (3) strengthening the scope, detail and quality of statistics, accounts and indicators; and (4) integrating the economic, environmental, social and human dimensions. The main objectives of the communication strategy are: (1) enable leadership advocacy; (2) build synergy of UNCEEA; (3) prepare and engage the statistical community and (4) manage expectations. A number of key messages were

also presented along with communication mechanisms and activities that could be used to deliver key messages.

64. UNCEEA members had a broad discussion on issues related to communication. The need for dedicated resources and engaging communications and marketing experts was mentioned by members as key toward successfully communicating about the SEEA. Members noted that the multipurpose nature of the framework is a critical element. Some members further noted that given the different governing structures and priorities within countries it is important that the communication strategy is flexible, decentralized and adaptable at the national level.

65. Members strongly agreed that the communication strategy should broadly focus on the value added from implementing the accounts and how the information derived from the accounts can be used to inform policy. Some members mentioned that references should be made to the SEEA complementing the SNA whenever possible. It should be clear in the communications with relevant stakeholders that adjusted GDP measures are one of many potential uses of the environmental economic accounting. It should also be clear that while many important indicators can be derived from the accounts, one of the strengths of the SEEA is the analysis that can be done with the larger information set.

66. UNCEEA members also expressed their views on the target groups for the communication strategy. Members noted that users of the accounts constitute the majority of the groups targeted by the communication strategy and that key messages should be cross-cutting across groups. Some members noted that the communications strategy should prioritize policy analysts and other immediate users of the accounts. Certain groups such as journalists, NGO's and high level policy makers will need highly aggregated data. Other members stated that the strategy could be expanded to include non-traditional target groups for statisticians that impact policy decision.

Agenda item 11 – Environment Statistics *(for information)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Noted with appreciation the update on the status of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES).*
- *Recognized the importance of FDES being consistent to the extent possible with the SEEA Central Framework.*

Summary of discussion:

The Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics (Eszter Horvath, UNSD)

67. The UNCEEA expressed its thanks to UNSD for the presentation which gave an overview of the process of the development and adoption of the FDES by the Statistical Commission in February 2013. The presentation explained the scope and structure of

FDES indicating clear links of its main components to SEEA Central Framework and EEA. It mentioned that FDES uses definitions and classifications of the SEEA Central Framework as far as possible and where it has relevance, with the objective of facilitating data integration. Regarding future work, the expert group that carried out the revision will be revitalized to support developing guidance for compilation and technical materials. Training and capacity building in countries will be coordinated with SEEA training efforts.

Agenda item 12 – Composition of the membership of the UNCEEA Bureau *(for discussion)*

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Accepted the resignation of Peter Harper as Chair of UNCEEA and expressed its deep appreciation for his successful chairmanship of UNCEEA, highlighted by the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework as the international statistical standard for environmental economic accounting.*
- *Confirmed Ian Ewing of the Australian Bureau of Statistics as interim chair for one year, up to and including the 9th UNCEEA meeting.*
- *Agreed to maintain the current governing structure and working methods of the UNCEEA.*
- *Supported expanding the membership of the Bureau and requested taking into consideration the proposals on the composition including the replacement of two Bureau members due to retirement.*
- *Requested that the secretariat contact current members of UNCEEA with regard to their continued membership in the Committee and supported the possible expansion of the UNCEEA given that the implementation programme has begun.*

Summary of discussion:

Thoughts on the Composition of the Membership of the UNCEEA Bureau (Ivo Havinga, UNSD)

68. UNSD as secretariat to UNCEEA made a presentation on the membership of UNCEEA and its Bureau, and on the governing structure of the Committee. UNCEEA was invited to provide input and comments on the following: (1) accepting the resignation of Peter Harper as Chair of UNCEEA due to his new responsibilities at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS); (2) nominating Ian Ewing (ABS) to become interim chair of UNCEEA for the period of 1 year, up to and including the next

UNCEEA meeting; (3) composition and possible expansion of the UNCEEA Bureau; and (4) working methods and governance of UNCEEA.

69. Members expressed their deep appreciation to Peter Harper, outgoing chair of UNCEEA, for his stewardship of the Committee. Mr. Harper expressed his appreciation to UNCEEA members and the UNSD Secretariat for their support in his function as chair. The UNCEEA expressed support for the proposition that Ian Ewing become interim chair of the Committee for a period of one year.

70. The UNCEEA supported the proposition that the membership of the UNCEEA Bureau be expanded and requested the replacement of two Bureau members due to retirement. Several members noted that it is important that high level representatives from countries are approached to serve as members of the UNCEEA Bureau and at the same time there should be an effort to maintain a balanced composition of nationalities. The Committee supported the possible expansion of the UNCEEA membership to other international organizations and developing countries given that the implementation programme has begun.

71. On the issue of UNCEEA governance, members expressed support for the current structure and working arrangements. Several members requested that the agenda of Bureau meetings is shared for information with all of UNCEEA and that the secretariat distribute in a timely manner the agenda and related documents for Bureau meetings.

Agenda item 13 – Other business

Outcome and actions:

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed its appreciation to the Editorial Board to the SEEA Central Framework for its work towards the final publication of the SEEA Central Framework.*
- *Expressed its appreciation of the SEEA Editor for his continued contributions to the many facets of the UNCEEA programme of work.*
- *Expressed its thanks to the Secretariat for the organization of the meeting.*